



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

A Response of the Olympic Sport Movement

European Commission's public consultation on the European Climate Pact

Position paper submitted by the International Olympic Committee and endorsed by the following National Olympic Committees:

- British Olympic Association
- Comité Olímpico de Portugal
- Comité Olímpico Español
- Czech Olympic Committee
- Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund (National Olympic Committee of Germany)
- Finnish Olympic Committee
- National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark
- National Olympic Committee of Lithuania
- Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports

and the following International Sport Federations through the UN Sports for Climate Action Framework:

- International Basketball Foundation
 - International Biathlon Union
 - International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation
 - International Cycling Union
 - International Federation of Equestrian Sports
 - International Fistball Federation
 - International Floorball Federation
 - International Golf Federation
 - International Ice Hockey Federation
 - International Ski Federation
 - International Triathlon Union
 - United World Wrestling
 - World Rowing Federation
 - World Rugby
 - World Sailing
 - World Taekwondo
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1. Status and Trends

Climate change is placing our planet and future generations at risks.

It is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even more tomorrow. Weather patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, weather events are becoming more extreme and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) are now at their highest levels in history.

The year 2019 was the second warmest on record and the end of the warmest decade. With a global average temperature of 1.1°C above estimated pre-industrial levels, the global community is way off track to meeting either the 1.5°C or 2°C targets called for the Paris Climate Change Agreement (2015). However, the current COVID-19 crisis has shown that fast and co-ordinated collective action is possible in the face of emergency.

Climate change is a global challenge, that impacts sports practice and recreational physical activity and which the sports sector can contribute to addressing.

Physical activity is a key element of good health but the way we practice sport in our everyday life is now affected by climate change. Moreover, extreme weather is placing the organisation of sports events in jeopardy, leading to more matches being abandoned and courses at risk of closure. Air pollution, increased rainfall, rising temperatures in the summer and unreliable snow in the winter culminate in new risks and challenges to how sports can be played.

Sport is not just a victim of climate change; it is also **a net contributor** through GHG linked to travel, energy use and other forms of consumption. This means that sports organisations have a responsibility to limit their climate impacts, as well as take measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

In all, sport has both an opportunity and a duty to contribute actively to global sustainability. That is why, in September 2015, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly confirmed the important role that sport plays in supporting the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals¹.

2. What Role for the Sport Sector in the European Climate Pact?

The European Union (EU) has chosen to take a global leadership role in efforts to advance sustainable development and tackle climate change. We commend the EU's intensified efforts to transform the continent to a low-carbon economy through the formulation of **the European Green Deal** and welcome the EU's recognition that such challenges require integrated responses and strong cooperation with all partners to build resilience.

The European Green Deal sets clear overarching targets which will require unprecedented collective action, from everyone, from every government, from every sector and section of our societies.

The sports community is a meaningful and cost-effective partner and should be recognized as an important actor of the EU sustainability policies and practices. It has a transformational impact, is inclusive and multi-stakeholder. It has also developed visible and innovative solutions that help raise public awareness about the impact of climate change. Sport has an unrivalled capacity to advocate, motivate, inspire and gather billions of people across the world around common goals.

Accounting for **2.12% of total GDP²** in the EU, the sports community:

- directly or indirectly impacts leisure, tourism, infrastructure, health, media, sporting goods, apparel and equipment;
- represent over 5.67 million of jobs in the EU;
- attract broad media coverage and attention across the continent.

The sport community is ready to seize the opportunity of the **European Climate Pact** to display leadership and use this major effort to stimulate cross-sectoral cooperation and encourage a greater number of individuals and organisations to join in the climate neutrality journey in the broader community alike.

¹ [United Nations Secretary-General Report on "Strengthening the global framework for leveraging sport for development and peace", August 2018](#); [The Commonwealth, Sport for Development and Peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015](#)

² [European Commission, Study on the economic impact of sport through sport satellite accounts, April 2018](#)



2.1 Taking Action

In December 2018, a major milestone was achieved with the launch of **the UN Sports for Climate Action Framework**³ by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in partnership with the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Through this initiative, the sports community has committed to address climate change through concrete actions, designed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and drive climate awareness and action among global citizens. In this way, the **128 signatories** – ranging from Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOG) and National Olympic Committees to International and national Sports Federations, leagues and clubs – have already actively contributed to the pursuit of **the European Climate Pact** goals.

