

6.3 UNESCO: building on global consensus to fight corruption in sport

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The educational and ethical dimensions of sport, and its multidisciplinary nature, form the core of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) mandate as the UN custodian of sport policy development. When sport emerged as an international policy issue in the 1970s, through 'ping-pong diplomacy'² and the boycott of the white-only South African Springboks rugby team, UNESCO responded by convening in 1976 the International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport ('MINEPS'). MINEPS I played an important role in the development of the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, adopted in 1978 by UNESCO's General Conference. The Charter establishes the practice of physical education and sport as a fundamental right for all, and thereby places emphasis on equality and grassroots sport. The longest article of the Charter is devoted to 'the protection of ethical and moral values of physical education and sport', with respect to violence, doping and 'commercial excesses'.³

The term 'corruption' does not feature in the 1978 Charter, however. More than 20 years after its adoption the third session of MINEPS (MINEPS III), held in 1999, recognised 'the risks threatening competition sport, such as excessive commercialisation and advertising, doping, violence and chauvinism, distorted, corrupted and discredited sport'.⁴ Building on the Council of Europe's Anti-Doping Convention, MINEPS IV, held in 2004, prepared the grounds for the adoption by the General Conference of UNESCO's International Convention against Doping in Sport⁵ in 2005. Ratified by 180 member states, it constitutes today, in combination with the World Anti-Doping Code, the only binding, international legal framework on sport integrity and governance.

MINEPS V, held in Berlin in 2013, covered all main national and international sport policy issues with a focus on emerging challenges of sport integrity. The Declaration of Berlin contains a detailed set of recommendations concerning the manipulation of sport competitions, as well as the conditions for hosting major sports events. Two of the central assertions of the Declaration are that, ‘due to the involvement of transnational organised crime, doping in sport, the manipulation of sport competitions and corruption are not only a threat to sport itself but to society at large’ and that ‘various national and international authorities and stakeholders need to concert their efforts in order to combat threats to the integrity of sport through doping, corruption and the manipulation of sport competitions, and that Sport Ministers play a leadership role in federating these efforts’.⁶ Ministers also recommended a revision of the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport – a fundamental benchmark for the universal principles underpinning sport policies and programmes.⁷

The new article 10 on the ‘Protection and promotion of the integrity and ethical values of physical education, physical activity and sport’ reaffirms that ‘phenomena such as violence, doping, political exploitation, corruption and manipulation of sports competitions endanger the credibility and integrity of physical education, physical activity and sport and undermine their educational, developmental, and health promoting functions’. Furthermore, it highlights that, ‘to reduce the risk of corruption and overspending related to major sport events, event owners, public authorities and other stakeholders must take measures to maximise transparency, objectivity and fairness in the bidding, planning and hosting of these events’. This article also includes provisions concerning national and international cooperation against the manipulation of sport competitions, the respect of international labour conventions and basic human rights, the implementation of principles of good governance, the rigorous enforcement of the principles of accountability and transparency, and the provision by all stakeholders of prevention programmes, as well as an invitation to the media to fulfil their role as critical and independent observers of events, organisations and stakeholders.

Above all, the Charter underscores the critical linkages of sport integrity principles with the ethical values and benefits of physical education, physical activity and sport, including equal access, non-discrimination, safety, sustainability and lifelong learning. This basic agreement on the reasons, purpose and main modalities of protecting and developing sport is powerful – both as a baseline for designing and measuring policy implementation and as a lever for future multi-stakeholder cooperation. MINEPS VI, to be held in the spring of 2017, will focus on the follow-up to the Declaration of Berlin and the revised International Charter of Physical Education and Sport – an agenda marking a move towards measurable action. For this endeavor to succeed, the sharing of “good practice” will be important. However, these practices must be qualified, codified and disseminated.

It is therefore critical that we leverage the existing policy consensus to build a globally recognised, coherent framework of indicators, benchmarks and self-assessment tools. These would allow public sport authorities around the world to objectively determine policy gaps and needs, solutions and progress to be targeted in the field of sport integrity. Such a framework would cover four main areas: awareness raising and prevention education; legislation; multi-stakeholder co-operation and governance; and effective exchange of information amongst athletes, sports organisations, public authorities and other sports-related rights holders. Our experience with the follow-up to MINEPS V shows that sport authorities welcome such harmonisation - a common set of monitoring tools would reduce transaction costs and strengthen their capacity to implement core policies. Yet, the development, harmonisation and deployment of sport policy monitoring tools require political will and dedicated resources at international and national levels. In this context, the revised International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, as the common denominator of sports stakeholders, can serve as anchor for gathering, standardising and disseminating more effectively practical experience and scientific evidence that is relevant for the governments of *all* our Member States and not only for individual countries or regions.

Through its standard setting instruments and in close co-operation with other intergovernmental

organisations in this domain, UNESCO offers a unique platform to harness a universal protection of the integrity of sport. This platform is a precious asset for the collective effort that is now required to strengthen the power of sport for all members of society, across the diverse interpretations and reflections of our multiple stakeholders. This is the common endeavour we must unite to uphold and defend.

Notes

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² The term 'ping-pong diplomacy' refers to the organising of table tennis matches between the United States and the People's Republic of China in the early 1970s as a means to relax tensions at a time when the two countries did not have diplomatic relations.

³ See http://www.unesco.org/education/nfsunesco/pdf/SPORT_E.PDF, article 7.

⁴ UNESCO, *Third International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS III)*, Punta del Este, Uruguay, 30 November–3 December 1999: *Final Report* (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), p. 12.

⁵ UNESCO, *Fourth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS IV)*, Athens, Greece (6–8 December 2004): *Final Report* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), point 4, p. 1.

⁶ The Declaration of Berlin was adopted by the 121 member states of UNESCO that participated in MINEPS V, based on a draft elaborated by some 100 expert organisations, including Transparency International: www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/physical-education-and-sport/mineps-2013/declaration.

⁷ This revision was carried out in 2014–2015 in a collective process involving all 195 UNESCO member states, as well as international experts and practitioners representing sports organisations, academia and non-governmental organisations. See <http://en.unesco.org/SportCharter>.