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# **SUSTAINABLE SPORT 2030 – Responsibility for Nature, the Environment and Society**

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## Prologue

Sport<sup>1</sup> plays a fundamental role in society and culture: Sport enables people to practice inclusion, contributes massively to their quality of life and health, gives pleasure, is fun, and conveys values such as hard work, tolerance, fairness and team spirit. In addition to this, sport can make numerous contributions in key areas of action, such as sustainable consumption, combating climate change, future-proof mobility, urban development and biodiversity conservation. With over 50 million people participating in sport and more than 27 million memberships in around 87,000 clubs, Germany is a sporting nation.

However, sport also changes the structures, functions and form of nature, landscapes and settlements, while simultaneously creating autonomous functional structures and spaces for interaction. Sporting activities and infrastructure take up space and resources, emit climate gases and affect ecosystems, fauna and flora.

At the same time, sport benefits from an intact natural world and landscape.

This raises a number of questions: How do we preserve the natural foundations of life and the spaces used in sports – for ourselves and for future generations? What must be done to ensure that young people, in particular, continue to enjoy access to nature, exercise, games and sport, and all the associated health and educational benefits? How do we resolve the conflict between the needs of sport and the goals of air quality control, climate change mitigation, nature conservation and noise abatement? And how can sport be a catalyst for progress towards a sustainable society?

This position paper on Sustainable Sport 2030 seeks to answer these questions and formulate a viable vision that can accommodate the conflicting interests of society, the environment and sport.

In 2015 the international community adopted the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) place the onus for action on governments, but also on civil society, private enterprises and the scientific community. The German government's National Sustainable Development Strategy, which provides the framework for implementing the SDGs in Germany, acknowledges the role of sport. The strategy is centred around topics such as health, education, environmental protection and mobility – in other words, fields that have a direct bearing on sport. The

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<sup>1</sup> This position paper is based on a broad-based definition of "sport" which includes diverse games, exercises and sports that are undertaken with goals like health, socialising and experiencing nature, are characterised by various organisational forms, including clubs and commercially or privately organised activities, and are practised in different settings such as natural spaces, sports facilities and sports venues.

German government is also committed to achieving the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Careful and efficient management of resources in the sport sector makes a key contribution to development that is environmentally, socially and economically viable. The German National Strategy on Biological Diversity provides important impetus for this, with an approach to sport that appreciates nature and landscape, has due regard for valuable habitats and rare species, promotes nature-friendly sporting practices and considers conservation targets in the planning and construction of sports facilities.

The Advisory Board for Environment and Sport at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Power and Consumer Protection (BMUV) has been advising the German government about all relevant issues since 1994, and communicating them to the wider public. The Advisory Board is an independent body that publishes statements and strategic/conceptual recommendations. This paper presents the Advisory Board's position "Sustainable Sport 2030 – Responsibility for Nature, the Environment and Society", and reflects the latest expert discussions within the Advisory Board. It is updated on an ongoing basis.

This position paper is intended as a guide for policy-makers, sports associations, sportspersons, and all other stakeholders in the fields of environment and sport. Because, despite a range of ideas and model projects, to date, no comprehensive principle of sustainability has been implemented across society, nor has sport been made fully sustainable. Such a transformation is indispensable for the future of both sport itself and sports organisations, and offers extensive opportunities for development.

Sustainable sport always means responsible, strategic action that must be anchored in and practised by an organisation's own structures. The actors and stakeholders involved in sport, i.e. the Federation, Länder, municipalities, the scientific community and sports organisations, as well as those in nature and environmental associations, have suitable instruments and a wealth of experience to support the sustainable development of sport. These approaches need to be further developed, specified and implemented for each area of action.

## **Guiding principles for sustainable sport**

Sustainability in sport is a team effort. Despite their sometimes diverging points of view and interests, actors, organisations, institutions and individuals have to join forces to seek ways of developing sport to meet the challenges of the future. With this in mind, the Advisory Board for Environment and Sport recommends the following guiding principles:

### **Responsibility and trust**

Sustainable development means taking responsibility. In particular, the enormous social reach of organised sport makes it a reliable multiplier that can promote environmentally sound, nature-friendly behaviour. The resilience of near-natural habitats and natural resources is limited. Their value for society can only be preserved if they suffer no long-term damage. Actors in the sport sector must take more responsibility for their actions by identifying the effects and consequences of their activities and taking any necessary countermeasures and precautions.

### **The precautionary principle: nature conservation, climate action and environmental protection**

To ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy an intact environment, sport must respect ecological boundaries. In the field of sport and environment, the precautionary principle has two dimensions: Precautionary resource management means that, as a matter of principle, sport should use natural resources such as water, soil, biodiversity and air carefully and should actively combat climate change. Precautionary risk management follows the principle of taking preventive action to avert adverse impacts on flora, fauna and landscapes, especially where there is incomplete knowledge or uncertainty about the type, scale and causes of environmental damage.

### **Clear facts and transparency**

Broad participation and public relevance are the prerequisites for transparent processes that may be applied to sport and society as a whole. However, this hinges on targets, voluntary commitments and projects being specified in a participatory process and conflicting aims being reconciled, for instance with the help of cost-benefit analyses. Decisions should be guided by cost efficiency and compliance with general environmental and social requirements. This will strengthen people's trust in sport and reinforce identification with it.

### **Information and communication**

The broader public is still nowhere near familiar enough with facts and data on sustainability in sport. To remedy this, comprehensive environmental and sustainability communication in and by sport must be developed and perpetuated. Information about relevant action areas must be published and dialogue sought with a range of actors and representatives in the field of sport. Good practice examples and intensive media work across all information channels

can help raise awareness of the aims, successes, effects and advantages of sustainable sport development and provide a blueprint for sustainable social action.