The framework lays out **a set of five principles** to guide sport organisations in the pursuit and achievement of their climate change goals and provides a solid foundation on which sporting bodies can create meaningful projects to support the protection of our planet's environment:

Principle 1: Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility;

Principle 2: Reduce overall climate impact;

Principle 3: Educate for climate action;

Principle 4: Promote sustainable and responsible consumption;

Principle 5: Advocate for climate action through communication.

Sustainability throughout the entire lifecycle of the Olympic Games

Paris 2024 have taken significant step to minimise its carbon footprint. From the outset, each stage of this edition of the Games has been designed with sustainability in mind. This has allowed for the reduction of its estimated carbon footprint to 1.5m t, compared to the footprint of the Olympic Games London 2012: 3.3m t. Paris 2024 will use 95% existing and temporary venues, and any new permanent construction will be low in carbon. Paris 2024 will also maximise the use of public transport and use its influence to push innovation in zero-carbon technologies.

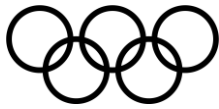
Milan-Cortina 2026 has also adopted a comprehensive approach to addressing climate change. It aims to align with existing regional programmes and catalyse new initiatives in this field.

From 2030 onwards, each OCOG will be required to go beyond the current obligation of reducing and compensating carbon emissions directly related to their operations. This way, the Olympic Games will become **climate positive**, meaning that the carbon savings they create will exceed the potential negative impacts of their operations.

With headquarters which are one of the most sustainable buildings in the world, the IOC 'walks the talk' and has encouraged **major International Sport Federations**, which organise competitions across Europe, as well as **National Olympic Committees** to put great effort to anchor sustainability and the fight against climate change in their day-to-day operations, such as:

- **World Sailing** has not only committed to reducing its indirect emissions by 50 per cent and to becoming carbon neutral by 2024 but has also committed to educating sailors around the globe on the importance of reducing carbon emissions in their everyday lives.
- **The International Ice Hockey Federation** has published its own manual for sustainable events and has also developed a "sustainability profile", which must be adopted by all top tournaments. This includes close collaboration with cities to implement cycling as a mode of transport for all athletes and spectators.
- **The International Cycling Union** actively promotes cycling and environmental sustainability and works with 196 National Federations on the five continents to bring cycling safely into urban areas in order to reduce emissions and improve health and wellbeing.
- **The International Volleyball Federation** is upcycling ghost fishing nets to use as volleyball nets, whilst educating through sport on the importance of protecting our planet and the need for circular economy.

³ <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/sectoral-engagement/sports-for-climate-action>



- **The International Federation for Equestrian Sports** aims to use horse manure to generate power at events, and work with local authorities to feed the power back into the grid.
- **The International Football Association**, organisers of the world's biggest single-sport event, has committed to achieving carbon neutrality over the next three decades, implementing measures to reduce their GHG emissions and inspiring others to take action.
- **United World Wrestling** have created a *More than Medals* programme to tackle climate change through sport education, reaching thousands each year.
- **The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation** actively promotes and educates around climate change through the UIAA Mountain Protection Award, their Respect the Mountains Programme as well as encouraging carbon reduction and mobility schemes in order to protect these delicate ecosystems.
- **The International Powerboating Union** stages an annual Solar and Energy Boat Challenge in order to help redefine powerboating and motorsports by developing green energy solutions and providing a platform for innovation on a global scale.
- **The Spanish Olympic Committee's** headquarters now consumes 100% renewable energy, which has since been implemented within the Madrid Judo Federation, the Taekwondo National Federation and the Spanish Fishing National Federation. Educational programmes on the importance of green energy, waste minimisation and recycling are being pushed through 59 national federations throughout Spain, using sport as a means to promote and inspire action.
- **The German Olympic Sports Confederation** is active and committed to tackling climate change and has developed Green Champions, a bilingual (German and English), step-by-step online sustainability tool for sports event organisers, all National Federations and local organising committees to encourage and help event organisers to address sustainability issues by providing concrete courses of action throughout all phases of sports events across the whole of the country.
- **The Finnish Olympic Committee** has, in partnership with Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, developed a toolkit that gives practical advice for sports organisations to try different operational models to benefit them as well as the environment.
- **The National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark** created an Environmental Code of Conduct containing requirements and recommendations for all national federations, local clubs and athletes, reaching the entirety of Denmark.
- **The National Olympic Committee of Moldova** holds an annual Eco-Fest to educate and promote the importance of sustainability through sport. They educate 5'000 schoolchildren and students yearly, underlying the role that sport organisations can play to help solve the environmental challenges that we face today.
- **The Montenegrin National Olympic Committee** launched a Green Games programme in order to implement concrete environmental standards and education at sporting events.

