



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DIF DIALOGUE GROUP ON THE AWARDING OF INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS

**BEVÆGER
DANMARK**

Recommendations from the DIF dialogue group on the awarding of international sports events

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 4

BACKGROUND 5

DIALOGUE GROUP – AIMS AND ORGANISATION..... 5

RECOMMENDATIONS 6

Before: recommendations for greater influence in the period leading up to host country selection..... 6

During: recommendations on voting on host countries to avoid selecting one that does not live up to the governance, values and view of humanity that Denmark stands for 9

After: recommendations if a host country is selected that does not live up to the governance, values and view of humanity that Denmark stands for, including e.g. compliance requirements ~~9~~¹⁰

INTRODUCTION

The debate on the process of selecting host countries for international sports events has heated up since the Winter Olympics in Beijing and the FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar. "Sportswashing" and "soft power" have become familiar terms and the role of sport in international politics has never before been such a big topic in Denmark.

The dilemmas faced by Danish sport are not going to disappear in the future and we will presumably be increasingly challenged by successful bids by countries that do not live up to the governance, values and respect for human rights that Denmark stands for.

A sustained effort is important if future international sports events are not to take place predominantly in countries with authoritarian regimes with no popular backing, no respect for universal human rights, and no regard for climate impact, and also to prevent such events becoming so financially unviable that only a handful of countries can afford to host them.

At the same time it is important to be mindful of the fact that the structure of international sport does not and will not resemble the democratic model in Denmark that is built around clubs and associations. In many countries sport is commercially financed and/or strongly influenced by political agendas, which means that powerful financial resources and interests often play a bigger role – in addition to sports interests.

As a result, DIF, the sports federations and Danish sport in general all need to be ahead of the game to deal with the dilemmas that we will inevitably face, including preparing sports leaders for their role in international contexts when sitting on boards or committees and discussing where to hold future sports events. Likewise, Danish sports leaders who attend international general assemblies need to be optimally equipped to actively shape the discussions and frameworks and to determine the criteria for awarding major sports events.

The relevant actors in Denmark need to unite behind a common policy since the individual sports federations cannot be expected to master the task on their own. The recommendations in this report are built on such a common policy, namely on fundamental Danish values such as democracy, transparency, co-determination, workers' and universal human rights, and respect for the freedom of the individual federations. At the same time it is paramount that Danish sport act in harmony with Danish Government, Parliament, business organisations, trade unions and civil society organisations to ensure that:

1) Danish sport can independently decide whether to participate in championship finals and tournaments being held in countries that are not being boycotted by Government and Parliament; and that.

2) Denmark, broadly speaking, acts in union to promote fundamental Danish values when Danish sport is on the international stage.

In this context, it is important to stress that sport cannot or should not change everything at all levels but that areas should be prioritised where sport can make a difference, for example stadium construction and hotels, where it is possible to carry out due diligence and scrutinise workers' rights.

This report, which was drawn up jointly with key organisations that are active in sports policy, human rights and anti-corruption, examines sports events (championship finals and tournaments) in other countries. It aims to provide DIF's federations with concrete tools that enable sports leaders and other actors to safeguard Danish interests as best as

possible and thus ultimately exert maximum influence on the process of selecting host countries and stipulating requirements for the preparation and execution of future international sports events.

BACKGROUND

The international strategy of the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark for 2021–2025 maps out an ambitious and proactive course. The issue of awarding international sports events is a key focal point, where DIF aims to promote greater financial, social and environmental sustainability when it comes to selection of host countries for international events. DIF wants to develop specific tools and advice for Danish sports leaders and other actors to apply when choosing host countries and wants them to heed recommendations at every stage of the selection process, i.e. *before, during and after* the decision-making.

Decisions within the individual sports on the hosting of events are made according to criteria drawn up by the international federations, which is why it is important for Danish representatives/leaders to be familiar with and raise awareness of Danish goals and convictions when developing such criteria and when formulating contractual obligations in connection with hosting.