### **Education for sustainable development**

Sport's considerable potential to educate people about sustainable development is not being fully exploited. Sport, and particularly outdoor sport, is an ideal vehicle for addressing environmental, economic, social and political issues. Its prominent role in civil society means it is well-placed to tackle the current crises that threaten the very existence of human beings and nature. We can encourage those who engage in sport to reflect on and adapt their own conduct in relation to sustainable development and at the same time, to learn from practical sport-related examples of how education on sustainable development can be successfully implemented.

Alongside global issues, sport is also ideal for promoting sustainable actions and attitudes as well as social and intercultural learning (e.g. inclusion, integration, health and volunteering) on an individual level.

### **Cooperation and participation**

The German sporting landscape relies on citizen engagement and has more potential than most areas of society to involve broad sections of the population in the achievement of sustainability goals. This calls for intensive cooperation between actors in the sport sector, policy-makers, enterprises, public institutions, civil groups and private citizens. Sports associations should play an active part in shaping this broad-based cooperation. At the same time, sport dedicated to the common good has much potential for tackling social challenges, and as such should be integrated more systematically into state and municipal action strategies.

### **Digitalisation and sustainability**

The goals of digitalisation and sustainability are conflicting. Over the past decades, the digital transformation has triggered a sharp rise in energy and resource use and created consumption patterns that severely impact our ecosystems. Associations, policy-makers, research institutions and civil society should advocate using digitalisation as a lever for the sustainable development of sport. In the sport sector too, decarbonisation, circular economy, resource efficiency and ecosystem protection could be achieved more easily and speedily by harnessing digital innovations. Digitalisation can make it easier to use technology expediently and contribute to innovative developments and resource savings.

## Area of action:

### Sport in nature, landscapes and urban spaces



#### Current situation

The values attached to housing, work and leisure are in constant flux. Urbanisation and digitalisation generally encourage a sedentary lifestyle, making preventive healthcare through sport increasingly necessary.

This also includes encouraging physically active mobility, both recreational and day to day. Public spaces, particularly those used for transport, must be further developed in this regard. For example, there is a lack of attractive footpaths for safe local mobility incorporating green and open spaces or aquatic landscapes.

Green spaces in settlements and near residential areas, forested areas, stretches of water, coastlines, mountains and other landscapes offer a variety of sites for sporting and recreational activities by the general public. Hiking, cycling, climbing, skiing and water sports, plus many other sporting activities, help to prevent conditions associated with a lack of exercise, play a valuable role in mental health and are drivers of social inclusion. As such, they make a pivotal contribution to sport's impact on social sustainability.

Under the Federal Nature Conservation Act (BNatSchG), as a general principle all persons are permitted to enter the open landscape on roads and pathways and on unused land areas, for purposes of recreation. Recreation also includes "sporting activities in the open air, provided these are compatible with nature and landscapes". Entering a wood for recreational purposes is also generally allowed under the Federal Forests Act (BWaldG). In Germany, forests have traditionally provided valuable spaces for sport, exercise and recreation. The additional provisions governing sporting activities vary between Länder.

When exercising their right to recreation, all persons are obligated to be careful with nature and landscapes, considerate of the habitats of fauna and flora, and respectful of the needs of land-owners and others with land use rights as well as the rights of other recreational users.

Practising sport in an attractive landscape or natural environment has its own particular charm. However, sport and nature conservation are not always compatible. Sport places strains on nature and landscapes. For example, conflicts can arise when hiking trails, cycle

paths, footpaths, cross-country skiing tracks and ski slopes encroach on sensitive habitats with high levels of biological diversity or species that are vulnerable to disturbance.

Nature conservation encompasses all measures aimed at the protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity, including wild species of fauna and flora and their genetic diversity and ecosystems. The services ecosystems provide for humans, such as the recreational function of nature, are implicit in these services.

Contemporary nature conservation features many classic protective and regulatory elements, but is also characterised by a dynamic approach that takes account of developments and changes in nature and landscapes, including human activities. There is potential here to raise awareness of environmental protection and climate action among those who engage in sport.

One major challenge is to combine protection and use in a way that both preserves species and habitat diversity while enabling the continued environmentally sound use of nature and landscapes.

In particularly sensitive regions, protection categories and differentiated land use plans play a particularly vital role: For example, core biosphere reserve zones guarantee the development of sensitive species and habitats without human interference or sporting use, while adjacent regions and zones focus on integration and coexistence between nature conservation, recreation, outdoor sports and other forms of land use, including human settlements.

A number of different national strategies and programmes contain development goals for the integrated consideration of nature and sport. The aspirations set out in the National Strategy on Biological Diversity (NBS) include the following<sup>2</sup>:

- To augment and improve the quality of recreational areas by means of nature conservation measures, and to avoid and eliminate impairments
- To significantly boost the appreciation of nature and landscape among recreational users, sportspersons and tourists, and thereby promote green, nature-friendly conduct
- To develop concepts for nature-compatible leisure use.

The National Strategy also formulates a concrete vision for the future: “The diversity and beauty of nature and the countryside support sport, recreation and the experience and discovery of nature, as well as helping to shape regional identity. Tourism, sport and

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<sup>2</sup> A revised edition of the National Strategy on Biological Diversity 2030 (NBS 2030) is currently being drafted by the BMUV with the support of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and all relevant stakeholders and is due to be adopted by the Federal Cabinet during 2024. The BMUV's current proposal is published at <https://dialog.bmu.de/bmu/de/process/58604>.

recreation do not significantly impair nature and landscape. Together with nature conservation, they are committed to the conservation of cultivated and natural landscapes.” The BMU Master Plan for Urban Nature (2019) also considers the potential of sport for liveable cities. The master plan underlines the importance of concepts such as urban nature. Urban nature provides quality of life, health, exercise and experience of nature in cities and settlements.

## **Key points**

More than 15 million people in Germany engage in outdoor sports every week. These activities in nature and landscape are constantly evolving, e.g. due to social developments, new products and trends. Socio-economic framework conditions are also relevant. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected where we exercise, encouraged us to step up our sports and leisure routines and had an impact on the numbers of active people all around the country.

