

# ***NATIONAL REPORT***



**COUNTRY:**  
***Cyprus***

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# **1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE**

The highest public authority for sport in Cyprus is the “Cyprus Sport Organisation”. It was established by Law No. 41 of 1969 under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and is responsible for promoting and implementing health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) in the country. It is an independent, non-profit institution governed by a nine-member Board. Its members are appointed by the Council of Ministers. According to the law, its functions include:

- (i) exercise control over sport activities and sport grounds and take all steps required for the promotion of sports;
- (ii) advise all athletic and gymnastic clubs on their athletic programmes and regulate their activities;
- (iii) give financial and technical assistance to communities, sport clubs, gymnastic clubs, athletic teams and representatives abroad;
- (iv) establish and set into operation athletic centres for use by the public;
- (v) build stadiums and create athletic playgrounds for use by communities, athletic and gymnastic clubs, etc.;
- (vi) encourage, promote, organise and finance the participation of Cyprus in international athletic meetings;
- (vii) organise local and international seminars and meetings;
- (viii) publish and circulate bulletins and other publications for the promotion of sports in general;
- (ix) act as arbitrator and resolve disputes between the various athletic, gymnastic, football and other sport clubs;
- (x) impose punishments on athletic, gymnastic, football and other sport clubs;
- (xi) award prizes and trophies to persons rendering high sport services;
- (xii) attest to and recognise federations, gymnastic, football and other athletic clubs. It has its own offices and staff and is publicly funded.

Also worth noting is the role of the sports movement. The Cyprus National Olympic Committee was recognised in 1978 and has sent athletes to every Olympic Games held since 1980. Furthermore, the country is gaining prominence as a host of major sporting events. In 2025, Cyprus will co-host the EuroBasket 2025, the quadrennial international men’s basketball championship organised by FIBA Europe. This will likely be one of the largest sporting events ever organised in Cyprus. Previously, the island hosted the Aphrodite Hills Cyprus Open, as part of the PGA (golf) European Tour.

## ***2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?***

There is no formalised national sport diplomacy strategy in Cyprus. However, sport is perceived as a potentially useful tool in the field of foreign relations and diplomacy by both public and private actors, in particular in order to improve the country's global reputation, create and promote a nation-brand and create business opportunities and drive economic growth.

It is relevant to note that intercommunity sporting events involving young people are already taking place in connection with the attempt at reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriot population. However, these events do not receive sufficient media attention and are mostly organised by non-governmental organisations and the United Nations, and to a much lesser extent by the Cypriot government.

## ***3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?***

Sport diplomacy governance is decentralised in Cyprus since different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. The various actors do not work in a coordinated manner.

Central government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry dedicated to sport) is the main actor. City authorities and local institutions do not have a specific role and are not engaged in sport diplomacy. Furthermore, national experts do not consider the role of sports authorities, the media, the private sector or athletes to be significant in this area.

## ***4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY***

Public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities in Cyprus are non-existent, as is the national budget dedicated to it.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy in Cyprus, the experts considered that several sport diplomacy activities like employment of high-profile sports people or the organisation of trade missions are quite rare. Nevertheless, they consider that diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events are made, like increased media coverage and international broadcasting.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities in collaboration with less developed countries, the experts consider that partnerships for sports competitions are implemented, unlike mentoring or training programmes, funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values, sport exchange programmes or sport fellowship schemes and grants.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities aiming at empowering sport diplomacy actors, the experts consider that neither training for diplomats and athletes, nor dedicated resources and coordination tools are implemented. Nevertheless, political support can be perceived.

When referring to Cyprus' experience in the field of sports diplomacy, the national experts cite two examples. The first is the above-mentioned organisation of the FIBA EuroBasket 2025.

The tournament will be co-hosted by Cyprus, Latvia and Finland. There has been political involvement in the process, but not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The second concerns the attempted reunification of the two football federations which, in the end, was not possible.

## **5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE**

Both the fact that it is a small and remote country and the lack of adequate facilities have been identified as specific challenges in strengthening Cyprus' role as a major sporting event organiser. Besides that, among the obstacles that would hinder the design of a national strategy in Cyprus, the following were mentioned:

- a. Lack of both funding and expertise.
- b. The specificity of Cyprus. This is an issue on which there are very different "sensitivities" that should be carefully taken into account.

At the same time, the national experts interviewed pointed out some advantages of the country if it decided to boost its image abroad through sport. These include the climate and the natural facilities for organising sporting events associated with water sport disciplines.

The national experts have identified the following possible disadvantages in connection with the existence of an EU common sport diplomacy strategy:

- a. Smaller Member States might be left behind.
- b. Risk of resource overburdening in small Member States.
- c. Some of the Member States that already have a sport diplomacy strategy may "drag" States that have not designed one and "impose" a sport diplomacy policy on them. Risk of asymmetric participation in strategy design.

As for the possible advantages, they mention:

- a. The reinforcement of European unity and identity.
- b. Smaller Member States can benefit through co-hosting major sporting events, both economically and branding-wise.
- c. The possibility of developing a stronger global brand.
- d. The improvement in sharing good practices.
- e. A common sport diplomacy policy could facilitate a spillover to other "harder" issues.
- f. The facilitation of cooperation between Member States that would not otherwise have close relationships/common interests in the area of external relations.

Both national experts agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Two of the suggestions for national experts' work stand out. Firstly, the suggestion to combine sport diplomacy with cultural diplomacy, an area in which the EU already has some experience and on which it could draw in order to make faster progress. Secondly, the proposal to strengthen the role of sport diplomacy as a tool for promoting reconciliation in conflict-torn regions.

## 6. INTERVIEWS

- **Constantinos Adamides** is an Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Nicosia.
- **Christos Liperis** is a political scientist. He currently works at the Council of Europe Development Bank

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