DIF's clear goal is for Denmark and Danish sports leaders to gain greater political influence in the international federations, for example through board positions, so that they are party to important discussions and decisions about the federations' future decisions on hosting. Often, however, it is far from always possible for Danish federations to influence decisions on which cities will host events or on the wording of contracts since Danish sport often lacks the necessary political leverage. Thus Danish sports leaders may disagree with decisions but essentially do not hold any sway and are forced to take action retroactively or oppose a decision about a particular event. This is the case when Danish sports federations are not represented on forums which vote on host countries or when selection takes place through a process of direct dialogue between international federations and the potential host country or city in question.

Various Danish sports leaders and federations have called for greater knowledge of and insight into international sports policy, just as they would appreciate concrete tools to support them in gaining more influence in their international federations. Thus there is a desire for greater insight into international federations, including affiliated public bodies, additional competence when it comes to safeguarding political interests, and the establishment of an international network for DIF's federations at administrative and political level.

The small federations face a particular challenge as they are largely run on a voluntary basis and have time constraints because their volunteer leaders often hold down full-time jobs in addition to their national and international posts. In light of this, it is important to stress that we are proposing recommendations and that these are not meant to be viewed as a definitive checklist.

DIF plays a central role in the leading organisations such as EOC and IOC, where the forming and rethinking of alliances can promote key Danish issues internationally. The direction and prioritisation of these efforts is set out in detail in DIF's international strategy.

DIALOGUE GROUP – AIMS AND ORGANISATION

As part of its international strategy, DIF has established an advisory dialogue group comprising representatives of key organisations. The group has met to discuss how Danish sport can influence the awarding of international sports events.

The purpose of establishing the group was to create the best possible framework for Danish sports leaders to shape the international sports policy debate on future hosting based on the values and principles upheld by Danish sport, which are set out in DIF's international strategy.

In addition to highlighting key challenges and issues, the dialogue group has proposed a number of recommendations, which are presented in this report.

Anchored at administrative level, the group is led by Per Nylykke, Deputy Head of Public Affairs at DIF, and comprises the following members:

- DIF: Poul Broberg, Director of Public Affairs
- Amnesty International: Simone Hald, Political Advisor
- Transparency International: Jesper Olsen, Chair
- Play the Game: Jens Sejer Andersen, International Director
- Danish Ministry of Culture: Kresten Lune Nielsen, Special Advisor
- Danish Football Union: Andreas Høj, Head of Governance & Strategy
- Danish Handball Federation: Morten Stig Christensen, Chair
- Danish Rugby Union: Jens Aage Skare Nielsen, Chair

Further information about establishment of the group is available in the attached memorandum of 28 January 2022.

The group met twice in 2022 to specifically discuss the influence of Danish sport on the process of awarding international sports events, approaching the question from two angles:

- *Before* – Tools and advice for greater influence on the selection of host countries (prior to the bidding process).
- *During and after* – Tools and advice to help avoid countries being selected that do not live up to the governance, values and view of humanity that Denmark stands for (in the lead up to and in connection with voting on host country candidates) and for responding in instances in which such a country is awarded an event nonetheless (requirements with regard to, e.g. compliance and legacy).

RECOMMENDATIONS

BEFORE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GREATER INFLUENCE IN THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO HOST COUNTRY SELECTION

- **Guidance and constructive exchange provided through DIF**
DIF recognises that the work on protecting the interests of international sport can be challenging and a drain on resources. It is beneficial for federations to be able to contact DIF early on, which can assist by providing guidance and constructive exchange through its work with members of the dialogue group, for example. It is

already currently possible to contact DIF for this purpose, but many federations may not realise this, which is why the option is only used to a limited extent.

- **Closer cooperation**

The dialogue group recommends that closer cooperation be established between organisations such as Transparency International, Amnesty International, Play the Game, trade unions and DIF and/or the federations concerned to provide relevant advice to DIF's federations. This cooperation should be available in connection with screening processes or advisory procedures, for example ahead of a vote or deliberations on a sports event in a potentially controversial country or countries. The decision on which partners to activate will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and, if required, DIF will serve as the foundation for federations to have bilateral cooperation with external organisations.