A survey conducted as part of the 2021 Nature Awareness Study (BMUV & Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) 2023) found that 38% of adults spent more time in nature during the Covid crisis than in pre-pandemic times (of whom 11% “much more”, 27% “slightly more” time). Among young people, the figures were even higher, at 44% overall (16% “much more” and 28% “slightly more” time). Furthermore, 44% of young people and 38% of adults said that nature has become more important to them since the pandemic.

However, quantitative growth in outdoor sports appears to have peaked, and following some temporary spikes during the pandemic, the market is now showing signs of saturation and consolidation at a high level. Overall, new trends are not delivering further growth, but leading to redistribution and specialisation within the different sport types. New trends are emerging at ever shorter intervals, as outdoor sports are now part of the supply of goods and services and follow traditional product lifecycles. At the same time, the number of people who informally pursue outdoor sports on an occasional basis is growing, while interest in joining organised clubs and associations has waned.

Among people aged 16 and above in Germany, most sports are self organised. In 2019, 72% of active individuals only engaged in self-organised sport, while 28% were members of at least one sports club (BMWi and BISp, 2019).

In many places, the framework conditions for the use of natural spaces and nature conservation have changed in recent decades as sport and recreation in nature have evolved. For instance, the use of natural spaces is subject to new restrictions, including the designation of new protected areas and a more stringent interpretation of nature conservation. Many of those engaging in outdoor sports are critical of excessive control and varying regulations between Länder. They feel under increasing pressure to defend their activities. In turn, this pressure can provoke a hostile attitude towards even sensible rules for



achieving nature conservation targets. However, all players have a responsibility to promote acceptance and understanding in sport.

### **Promoting exercise and sport in urban areas**

Attractively designed paths incorporating the green and blue infrastructure can help promote physically active day-to-day mobility by walking or cycling as well as sport. This contributes threefold to preventive healthcare and environmental protection: Forging an alliance between exercise and “green”, promoting urban health by offering incentives for physical activity, and improving air quality via the associated reduction in motorised local transport.

As inner-city parks and green areas are unsuitable or too small for many activities, more multifunctional spaces for sports should be facilitated and developed on urban green and open spaces to coexist alongside standard sports facilities. Preserving and supporting near-natural urban spaces (urban nature) enables people to experience biodiversity in towns and cities, at the same time securing urban sites for sport, games and exercise. In this way, new parks and green areas significantly enhance neighbourhoods and improve quality of life in the urban setting.

Additional potential lies in incorporating recreational forests on the outskirts of towns and cities into urban planning. Such forests can help boost demand for sport and exercise, curb traffic, ease pressures on valuable biotopes and enhance urban spaces. In recent years, however, forest management has proved inadequately equipped for dealing with the multiple challenges associated with recent developments in outdoor sports. Moreover, many forestry organisations do not have sufficient staff to fulfil their tasks in the field of recreation and preventive healthcare in forested urban and tourism sites.

### **Activity management<sup>3</sup> in nature and landscapes**

The impacts on nature and landscapes associated with their use for sport, exercise and recreation have long been known and thoroughly investigated. Conflicts can arise in particular where outdoor sporting activities are concentrated in a particular space or time period or when they expand into previously untouched, sensitive natural areas.

In specific cases it is usually possible to minimise conflicts of use permanently and satisfactorily if all local actors and decision-makers participate competently and constructively. Where there are conflicts over different goals that pit the interests of outdoor sports against those of nature conservation, water resource management, agriculture, forestry and hunting, reliable expertise is vital to decision-making. Sports organisations, outdoor sports associations and nature conservation groups have helped bring objectivity to the debate and resolve conflicts by strengthening knowledge networks.

Part of the solution is an integrative approach that steers land use with attractive offers, avoids conflicts of use and positively influences sporting activities in nature and landscape.

A key element is to develop outdoor spaces for exercise, especially trails and paths. By giving people the opportunity for physical exercise, these spaces promote an active, healthy lifestyle, while distributing recreational users and steering them to specific points. Proper maintenance and management of the path and trail network is extremely important.

Managing activities in this way has a direct impact on the number of outdoor sportspersons, when and where they use the spaces and their behaviour in nature and landscapes. Activity management follows two overarching goals:

- To secure and further develop attractive sports and recreational spaces for present and future generations, at the same time minimising environmental and social risks.
- To avoid conflicts between outdoor sports or recreation and other uses of nature such as agriculture, forestry, energy generation and hunting.

Site-specific knowledge of the impacted habitats and species and of the space and time they need is crucial for finding solutions with long-term acceptance. It is also important to

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<sup>3</sup> The Advisory Board for Environment and Sport uses the term “activity management and land use”, based on the definition of Roth, R., Jakob, E. & Krämer, A. in: Neue Entwicklungen bei Natursportarten: Konfliktpotentiale und Lösungsmöglichkeiten. Cologne, 2004, (Volume 15; Natursport und Ökologie), p. 82. The overarching goal is to ensure both the preservation and protection of nature and the possibility of engaging in sports in the space, alongside other activities. In this context, reference is made to recreational users, sportspersons and other users rather than “visitors”. The term “visitor management” is essentially used for protected areas and relates here to the normative aspect.

understand how individuals use the space for sport and recreation, and what their motivations, expectations and needs are.

Activity management comprises multi-stage strategies with appropriate measures: land use plans, appeals and strategies for conventions and standards. In this context, sportspersons' behaviour can be influenced or steered, especially with

- the development of coordinated, area-specific offerings
- tailored information and communication strategies (analogue, cross-device and multimedia),
- voluntary agreements involving all stakeholder groups and
- rules and bans (e.g. restricted trails in protected areas, denial of access, right of entry).