Reducing energy costs for grassroots sports clubs in the Netherlands

The Dutch Football Association (KNVB) has pledged to help the nation's 3,000 grassroots sports clubs significantly lower their energy costs and environmental impact by brokering renewable energy deals and facilitating finance opportunities for energy-saving equipment. As part of De Groene Club (The Green Club) project, the KNVB has partnered with a utilities company to offer amateur clubs energy advice, as well as favourable prices for the installation of solar panels, new boilers and insulation.

The KNVB and its partners KNLTB (Dutch Tennis Association) and KNHB (Dutch Hockey Association) plan to go through the same five-step process (energy advice, drafting plan of approach, best-value common measures, financial advice, and realisation) with 300 grassroots clubs per year, starting with football, hockey and tennis. Interested clubs are expected to make an initial investment of between €30,000-€50,000 to purchase equipment, such as solar panels and boilers, with a return on investment expected after around five or six years. They can use their own money or apply for financial assistance through the Stichting Waarborgfonds Sport (SWS), a social investment fund, which has been facilitated by the KNVB.



The sports sector has also shown a leading role in tackling additional key environmental issues, directly linked to climate change, and which have severe consequences for our ecosystem, such as **plastics⁴**, **biodiversity loss⁵** and **air pollution**.

2.2. Educate and Inspire

The sport sector is also uniquely placed to make a major contribution to tackling climate change through its compelling power to inspire and to attract a following of millions of people. The Olympic Games alone are followed by over 13 million spectators and 4 billion viewers across the world through more than 100,000 hours of television broadcasts.

As individuals, athletes can make choices to reduce their carbon footprint, but their greatest impact lies in their capacity to influence others. An athlete can be recognised by thousands or millions of people around the world. As the below illustrates, by becoming advocates for change, athletes can encourage communities, sports fans, sponsors, organisers and suppliers to reduce their climate impact in buying local, reducing energy consumption or using sustainable transport.

- Finnish Olympic medallist snowboarder **Enni Rukajärvi** campaigns with climate-advocacy non-profit Protect Our Winters to encourage Finnish ski resorts to switch to eco-electricity and promoting climate-friendly food.
- British sailing gold medallist **Hannah Mills** has launched the Big Plastic Pledge – a global campaign to unite athletes and fans around the issue of plastic pollution. The campaign is supported by the IOC, as part of its commitment to the UN Clean Seas initiative.
- Norwegian rower **Martin Helseth** has pledged to clean five tonnes of waste from Norwegian waters and cleans waterways after every Olympic training session, influencing his followers along the way.
- Canadian Olympic sprinter **Oluseyi Smith**, launched a project to help spectators and organisers of athletics to become more environmentally responsible. He then plans to reach out to the wider community and to get people of all ages to think more inventively about how they can reduce their own impacts.
- **Lewis Pugh**, a British-South African endurance swimmer, undertakes gruelling swims in some of the world's most vulnerable ecosystems, to highlight their plight.
- **Val de Falbaire**, an elite triathlete and international swimmer, launched **Precious Plastic Mauritius**, which aims to save our ocean from pollution by organising a series of activities to create lifelong behavioural changes in regards to plastic pollution.
- **Will Gadd**, a world-class Canadian athlete and adventure is using his profile to draw attention to the threat of climate change and is supporting climate scientists to collect valuable data from some of the world's most inaccessible places.