- **Familiarity with relevant decision processes**

The dialogue group recommends that Danish sports leaders become thoroughly familiar with how their international federations are organised and establish where (and whether) it is possible to have an impact on decision-making processes politically. If no influence is currently evident, the group recommends identifying potential for gaining influence either directly or through alliances.

- **Forming of alliances**

Federations should constantly look out for opportunities for and actively take part in forming alliances as a way of furthering their own causes. They should think in terms of identifying and grouping together relevant stakeholders and wherever possible consider initiatives in concrete areas.

With regard to alliances with European countries, the dialogue group recommends referring to the joint declaration by 23 European governments that highlights the need for more transparency and democracy in international sport.

Federations should also prioritise looking at alliances with Nordic or Northwest European countries, with which we often compare ourselves, and other alliances that are broader and more far-reaching.

For example, DIF is seeking to strengthen alliances outside Europe through dialogue with countries such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but DIF also sees good opportunities to consolidate links and alliances with various countries in South America, where shared values can be seen in a number of areas.

If relevant, it would be recommendable to contact DIF for assistance.

- **Screening countries that are making bids**

In the initial stages of processing bids, the federations should screen the bidding countries, also examining human rights, workers' rights and the climate and environmental impact of holding the event. The group recommends contacting DIF for assistance and also, if relevant, collaboration with external organisations.

- **Openness about criteria and evaluation process**

In general, Danish sport should actively advocate openness with regard to criteria, evaluations and the make-up of evaluation committees for bids for sports events. This is specifically the work of the relevant boards but if you do not sit on the board, you can push your agenda through alliances, raise it in other broader forums, or through written material – possibly in collaboration with other countries.

The shared objective of DIF, the federations and the elected leaders should be for bids for sports events to be decided on unambiguously in transparent processes, where voting is open to members, as a minimum, and ideally also to the public. Danish representatives should, in line with democratic principles, aim for these decisions to be made by general assemblies rather than solely by the boards.

If, for example, an international federation has few active national federations, it is important to be especially aware of the risk of undue bias playing a role, for example topics being included in the agenda that are of major financial relevance to small national federations.

- **Aiming for a small number of objective criteria**

When it comes to criteria, it is essential to bear in mind that prioritising the sports-related criteria is the most important, partly to avoid giving too much weight to extraneous criteria that do not directly relate to the specific bid.

The dialogue group also recommends narrowing down the selection criteria since the most important criteria easily become obscured in a mass of other criteria. In the case of corruption, tailored bids are a way of masking why too many criteria easily become formal – but more symbolic – than real.

Ideally, criteria could be grouped into two stages. The first (prequalification) stage could involve basic criteria concerning respect for fundamental and universal human rights as set out by the UN: these would essentially be a prerequisite for a bid to be considered. The second subsequent stage could involve criteria that are more specific to the individual event.

- **Respect for fundamental human rights and requirements for sustainability**

Respect for human and workers' rights during preparation work directly related to the event and execution of the event should be set out as one criterion and should be an obvious element in the selection assessment. It would be recommendable here to seek to base the wording of future contracts on UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in line with the IOC's Strategic Framework on Human Rights. The same goes for subcontractor agreements for the event. There should also be a clear plan for implementation and consequences in the case of non-compliance.

- **Media access and involvement**

One clear criterion should be free access by journalistic media during the entire event, also for a reasonable period before and after the event. Journalists should be able to cover the event without restrictions, also investigating aspects such as political, economic, social, cultural and other relevant factors in the host country.

- **Sustainability and construction**

Limits should be set for the number of new buildings and facilities which host countries may establish in connection with an event, including facilities other than the actual sports facilities. If new construction is necessary, it should be ensured that the new building will be able to be used in the future, possibly as part of the legacy of the event.