There is a wide range of goods and services for every sporting activity that caters to the modern focus on comfort, consumption and experiences. Changes in supply and demand occur in ever shorter cycles. This increases the pressure to use spaces even more intensively – especially urban spaces.

In large nature reserves, growing consideration is given to sport and recreation within the context of protected area management. This process should be supported by innovative measures to raise awareness among sports enthusiasts who are active in National Nature Landscapes and fostering cooperation in this regard between the administrations of protected areas and sports organisations.

### **Digitalisation**

Digitalisation in outdoor sports is advanced and will become further specialised. Apps make navigation in the countryside easier, explain natural phenomena and offer tailored information on outdoor activities. Measuring and recording personal activities in real time and using biometric data are already common practice for many sportspersons.

Generally it can be said that digitalising their processes enables sports organisations, clubs, protected area administrations and service-providers to become much more efficient, attractive and competitive. Digitalisation can help to reduce environmental pressures and social conflicts in outdoor sports. For instance, providing relevant information via specific platforms and apps can manage uses and demand, prevent over-use and ensure a quality experience.

On the other hand, the experiences of protected areas and the latest research show that digital media can also lead to even greater pressures on nature. This is particularly the case if the sports or recreational activities take centre stage and environmental factors and risks are neglected. Examples include cases where digital media ignore protected areas and

indicate routes through highly sensitive habitats, or when users simply follow digital information without question.

That is why it is especially important to consider the overall influence of digitalisation, taking advantage of the opportunities while minimising the risks. Digitalisation should not be an end in itself, but a tool to support the nature-friendly development of a healthy society.

## **Recommendations of the Advisory Board**

- The debate surrounding the conflicting goals of sport, nature conservation, agriculture, forestry and developments in urban spaces must be based on transparent, verified facts which consider the needs of sport as well as those of nature, species conservation and the environment to develop successful, collaborative solutions.
- Nature conservationists and sportspersons need to be able to act as multipliers and mediators in their individual fields. To this end, they must be suitably qualified and actively involved in relevant bodies. They should also receive support with networking processes.
- Collaborative schemes and projects between sports organisations, urban and transport planning and nature conservation should be bolstered by public funds.
- There is a need for institutional support for measures to sensitise sports clubs, sports associations and sports venue operators to the possibilities offered by the greening of sports grounds and the integration of biodiversity protection.
- Sports organisations and providers of sport tourism services should promote the conservation of biodiversity and associated ecosystem services, and contribute to climate action with projects and public relations measures.
- Communications and educational work in sport must be continually adjusted to reflect social transformation. Education for sustainable development and nature experiences require the targeted preparation, supply and sharing of information by sports organisations to their members and multipliers.
- The Federation, Länder, municipalities, sports providers, tourism providers, sports equipment manufacturers and specialist sport retailers must collaborate more closely towards a shared goal of the integrated, sustainable development of sport. This approach will help avoid one-dimensional concepts, identify problems early on and launch joint communication initiatives.

- Research and development projects should be supported, especially in the areas of market and trend analyses, viability concepts for spaces, climate change adaptation and responsible resource management.
- Resolving conflict hinges on the early involvement of property owners. This also affects forest owners, agricultural businesses and holders of fishing and hunting licenses.
- The successful reconciliation of interests between outdoor sports and nature conservation and the establishment of diverse cooperative schemes should be extended to forests as natural spaces with the involvement of forest owners and forestry companies, as well as to cultivated landscapes.
- Outstanding cross-sectoral approaches, such as those put forward by the Federal Platform on Forestry, Sport, Recreation and Health (WaSEG) on streamlining the legal situation on the right to enter forests, and the sport, recreation and health services provided by the forestry sector, should be acknowledged and supported.
- In order to promote equal opportunities and participation, all strata of the population should have access to green spaces and local recreation areas. This is particularly true in socially deprived areas, to provide local residents with the framework conditions for more physical activity and to promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Digitalisation should support the development of cooperative offers by sports organisations, sports tourism operators and representatives of environmental and nature conservation stakeholders. Cross-sectoral, coordinated development and reciprocal involvement will help to ensure acceptance, add value and minimise the environmental risk.
- Digital services in outdoor sport should be supplemented by relevant nature conservation data tailored to individual target groups. All such space-related data must be subjected to quality reviews.
- The publication and use of (user-generated) routes in outdoor apps, for example, may be environmentally problematic if they fail to take account of nature conservation aspects, protected areas, limited access rights on certain trails or open spaces and closure times. To prevent conflicts, the operators of such apps must assume responsibility for these aspects.<sup>4</sup>
- If providers and developers fail to meet their environmental and social responsibilities voluntarily, the Advisory Board recommends developing evaluations, certifications

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<sup>4</sup> Many projects are currently in progress to optimise this comparatively new type of challenge.

and/or lists of recommendations to inform the public about the sustainability of their offerings.

## Area of action: Sports facilities



### Current situation

Climate action, decarbonisation, sustainable building and the circular economy are key transformative areas in politics, business and society that directly affect sports facilities. Every avenue to save resources, use energy more efficiently and use renewables must be systematically explored.

At the same time, sports and sports facilities are themselves affected by the impacts of climate change and, in the long term, must adapt to altered framework conditions. Climate action and climate change adaptation measures in sports facilities therefore lead to win-win scenarios: While protecting the environment, nature and climate, they also help organisations to safeguard the long-term future of their sport.

As well as purpose-built sports venues, the term sports facilities also includes spaces not originally intended for sport but which offer spatial and temporal opportunities for secondary sporting use. These include paths, trails, green and blue spaces whose importance for sport in nature, landscapes and urban spaces has been the subject of intensive debate.

Sports venues are facilities of all kinds that are built explicitly for sport. They are generally municipally owned, but increasingly also the responsibility of associations and other operators.