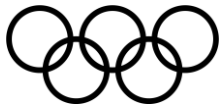
In particular, in a world increasingly facing challenges, sport can be a vehicle of hope and aspiration. And it is fun. These are the attributes that are so important to mobilise about climate change and to inspire people, and **the youth** who have played such a crucial role in spearheading the climate action movement, to take positive action. These actions – be they small, medium or large- would add up to a truly significant total of GHG emissions savings.

The resources and pathways available through sport at all levels are therefore immense:

- Broadcasting channels
- Social media
- Athletes as role models and climate ambassadors
- Showcasing sustainable actions at events and at club grounds
- Association/federation networks
- Sport clubs' memberships and team fans
- Sponsors and partners
- Iconic venues

⁴ See [the IOC's Plastic Game Plan for Sport](#)

⁵ In close collaboration with the IOC, the International Union for Conservation of Nature has recently published two Sport and Biodiversity Guides: [Mitigating biodiversity impacts of new sports venues \(2019\)](#) and [Mitigating biodiversity impacts of sports events \(2020\)](#).



The IOC and UNFCCC have developed a **number of bespoke educational materials** to support the sport ecosystem in addressing climate change and adopting climate adaptation measures in the face of more extreme and variable weather patterns.

As a key partner of **the UN Environment Programme**, the IOC has recently contributed to **‘Earth School’**, an educational initiative led by the UN agency, which aimed to help boost understanding of the environment among citizens locked down due to COVID-19. Based on its expertise and experience, the organisation helped design two video lessons for learners of all ages on the scale of plastics pollution around the world and the life cycles of plastic bottles, shedding light on the dangers these disposables present to our world.

Beyond the IOC, a number of European sports organisations are mobilising their assets:

- At the **2017 International Ski Federation Nordic World Ski Championships** in Lahti, Finland, competing athletes were encouraged to participate in a video highlighting the importance of tackling climate change through everyday behaviours. Statements given by athletes were put together in 45-second clip which was shown to spectators at the event;
- **German Bundesliga football club TSG Hoffenheim** has created in 2019 a ‘climate ticket’, which gives fans the opportunity to pay 1 EUR more than the original price to create a fund to build new forests in Uganda. In addition to promoting sustainable land use in Africa, this initiative brings the issue of climate change to the top of the agenda every time a fan wants to buy a ticket;
- In August 2019, **the FEI Sports European Championships Jumping, Dressage and Para-dressage** in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, showcased a restaurant pops up which served food that was sustainably sourced and healthy. One of the goals was to highlight food production environmental impact, as it contributes around a quarter of the GHG responsible for climate change;

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The environment, from oceans, rivers and lakes, to mountains and forests, is vital for sport and closely connected. If we do not have a healthy, thriving environment, then sports will not thrive. At the same time, sport practice and sports events can contribute to climate change – through associated travel, energy use, construction, catering, and responsible behaviours on a day-to-day basis. Dedicated programmes inciting innovative action, raising awareness and education amongst the sporting community and fans are therefore a critical contributor to this global effort.

From sport bodies, such as World Sailing and Formula One, pledging to be climate neutral, to dedicated athlete ambassador programmes to raise awareness, the sport world is joining forces to win the race against climate change. Through the European Climate Pact, the sport community can now inspire new stakeholders to join existing initiatives or undertake new ones.

As part of its sport policy, the European Commission and the Member States have addressed the topic of sustainability (of major sport events) in the recent past albeit to a limited extent. Several sport projects focusing on environmental sustainability have also been supported by the Erasmus+ and the LIFE programmes. However, a coherent cooperation between the organised sport sector and the EU institution in this area has not yet been explored. The European Green Deal and with it the European Climate Pact are a great opportunity to do just that.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also generated an unprecedented wake-up call. To ‘build back better’ from the current crisis, the organised sport sector **is committed to partner with EU institutions** to continue to leverage its unique ability to reach people to stimulate action at all levels of our societies.