Construction accounts for 40% of global CO₂ emissions, which is why buildings and facilities that are unlikely to be fully used after the event should be avoided. Furthermore the construction industry is a potentially high-risk area for corruption and breaches of human and workers' rights, which means that international sports organisations need to be especially alert to these issues, even if they can be difficult to navigate.

- **Critical assessment of finances**

The sponsors in host countries, including governments and authorities, need to be critically assessed, looking in particular at whether the sports event is financially dependent on individual sponsors. One possibility would be to set limits for the level of financial dependence on individual contributors, both private and public.

- **Critical assessment of awarding of contracts**

There should be a focus on the requirements stipulated by international federations with regard to, e.g. human rights and the environment, when it comes to all contracts awarded throughout the event supply chain, including contracts for hotels, security, transport and other infrastructure.

- **Whistleblower scheme**

A whistleblower scheme should be set up to report any violations of final contracts.

DURING: RECOMMENDATIONS ON VOTING ON HOST COUNTRIES TO AVOID SELECTING ONE THAT DOES NOT LIVE UP TO THE GOVERNANCE, VALUES AND VIEW OF HUMANITY THAT DENMARK STANDS FOR.....

- **Transparent evaluation process**

Transparency with regard to the weighting of the individual criteria in evaluations for voting and selection, including ensuring that human rights and sustainability are clearly on a par with sports criteria. The dialogue group also recommends examining the financing and financial independence of each bid.

- **Screening of bidding countries**

If not already the case, federations should screen the bidding countries, looking at factors such as human rights and potential impact on the climate and the environment when the event is held. The group recommends contacting DIF for assistance, also regarding possible cooperation with external organisations before the federation or the individual Danish board member assesses a concrete bid from a host country.

- **Activating alliances**

Making use of established alliances to oppose bids that do not respect human and workers' rights or employment laws, or which have a potentially high environmental impact, as well as organising broad support for bids that do comply.

Networks can be activated by adopting a joint approach to these evaluation criteria or to individual specific criteria.

With regard to alliances with European countries, the group again recommends referring to the joint declaration by 23 European countries that urges the federations to be particularly alert to the issues of human rights (including in the case of migrant workers, children, minorities and LGBT+ people), freedom of the press and freedom of assembly, and workers' conditions when awarding major sports events.

AFTER: RECOMMENDATIONS IF A HOST COUNTRY IS SELECTED THAT DOES NOT LIVE UP TO THE GOVERNANCE, VALUES AND VIEW OF HUMANITY THAT DENMARK STANDS FOR, INCLUDING E.G. COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS.

- **Screening**

If a federation has not been part of the bidding and selection process and is merely subsequently informed about the selection of a future host country, the dialogue group recommends that the federation carry out a screening process on the country, assessing human rights, levels of corruption, climate impact and freedom of the press. It recommends contacting DIF for assistance, including, if relevant, cooperation with external organisations.

- **Implementing critical dialogue**

If there is disagreement about the circumstances surrounding the awarding of a major sports event, the dialogue group recommends starting with a critical dialogue – unless Denmark has officially set in motion a general diplomatic boycott of the country. A sports boycott implemented by a Danish sports federation is an extremely far-reaching measure that can have long-term ramifications for Danish sports practitioners and leaders. The dialogue group would not, however, rule out a sports boycott as one possibility and a last resort in an extraordinary conflict situation.

The group recommends that the political leadership of the federation concerned engage in a critical dialogue within the relevant international sports federation or federations and vis-à-vis the public authorities, sports organisations, organisational committee and other civil society organisations in the host country or countries. To ensure that the viewpoints of Danish sport have a genuine impact, the dialogue group recommends initiating a debate as early as possible in the process, if possible, a debate centred on the individual objectives and declarations of the international federation and contractual agreements with the host country.

Irrespective of whether a federation and its athletes have decided to focus solely on the sporting aspects or have planned to make a stand during the actual event, the working group recommends that the federation prepare itself for politically sensitive situations, where, for example, the organiser, other participants or third parties want to use the occasion to make a political stand, or where the prerequisites for participation by Denmark are compromised in some other way.