Germany as a whole is adequately supplied with sports facilities. We do not anticipate any notable expansion of sports halls, outdoor facilities and swimming baths, despite a need for them in growing towns, cities and regions. Instead, existing sports facilities will need to be modified, upgraded and expanded through renovation, modernisation and replacement. Experts at the Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund (German Association of Towns and Municipalities) and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) estimate the total cost of essential renovations to sports facilities in Germany at around 31 billion euros. Sports halls and swimming pools are especially affected by the investment backlog.

There is still a need to upgrade the environmental performance of sports facilities by improving their resource efficiency, using renewable energies, reducing the proportion of sealed land and greening roofs and facades. Maintaining the current stock by modernising

and renovating existing sports facilities has clear priority over new build, also with a view to combating climate change. In the case of swimming pools, rebuilding is often the only way to achieve the aspired environmental goals, given the complex technology involved.

Furthermore, case-by-case reviews should be carried out to determine whether sports facilities will meet climate change adaptation and environmental justice requirements, for example, by creating retention spaces in case of heavy rainfall or by selecting suitable materials and building methods.

## **Key points**

There are well over 230,000 sports facilities in Germany, of which the overwhelming majority are in need of renovation and have correspondingly high levels of energy and resource consumption. In total, the operation of sports facilities in Germany produces 7.4 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per annum (Öko-Institut, 2016).

Energy upgrades and modernisation are a major driver of significant emission reductions.

Important areas for renovation include the heating, cooling and ventilation systems, insulation of the building shells and the replacement of doors and windows. Lighting is another key focus of renovation and modernisation efforts. Managing and controlling energy and other natural resources like water is also crucial for preventing unnecessary consumption and managing resource use efficiently.

Modern technology makes it possible to turn facilities from energy consumers into energy generators – for example if they are constructed as plus-energy buildings or operated as plus-energy buildings after renovation. Energy upgrades are therefore a significant component of any comprehensive modernisation, which will also involve a socially fair distribution of the costs.

In addition to energy upgrades and high-efficiency technical systems, the sustainable operation of sports facilities is crucial. With a view to sport as a driving force for sustainable development, environmentally friendly patterns of use go hand in hand with information on and raising awareness of climate action, climate change adaptation and environmental protection. This includes advice and training for facility managers.

The conversion and construction of sports facilities require clear coordination of climate action, climate change adaptation and environmental protection, integrated, sport-orientated concepts framed with overall efficiency in mind and, where necessary, additional forms of financing.

In the context of the Master Plan for Urban Nature (BMU 2019) and the potential sport holds for liveable cities, we should support measures for raising awareness among sports clubs, associations and operators of sports facilities about the options available for greening sports premises and integrating biodiversity conservation.



## Recommendations of the Advisory Board

- As the individualisation of society progresses, new sport and leisure varieties are emerging in conjunction with lifestyle components. As it is impossible to provide dedicated facilities for every type of sport, the existing sport and leisure facilities must be multifunctional and accommodate many different forms of exercise, as well as providing an attractive meeting place for local residents.
- The construction, operation, renovation and modernisation of sports facilities should be directed towards the goal of a climate-neutral building stock by 2050. By 2030, zero-energy or plus-energy buildings should be the standard in the sport sector.
- The German government's efforts to promote sustainability in the construction industry must give more comprehensive consideration to sports venues. For this purpose, public funding and credit lines should be further developed, optimised, publicised through as many channels as possible and placed on a stable basis. Efforts must be made to ensure neutrality and minimal bureaucracy.
- The owners and operators of sports facilities should be integrated into public sustainability, climate action, information and funding strategies.
- The Federation, Länder and municipalities must align their funding policy and practices more closely with the goals of environmental protection, climate action and responsible management of resources. Sustainability should be laid down as a mandatory standard for public sports infrastructure measures and financial support programmes for sports venues owned by clubs and public bodies. To this end, nationally valid guidelines for the construction and operation of sports facilities as well as renovation and modernisation targets must be defined.
- The Federation and Länder must create the organisational and financial framework conditions to facilitate the construction and operation of climate-friendly measures in sports facilities.
- Renovation and modernisation have clear priority over new build projects. However, in the case of swimming pools, rebuilding is often the only way to achieve the aspired environmental goals, given the complex technology involved.
- Expert advice on renovation and modernisation is provided e.g. by regional sports federations, umbrella organisations and planners, focusing on "the sports facility as real estate category". These approaches should be further developed and offered nationwide and used by municipal operators as well. Life cycle analyses should be carried out prior to any new construction or renovation of sports venues.

- The construction methods and materials chosen for sports facilities should have minimal impact on the environment, climate and human health. Funding bodies should prioritise greener alternatives and refrain from funding critical construction methods and materials.
- Funding bodies should include the following requirements when awarding support: Selection and documentation of green construction methods and materials, adequate human and technical resources to maintain sports venues, including staff training, and binding decommissioning and recycling concepts. For example, this might include considering measures to prevent the release of microplastics from synthetic grass surfaces, adequate technical and human resources to maintain synthetic grass, suitable training of local staff and binding concepts on the end-of-life treatment of synthetic grass surfaces.
- The industries that manufacture and process components for synthetic products in the sport sector should guarantee a sustainable value chain. For example, this requires good plant management during manufacture, in-company handling, processing, distribution, logistics and recycling. The measures taken should be documented in a transparent way.

## Area of action:

### Major sporting events



#### Current situation

Major sporting events are unique occasions for the participants and spectators, but also pose a challenge for sustainable planning and execution. Sports promoters, organisers, the Federation, Länder, municipalities and the sport sector must have the joint goal of planning and running sporting events in a way that ensures they fulfil the intergenerational responsibility for economically, environmentally and socially viable development in urban and rural areas.

This is particularly true for the Olympic Games, World and European Championships and other events with large numbers of participants or spectators, but the principle applies to smaller elite and grassroots sporting events as well. The idea of sustainability requires new approaches in all areas with a view to long-term viability and the equitable sharing of burdens, opportunities and risks. Major sporting events can therefore be drivers of future-proof urban and regional development while also bringing the concept of sustainability to the daily lives of millions of fans and sportspersons.

