
Call for Abstracts

Conference of the ECREA Temporary Working Group “Communication and Sport”

***“The Social Impact of Sports Communication:
(Sports) Media, Engagement, and Activism in the Digital Sphere”***

Institute of Communication and Media Research

German Sport University, Cologne, Germany

(conference will be held onsite with inclusion of 1 online panel)

November 13-15, 2025

Sports media play a crucial role in shaping public discourse, influencing narratives, and determining the visibility of social issues within both the sports industry and wider society. From investigative sports journalism uncovering injustices to strategic communication efforts by athletes, teams, and brands, the role of media in shaping social impact requires critical exploration. Moreover, audiences actively engage with, interpret, and respond to these narratives, shaping the effectiveness and reach of various movements in sports media. Additionally, sports journalism can take on an interventionist role, with journalists advocating for social issues, giving voice to marginalized groups, and driving conversations on equity and justice. Activism within sports communication, whether led by athletes, media professionals, or fans, continues to be a significant factor in addressing societal challenges. Beyond journalism, various forms of engagement—including fan mobilization, community-driven initiatives, and participatory media practices—are shaping the broader landscape of social influence in sports communication.

The *Conference of the ECREA TWG “Communication and Sport”*, hosted by the *Institute of Communication and Media Research at the German Sport University in Cologne*, on *November 13-15, 2025 (Get Together, Nov 13; Academic Program Nov 14 and 15)* invites scholars (not necessarily only from Europe) to submit abstracts that investigate the relationship between sports communication and its broader societal influence. It aims to foster interdisciplinary discussions that deepen our understanding of how journalism, digital platforms, strategic communication, audience reception, engagement, activism, and advocacy intersect with social impact in sports communication.

The conference will feature one online panel that will allow participation of a select number of researchers who are unable to travel to Cologne.

Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

Sports Media:

- *The role of sports journalism in shaping social change*
- *The interventionist and activist role of sports journalists*
- *Media framing of social issues and activism in sports*
- *Intersectionality and diversity in media portrayals of athletes and social issues*
- *Regulation and censorship in sports media*

Sports Actors:

- *The role of sociopolitical issues in athletes' self-presentation*
- *Strategic communication in socially responsible and activist sports initiatives*
- *Corporate media and its stance to social activism in sports*
- *Athletes' employment of different media channels for activist purposes*
- *Sports actors' responses to online hate*
- *Social media's influence on activism and public engagement in sports*

Sports Audiences:

- *Fan engagement, mobilization, and advocacy through media platforms*
- *Audience expectations and perceptions of activism in sports communication*
- *Community engagement and grassroots movements in sports media*
- *Case studies of sports media's impact on social discourse and activism*

This list is not exclusive, and we call for papers which in a broad sense deal with different forms of engagement, including both theoretical and empirical perspectives on the potential social impact of sports communication

We invite **abstracts between 300-500 words (excluding references)** submitted in English language **by June 23, 2025** via email to ecrea_sports_2025@dshs-koeln.de (ecrea_sports_2025@dshs-koeln.de) or directly to the main organiser JProf. Dr. Daniel Nölleke (d.noelleke@dshs-koeln.de). **The submission should be anonymized.**

The abstracts can be both for individual papers and panel proposals. Each panel proposal must include an abstract of the cover topic and the titles of 4-5 involved papers with the names of the authors. Each paper in the panel needs to be presented by people from different universities. Please **indicate clearly whether the abstract is for an individual paper or a panel proposal.**

The TWG (in collaboration with its YECREA representative) particularly invites early career researchers to submit abstracts for the conference. Please **indicate on your submission if it is authored exclusively by (bachelor, master or Ph.D.) students.**

To support the integration of as many scholars as possible, we will hold approx. 5 onsite panels and 1 online panel for the colleagues who have difficulties travelling to Cologne on the dates of the conference. Please **indicate clearly whether the abstract is for onsite or online presentation.** Authors will be notified about acceptance by July 25, 2025.

To cover the expenses for room rental and on-site catering (coffee, cold drinks, finger food), **a fee of max. 70 Euro (max. 40 Euro for Early Career Scholars)** will be charged for on-site participation. Detailed information on fees, accommodation options and the social program will be sent with the acceptance notification in July.