

Why policy coherence in sport matters

Almost three years have passed since the adoption of the [2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development](#). While significant progress has been made, countries – and the international organisations that are supporting them – are still facing the challenge of effectively implementing a universal, integrated and indivisible agenda. Such an ambitious agenda envisages a world free of poverty, hunger and inequality, where good quality education, health care and decent work are available to all, and where economic growth and progress is not at the expense of the environment and the well-being of future generations.

Why is [policy coherence](#) so important to achieving the new agenda? Policy makers, together with a wide range of stakeholders, will have difficult choices to make – and reconcile often conflicting priorities in the context of a highly interdependent world. This includes: divergences across the SDGs and the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; across and within policy communities used to working in silos; between short and long term priorities, and between domestic and international objectives. Maybe this is why [SDG 17.14](#) to “enhance policy and institutional coherence” was introduced as a means of implementation.

In response to these challenges, the OECD has developed a [Framework](#) and guidance to support countries in enhancing policy coherence for SDG implementation. [OECD’s Framework](#) can be a useful screening tool to foster synergies, address trade-offs and avoid unintended consequences. Sport is no exception.

Why is policy coherence important in the context of sports?

Sport is an important enabler for sustainable development. Sports can contribute to a number of [SDGs](#). A lot has been written about the contribution of sport to well-being in terms of better health (SDG 3) and education outcomes (SDG 4), and gender equality (SDG 5). Sports events, big and small, can contribute positively to tourism, infrastructure development (SDG 9), economic growth (SDG 8) and prosperity. Initiatives such as the *Homeless World Cup*, working across 420 cities in 74 countries around the world, can have a huge impact on reducing poverty (SDG 1) and social inclusion of women, the elderly, youth and the disabled. It can provide decent work (SDG 8) while reducing costs associated with homelessness and inequality (SDG 10). Governments and private actors can benefit from policy coherence to exploit these synergies.

[Policy coherence](#) can also help to address potential trade-offs, for example the association between sports events and alcohol consumption which is harmful to human health and can lead to violent behaviour including against women and youth. Sports can be big business, sometimes with negative spill over effects such as may arise from an influx of large investments for rapid construction bearing risk of spending irregularities. Estimates for money laundering through sports betting can amount to \$140b/year, 10% of worldwide revenues of organised crime. A policy coherence lens can help to identify the range of actors that can address these challenges in a collective effort going beyond the narrow sports industry, to include justice, central banks, tax authorities, police, customs as well as culture, finance and tourism ministries.

Policy coherence can also help to address the potential impacts of sports on natural resources. Winter sports can be harmful to biodiversity and life on land (SDG 15). Cities are important

hosts for sporting events. They rely on sound infrastructure which in turn relies on heavy use of water and energy which put pressure on scarce natural resources. This can undermine efforts to achieve sustainable cities (SDG 11) and slow climate change (SDG 13). Global sports events require the procurement of large amounts of materials over a short time frame, which can undermine efforts to achieve more sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12). Far more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that sports contribute not just to economic and social development but also to sustainable development. Events must be deliberately designed and executed in ways which can generate sustainable outcomes.

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