

NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Portugal

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

In Portugal, a Secretary of State for Youth and Sport, under the Minister in the cabinet of the Prime Minister and for Parliamentary Affairs, directs sport policy in the Portuguese government. The Basic Law on Physical Activity and Sports (Law no. 5/2007) defines the bases of the policies for the development of physical activity and sport. According to article 11, in order to increase international cooperation in the area of sport, the State shall (i) ensure Portugal's full participation in European and international sporting bodies, namely the institutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the Ibero-American Sports Council; (ii) establish cooperation programmes with other countries and encourage international sporting exchanges at the various age levels; (iii) give priority to sporting exchanges with Portuguese-speaking countries, in particular within the framework of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries; and (iv) ensure that sports programmes aimed at Portuguese communities established in other countries are implemented, with a view to developing ties with their community of origin.

From an institutional perspective, it is also worth mentioning:

1. The Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth (Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, IPDJ), whose mission is to implement an integrated and decentralized policy in the areas of sport -and youth-, in close collaboration with public and private entities, including sports organisations. IPDJ is involved in the definition, implementation and evaluation of public sport policy, promoting the widespread use of sport, as well as supporting regular and high-performance sport through the provision of technical, human and financial resources. The preservation of ethics in sport remains one of the core areas of the IPDJ.
2. The Portuguese Sport Confederation, formed by the national sports federations. Its tasks include (a) Defending the exercise of the right to sport as an essential factor in the full development of the human being and as an obligation arising from the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and the Basic Law of the Sports System; (b) Promoting sporting associations and relations with similar bodies in other countries; (c) Contributing to national sports policy and participating in strategic sports guidelines in general, as a social partner, with the State; and (d) Representing the group of sports federations before the State, the European Union and similar bodies in other countries.

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

There is no formalized Portuguese sport diplomacy strategy. Nor is there a "Strategic Plan for Sport". A "Plan for Physical Activity" and a "Plan for Sport in Schools" have been adopted, but neither of these refer to sport diplomacy or use sport diplomacy as a tool. There is not a single reference to sport diplomacy in the Government Programme, or in the legislation that establishes and governs the mission of the Government body responsible for sport, i.e. the Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth. Portugal recently adopted a "Recovery and Resilience Plan" in the context of European Union funding, which only contains a few references to sport, and does not mention sport diplomacy. The "Tourism Strategy 2027" refers to sports events as "strategic assets" of the country, and to the state's intention to promote Portugal by making it an international destination for cultural and sports events. The government programme also refers

to an integrated strategy to attract international sport events and promote sport tourism to Portugal, with a dedicated working group having been created on this topic in 2022. However, these documents do not make any reference to the role of sport diplomacy either.

In this context, the most relevant objectives of sport diplomacy in Portugal are attracting athletes to the national high-performance centres, improving the country's global reputation, creating and promoting its nation-brand, creating business opportunities, promoting the country as a sport tourism destination and driving economic growth.

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

Sport diplomacy governance is decentralised in Portugal, since different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. Among the ministries, the one most involved in this area is the Ministry in charge of Sport.

Regarding the role of diplomats, national experts affirm that they are involved on an ad hoc basis, for example, for national representation at major international events. They provide points of contact in the hosting country and support the dissemination of the national brand. As for the role of city authorities and local institutions, they are involved in the scope of their functions (for instance, when they host major sport events in their regions), but not as part of any national or general sport diplomacy strategy or policy.

Other actors are also relevant in this field:

1. The Portuguese Sport Confederation has traditionally strived for Portugal to hold important and decision-making positions in international sport NGOs.
2. The Portuguese Sport Foundation, which is a private organisation that manages the National Network of High-Performance Centres, seeks to encourage the largest possible number of national teams and other international representatives of various third countries to train and spend time in these facilities.
3. The Portuguese Olympic Committee, the body in Portuguese sport that places most emphasis on sport diplomacy, has already persuaded the Portuguese Government to sketch out a sport diplomacy plan.
4. Some sports federations work with the government, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or the government body with ultimate responsibility for equality, to promote sport as a way to foster the social inclusion of immigrant athletes. Korfball is the sport that has had the most success in this area.
5. There are no known social partner-promoted sport diplomacy initiatives in the non-sport private sector, i.e. industry, commerce, and services.
6. The role of the public television broadcaster, which has a channel for emigrants, and people, who speak or know Portuguese, i.e. RTP Internacional, which uses sport as one of its primary contents, is particularly noteworthy.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities are scarce in Portugal and no specific budget is allocated to sport diplomacy.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy, a national expert considered that diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events are important as is the employment of high-profile sports people, whereas media coverage and international broadcasting and organising trade missions seem less implemented.