At the 5th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, which was held in 2013 and attended by more than 120 other UNESCO states, the German government already committed to the sustainability of major sporting events. It called upon all stakeholders to ensure that investments in infrastructure and sports venues are consonant with the requirements of social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability. The Olympic Agenda 2020, adopted by the International Olympic Committee in 2014, is another key reform that was updated in 2021 as the Agenda 2020+5. The current National Strategy for Major Sporting Events 2021 builds on the goals and standards of this international reference document for sport policy.

#### Key points

A comprehensive understanding of sustainability in sporting events forms an overall picture based on all environmental, economic and social aspects.

Practical support in German and English, with up-to-date advice and tips, is available to sports promoters, sports associations and political decision-makers on the Internet platform

for sustainable sporting events ([www.green-champions.de](http://www.green-champions.de)) created by the BMU and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB).

Sustainable major sporting events can only be achieved through dialogue and broad participation of the public. A transparent, dialogue-oriented, ongoing process that involves all stakeholders, affected groups, and private citizens is a constructive way of dealing with all the issues relating to a sustainability concept and sustainability strategy. Sports organisations, promoters and organising committees in Germany are called on to develop sustainability strategies for sporting events through participative processes. The Federation, Länder and sports associations must support this in an appropriate manner and adopt programmes of measures for events in their own areas of responsibility. The following aspects are especially important:

- Providing information on regulations at federal and Länder level
- Complying with environmental, economic and social standards
- Generating momentum for social integration and inclusion (e.g. accessibility) and for sustainable regional, urban and sports development
- Establishing models in the national and international context
- Ensuring easy access to sporting events for all, particularly children and young people
- Managing conflicting goals with the aid of cost-benefit analyses, taking particular account of the environmental and social dimensions
- Providing education for sustainable development through concrete information and outreach projects at major sporting events

Where possible – and as long as the technical requirements for sporting events can be satisfied – the use of existing and, if available, modernised sports and event venues has priority over new build. The deciding criterion for the question of whether a competition venue should be built as a permanent or temporary structure is its use following the sporting event. Where subsequent use is not economically viable, facilities should be designed either to be temporary or to be repurposed later for other uses.

### **Recommendations of the Advisory Board**

- Sports organisations, promoters and organising committees should implement sustainability concepts that set out and implement the goals of climate neutrality and the responsible management of resources in key action areas for major sporting events.
- Sustainability projects should help to gradually improve the sustainability performance of major sporting events and develop new approaches, particularly with regard to democratic co-determination and control, both within the organisation and by the local community.

- The German government can initiate suitable measures such as management systems, model projects or scientific studies and expand its funding strategies to include sustainability criteria with a view to systematically advancing sustainable sporting events.
- In future the Federation, Länder and municipalities should consciously focus their support on major sporting events with a defined sustainability concept, for example under the National Strategy for Major Sporting Events.
- Within their own structures, but also in their dealings with the International Olympic Committee and international sports federations, the DOSB and its affiliated associations should campaign for sustainability as an important criterion when awarding sporting events, and work to strengthen sustainability as a binding principle.
- State-recognised certification systems can assure quality and act as a model for smaller and medium-scale events.
- Use of the term “climate-neutral major sporting event” must be critically scrutinised. A definition must be adopted based on the German Climate Protection Act and accompanying independent scientific support, together with documentation of the greenhouse gas reductions achieved. Steps must be taken to prevent greenwashing when using these terms and other advertising statements, and full transparency is required.

## Area of action: Transport and mobility



### Current situation

Mobility is an expression of people's freedom to develop and participate in modern society. Sport is unthinkable without mobility, be it journeys to and from sporting events, trips to training sessions or the jogging track, flights to sporting holidays or travel by spectators of all ages to league matches. A socially responsible transport transition is urgently needed to safeguard and improve quality of life. The aim must be to reduce the amount of energy used for mobility and meet the remaining demand from renewable sources. The transport transition is a two-pronged approach incorporating the mobility transition and the energy transition in transport.

At the same time, transport puts considerable pressure on the environment and poses dangers to human health. It consumes resources, land and energy, generates noise and air pollution and impairs the spaces where people live, work and relax. To secure travel for sport and leisure in the future, these pressures must be minimised.

Conceptual and strategic distinctions must be made between the following:

- Active forms of mobility
- Everyday accessibility of sports facilities
- Sport-related leisure traffic
- Accessibility of major sporting events
- Operational mobility of all actors involved in sport (vehicle fleets, journeys to work, business trips etc.)

Transport by road and air (vehicle fleets, journeys to work, business trips, sport-related leisure traffic etc.) has a decisive influence on the sport-related energy and greenhouse gas balance. All actors have a responsibility to critically review and optimise the number and type (transmission, engine size, fuel consumption etc.) of vehicles used through active environmental and mobility management. The occupancy levels of vehicles, particularly for sport-related travel, must be increased.

Journeys to work account for a significant share of the carbon footprints of sports organisations and companies. The onus is therefore on employers to create incentives and provide a healthy, green commuting infrastructure, for example by offering subsidised season tickets, bicycle leasing and an infrastructure for cyclists such as cycle parking spaces, charging stations, repair shops, showers etc. Employers can insist on greener business travel, for example, by banning air travel for destinations within Germany and adjacent countries.

As well as focusing on public transport links, greener accessibility of sports facilities can also be encouraged via strategies to boost the attractiveness of physically active everyday mobility (by creating safe, appealing paths and tracks and communicating the available options). The planning of major sporting events requires a tailored approach.

## **Key points**

Particularly given the continuing growth in traffic volumes, the environmental impacts of transport are a major challenge for society and sport. The fundamental aim of modern sport, transport and environmental policies must therefore be to design the necessary mobility to be as environmentally sound as possible. Strategies and concepts must be developed that satisfy people's mobility needs in the sport and leisure sectors, but which are nevertheless compatible with the requirements of sustainable development.