- **Shielding the athletes**

The dialogue group recommends organising political activities and a critical dialogue in such a way that they support the freedom of expression of the athletes (including their freedom *not* to express themselves) and provide them with a means of constructively and safely joining in the public debate if they so wish. Sports leaders can facilitate this by having clear-cut procedures, being well prepared and by being clearly available to answer questions. The dialogue group recommends that the federations involve the athletes in the political discussion and ensure that the athletes are primed and in a position to understand the issues of the conflict and possibly join the public debate. Any statements or initiatives by athletes should come from the athletes themselves.

- **Closely monitoring developments**

If there is an implementation plan and/or contract that stipulates measures in the case of breaches, it is important to closely monitor developments and indicate any breaches to board members of the international federation in question, possibly through a whistleblower scheme, if such a scheme is in place.

Be especially aware of the following:

- Respect for human rights and corruption – here it is advisable for athletes to ally themselves with relevant civil society organisations such as Amnesty International or Transparency International, trade unions, etc. DIF can help with setting up contact.
- Access by and involvement of the press – if relevant, collaborations with Danish and foreign journalists.
- Construction projects, including their climate and environmental impact.

11 Recommendations from the DIF dialogue group on the awarding of international sports events

recommendations

- **Be aware of secondary activities**

Particular awareness of secondary activities and sponsors' use of the event as a framework for such activities is necessary. Contact DIF if in doubt as to whether it is possible to decline invitations to participate in activities.

- **Ensure that athletes receive advice**

There should be a stronger focus on advising on circumstances in host countries, especially with a view to preparing athletes and other key representatives from federations (e.g. politicians and leaders) to handle the media, etc. and set up a critical dialogue with relevant interested parties in the host country. DIF should be contacted for assistance, also for any cooperation with external organisations.

- **Involvement of athlete groups/players' associations**

Regular involvement of athlete groups outside of the athlete committees should be prioritised. Any statements or initiatives by athletes should, however, be initiated by the athletes themselves. A good balance is needed in terms of what is required of athletes outside training and competition venues. Furthermore, in some of the big sports, it might be beneficial to have a dialogue with fan groups.

- **Due diligence**

It is advisable for the federations to be watchful and critical when it comes to providers of e.g., hotel accommodation, training facilities, security and transport in the host country, especially wherever the choice of possible facilities is outside their control. It might be beneficial to initiate a dialogue with Danish or international trade unions.

As a participating country, Denmark should stipulate that suppliers and sub-contractors for the activities of the federation linked to participation in championships/tournaments respect universal human rights and workers' rights. Independent inspections should be carried out in the host country with respect to due diligence and compliance with the aforementioned rights.

- **Adopting a position – and taking a transparent approach**

The dialogue group recommends that federations act transparently in terms of their position on the sports event in question, also clearly stating their position on the federation's website/social media.

- **Legacy**

It is important to consider the long-term consequences when selecting hosts. The dialogue group recommends that the federations and DIF actively formulate their requirements and expectations with regard to legacy in the host country. This could include demanding that the host country and sports federation arranging it must live up to their responsibilities – in line with UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

FACT BOX**IN THE CASE OF THE FIFA MEN'S WORLD CUP IN QATAR, THE DANISH FOOTBALL UNION USED THE FOLLOWING APPROACH TO ALLIANCES:**

- Close cooperation with Nordic countries, which share similar views and values in terms of criteria for host countries and the preparation, execution and legacy of championship finals
- Membership of working group under the direction of UEFA (UEFA Working Group on Human Rights), composed of members from, e.g. Germany, England, France, Sweden and Norway
- Dialogue with countries outside of Europe that share/could share the same views of the World Cup in Qatar
- Cooperation with Danish and international trade unions and ILO on conditions for migrant workers in Qatar
- Cooperation with Amnesty International on the general human rights situation in Qatar
- Active public affairs activities vis-à-vis government and parliament