Regarding collaboration with less developed countries, mentoring or training programmes and partnerships for sports competitions seem to be more developed, like sport exchange programmes, rather than funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values or sport fellowship schemes and grants.

When we questioned experts on the sport diplomacy activities implemented with the aim of empowering sport diplomacy actors, they consider that monitoring and evaluation processes are almost non-existent, and training for diplomats and athletes, or dedicated resources and coordination tools, like political support, are also rare.

Regarding the most important sport diplomacy activities in Portugal, it is important to note that, as a consequence of the provisions of Article 11 of the Basic Law on Physical Activity and Sport (see above), the main emphasis is on relations with former colonies through sport. In this regard, Portugal organises and participates in both the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries) Games, organised in partnership with the Portuguese Sports Confederation, and the Conferences of CPLP Ministers of Sport. Sporting relations with the Portuguese Speaking Countries' Community also includes support for sport development, capacity building, and information and best practice sharing. Also the participation in the Lusofonia Games, promoted by the Association of Portuguese Speaking National Olympic Committees has to be mentioned.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The major weaknesses of the sport diplomacy strategy in Portugal are linked to the absence of an explicit strategy for sport diplomacy:

1. Lack of clear and explicit objectives.
2. Lack of structured dialogue and coordination between organisations and between policy areas, and between the latter and economic players.
3. Difficulty in monitoring and reporting activities developed at all governance levels and connecting them to sport diplomacy.
4. Lack of political and social awareness of what sport diplomacy is and how it is linked with sport policy and overall diplomacy.

The greatest challenges and opportunities of Portuguese sport diplomacy are:

1. Promoting the social value of sport and its importance as a driver of social and economic development.
2. Harnessing the full potential of a sport diplomacy strategy in the context of national policy.
3. Strengthening links with Portuguese-speaking countries (which is both a challenge and an opportunity).

4. Fostering the engagement of economic actors in sport diplomacy efforts.¹
5. Mainstreaming sport diplomacy in sport policy and diplomatic efforts.

National Experts have identified the following possible disadvantages in connection with the existence of a common EU sport diplomacy strategy: potential for overlapping activities and “grey areas”; Difficulty defining common goals and strategies; Possible dilution of funding opportunities (if no additional targeted funds are made available).

As for the possible advantages, they mention:

1. Greater outreach to areas and people through sport, that could not otherwise be reached,
2. Greater potential for cooperation at different levels (building on the experience that each Member State already has in the field),
3. Strengthening/fostering the development of national sport diplomacy strategies (complementarity) and those of civil society organisations.

National experts agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Further suggestions of national experts include raising awareness of the relevance of sport diplomacy, building the capacity of the different actors and players (incl. public actors), both at EU and national level, and sharing best practices. The US, Australia and grassroots diplomacy are mentioned as good practices to be taken into account.

6. REFERENCES

- **Fábio Jorge** da Silva serves as Senior Policy Officer at the Department of Sport of the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, IP.
- **Cristina Almeida** is Director of the research and projects department of the Portuguese Olympic Committee.
- **Flávio Martins** is Director of services of coordination, physical activity, innovation and research of the Regional Directorate for Sport of the Autonomous Region of Azores.
- **Alexandre Miguel Mestre** is a lawyer and expert in sports law.

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¹The President of the Portuguese Olympic Committee has recently reflected on the link between the economy and sport diplomacy: <https://www.dn.pt/opiniao/economia-e-a-diplomacia-desporti-va-14899461.html>



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