The following figures illustrate the importance of sustainable mobility in the sport sector: According to the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI) study "Mobility in Germany 2019" (MiD 2019), travel for leisure accounts for a large proportion of the total volume of traffic: 28%, or 71 million journeys per day. Around 6 percent of all passenger transport journeys are specifically for the purpose of engaging in sport. In terms of passenger kilometres travelled per day, leisure traffic leads with 34%, equivalent to 1.1 billion passenger km. The car is the main mode of transport in sport.

Upgrading cycle paths and footpaths between sports facilities and residential areas and enhancing green and open spaces are therefore key for healthy, climate-friendly mobility in the sport sector. Those who become accustomed to cycling daily from a young age will also use a bicycle more as an adult. Safe, attractive footpath links are important in two respects, both for covering short distances and for accessing public transport.

The resource consumption of mobility must be reduced substantially. The aim must be to achieve environmentally friendly, healthy mobility in the sport-related context. Cooperation is one possible solution: The aspiration must be to achieve an integrated, cross-sector approach involving all actor groups. Targeted mobility management is highly relevant here, for professional sporting events, in the day-to-day work of associations and for grassroots sports.

Another key task is to nurture a new mobility culture in sport that is based on innovative technology and a new balance of footpaths, cycle paths, and public transport. A start has already been made: Car sharing in associations, attractively priced tickets for local mobility, electric vehicles and flexible mobility via apps are pointing the way towards an interconnected system that makes use of renewable energy and reduces emissions. The challenge now is to translate these approaches into regular practice.

### **Recommendations of the Advisory Board**

- Overall, we should aspire to make greater use of renewable energy in transport. Vehicle fleets should be systematically converted to zero-emission transmissions.
- Greater priority must be given to walking, cycling and public transport in cities and communities. This means expanding footpaths and cycle paths and improving public transport links and frequencies at the expense of passenger car traffic, where necessary. The Federation, Länder, municipalities and local authorities must draw up and implement suitable concepts.
- Mobility concepts with appropriate public transport offerings must be made binding for major sporting events. (Major) sporting events must offer incentives to use public transport, for example by sponsoring overnight accommodation for those who opt not to travel by car etc.
- Sports clubs and other sport providers must devise and implement a mobility management approach to promote green, healthy mobility among their members, customers and employees.
- Devise and execute a public relations campaign for sustainable mobility in sport focusing, for example, on walking, cycling, public transport, car-sharing and lifts, particularly for daily practice, club sport and other sport stakeholders (individual sport, occupational mobility).
- Set up a cross-association climate action fund to finance measures for minimising and eliminating greenhouse gas emissions based on carbon charges in the mobility sector.
- Rather than relocating sports venues to urban peripheries, support more attractive sports facilities in residential areas that are accessible on foot or by bicycle.



## Area of action:

### The sporting goods industry and retail trade



#### Current situation

Alongside the social importance of sport and exercise, the manufacture and sale of sports equipment and clothing are a significant economic factor in Germany.

The companies organised in the Association of the German Sporting Goods Industry (BSI) alone make a global annual turnover of approximately 35 billion euros. The sectors sports apparel, sports shoes, sports equipment and bicycles each account for one-quarter of the German sporting goods market. According to NPD Group, in 2020, German consumers spent around 18.5 billion euros in these sectors.

Many consumers appreciate the fashion aspects, comfort and functionality of sports clothing and shoes and use them for everyday wear as well as when practising sport.

The outdoor sport sector in particular experienced a huge growth spike during the Covid-19 pandemic. With travel restricted and sports facilities closed, many people (re-)discovered the pleasure of exercising in nature near their homes. Walks, hikes and cycle rides were booming, and in 2022 the German sporting goods retail sector grew by 9% compared with 2019, with online sales up more than 28%. Sales of European outdoor brands rose 11.5% year-on-year, while unit sales of outdoor clothing, shoes and equipment grew by around 6%.

Although the financial situation in the sporting goods industry as a whole has experienced a downturn since the end of the pandemic, German products are still among the most sought-after brands in this sector worldwide.

At the same time, however, the sporting goods industry with its global supply chains has severe impacts on the environment and human rights. In 2017, this prompted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to publish its own corporate due diligence guide for the clothing and shoe industry.

Many sporting goods and related materials, including German-owned brands, are produced in the Global South. While these supply chains create employment and provide an income and improved education and development opportunities for local people, they also harbour environmental and social risks. In many producing countries, there are either no sufficiently

binding laws to protect people and nature, or else compliance with provisions is inadequately enforced and monitored. The affected individuals are not adequately consulted and trade unions and other civil organisations representing vulnerable groups and environmental concerns either do not exist or are prevented from operating freely. The consequences are often precarious working conditions and poor environmental and workplace safety standards.

Globally, the textiles industry accounts for around one-tenth of all climate-damaging greenhouse gas emissions. The production of textiles, plastics and leather consumes vast amounts of resources like energy, water, fossil and biobased materials while also causing water and air pollution and producing microplastics and waste.

In Germany, there is now much greater public awareness of sustainability in the sporting goods industry, partly as a result of disasters such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh in 2015 and campaigns like Greenpeace Detox. As well as potentially harmful chemicals in products, this also concerns working conditions and environmental protection in the manufacturing plants and processes, the impacts of products during the usage phase (such as the shedding of microparticles in domestic laundry) and the reparability and recyclability of products. People are also more critical of their own consumption and use behaviour, helping to boost new business models like equipment leasing and upcycling.

Legislators in Germany and the EU are responding to the known shortcomings in the industry and making companies more responsible for their actions: Germany's Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains, which entered into force on 1 January 2023, sets out minimum standards which companies must observe and document. A number of draft directives are currently being drawn up under the EU Green Deal aimed at anchoring transparency about the impacts of industry, environmental and consumer protection and human rights more firmly within industry. These include binding reporting obligations (the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, CSRD), a European supply chain directive (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, CSDDD), a strategy for sustainable and circular textiles<sup>5</sup> and the Green Claim / Empowering Consumers Directive.

For actors within the sporting goods industry, the current situation has increased the pressure on companies to integrate sustainability and risk management, sustainability reporting and future-proof business models that sever the link between corporate success and resource consumption into their corporate strategies if they want to remain competitive.

## **Key points**

As regards the compatibility of environment and sport, the sporting goods industry cannot limit its environmental commitment to simply promoting “green” sporting practices: Its

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<sup>5</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/textiles-strategy\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/textiles-strategy_en)

activities must also extend to the core business of these companies, namely the design of sustainable products and their fair, environmentally friendly manufacture, including all the materials required for this purpose, their in-service use and recycling.

A credible focus on sustainable production can reinforce a company's reputation as an attractive employer in an employment market increasingly characterised by shortages of skilled workers, as well as strengthening existing customer loyalty and opening the door to new customer groups.

Companies that are quick to adjust to altered parameters, such as changing consumption and usage patterns, rising energy costs or a more rigorous regulatory regime, can often secure competitive advantages in both the procurement and sales markets.

### **Recommendations of the Advisory Board**

- The sporting goods industry and retail trade and the organisations representing it must accept responsibility for the environmental and social impacts of their products at every stage in the product lifecycle and commit to ambitious, binding, rapidly implemented environmental standards. Thus far, voluntary commitments by industry have failed to produce satisfactory results (see also the Advisory Council's position on the CSDDD).<sup>6</sup>
- Best practice industry initiatives and standards should be communicated more widely to increase the efficiency of the measures and promote international visibility and effectiveness.
- Investments in green and recyclable sporting goods and usage formats will be stepped up, including the provision of public research and development funding.
- Over-production and planned obsolescence must be systematically avoided.
- The consideration of sustainability criteria in public procurement processes will be made mandatory.
- Transparent, honest and user-friendly information about the origins, manufacturing and properties of products and their repair and recycling / disposal should be publicised.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.bmuv.de/en/report/opinion-of-the-advisory-board-for-environment-and-sport-of-the-federal-environment-ministry-bmuv-on-the-draft-eu-corporate-sustainability-due-diligence-directive-csddd>

## Call for joint action



Sustainable sport is climate-friendly and uses energy and resources efficiently. Sustainable sport is adaptable, socially equitable, economical and – not least – enriching and healthy. Sport can therefore be a catalyst for progress towards a sustainable society. To achieve this goal, the various civil groups must work together in alliances and partnerships.

The Advisory Board appeals to the competent persons in federal, Land and municipal policy-making, in towns, cities and regions, sports organisations, nature conservation associations, businesses and initiatives to launch their own sustainable sport programmes and projects.

**Policy-makers** should put in place the parameters for the sustainable development of sport and set up broad-based alliances for sport as a driver of sustainable society. This requires a willingness to join in a comprehensive cross-sectoral, interdepartmental dialogue, in conjunction with targeted support for the sustainable development of sport, education for sustainable development and knowledge transfer between research and practice.

The structures, programmes and policies of the **Federation, Länder and municipalities** should recognise the requirements of sustainable development in sport and recreation. This includes considering sport and recreation in project development as a matter of principle, involving sports stakeholders from public bodies and sports organisations at an early stage, and fostering cooperative arrangements and joint projects.

**Education and science** should engage far more intensively in a critical and constructive dialogue on the sustainable development of sport and lend conceptual impetus to education for sustainable development in sport. Higher education and research institutions should be especially committed, stepping up their advisory services and creating platforms for public dialogue.

**Sports associations, sports clubs and sportspersons** should make an even stronger commitment to a sustainable society and the common good. Education for sustainable development in sport will encourage stakeholders to reflect on sustainability issues and highlight new, more sustainable approaches. In future, outdoor and indoor sports must give greater consideration to environmental protection, nature conservation, climate action and responsible conservation management through collaboration between organised and informal sport. Public recognition of the outstanding contribution to society made by all actors

in organised sport is also important. Sports organisations are called upon to develop and implement sustainability strategies with quantifiable targets and measures.

**Nature conservation and environmental associations** can play a key role by providing environmental information to those engaged in sport and fostering intensive experiences of nature through sporting activities that are compatible with nature and the landscape. These associations should engage in strategic cooperation with sports bodies, support education for sustainable development in sport, and generally recognise sport as a partner and as a driver of sustainable society.

**Sporting goods manufacturers, the sport sector and retailers** should view this growing awareness of the need for change as an opportunity to future-proof their businesses and develop environmentally sound procedures and products. By actively advocating transformation to sustainable production and focussing on the common good, they can play a positive role in raising the environmental awareness of customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.

**The media** should devote more of their coverage to issues around sustainable sport development, and report on these matters in a responsible fashion.

## The Advisory Board for Environment and Sport

In the 20th legislative period at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection:

### Full members:

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**Tim Bagner**, Association of German Cities

**Detlef Berthold**, State Chancellery, North Rhine-Westphalia

**Ute Dicks**, German Hiking Association (DWV)

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### Advisory Board for Environment and Sport

The Advisory Board for Environment and Sport is an advisory body to the German government that has been based within the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) since 1994. Its functions are to identify new trends in nature and landscape-based leisure sports, develop recommendations for restructuring urban spaces to be more exercise-friendly, generally advocating more exercise in people's daily lives and leisure time and developing ideas and initiatives for sustainable sports venues and sustainably organised (major) sporting events. The Advisory Board has 14 honorary members who are experts in sustainable sport and exercise development drawn from environmental agencies, sporting bodies, local government, urban development, science, business, nature conservation, environmental protection and organised sport in Germany.