Sport Singularity

Who will fund the federation's participation commitments through 2030?

Sport Singularity · European Sport Model 2030: Who Pays for Solidarity? For: national federation board and finance director Decision window: 2027 funding and service agreements; horizon: 2030 Version 0.4 · Evidence cutoff: 12 September 2026 · Approved publication edition

Proposed decision: trace one existing funding route before expanding recurring participation commitments. Use the result to negotiate dependable support and test whether any uncovered costs are being absorbed by households or volunteers, or through reduced provision. This is a proposal for the reader, not an action already authorised or implemented.

The Commission expects its strategic sport document by the end of 2026. Post-2027 Erasmus+ finances remain unresolved in the inspected Council position and Parliament procedure. This creates a useful negotiation window, rather than assured new operating income. Commission, Council, Parliament.

Three assumptions to reconsider

“Solidarity is disappearing.” UEFA records €308 million paid to non-participating men's clubs in 2024/25, against €178.5 million in 2023/24. That increase challenges a general decline narrative. It does not establish cheaper community participation: the main scheme serves eligible professional clubs. Financial report, p. 26, scheme eligibility.

“A transfer proves the intended benefit.” A paid allocation is stronger evidence than an announcement, but expenditure, additional access and who is excluded still need checking. C-333/21 required substantiation of concrete user benefits in the centralised football-rights arrangement under examination. This does not automatically settle another sport's legal position. Judgment, paragraphs 236 to 238.

“Balanced accounts mean delivery capacity is secure.” German evidence combines 72.7% of clubs reporting balanced or positive 2022 accounts with a 2023 finding that 17.5% saw voluntary-officeholder recruitment or retention as an existential concern. These are national, dated observations from one study, not current European rates. They justify investigating unpaid capacity alongside cash. Study, pp. 41 to 43, DOSB account.

Compare the choices across three futures

A — Renewed redistribution agreement: funders make dependable commitments with clearer beneficiary terms. **B — Commercial islands:** resources remain selective; uncovered costs shift to households, volunteers or lost provision where alternatives are absent. **C — Shared participation service:** public, lottery and sporting partners jointly finance access across sports and organisational boundaries. These are conditional futures that may coexist.

Option / proposed accountable role	A	B	C	Cost, dependency and reversibility
1. Trace one route / finance director	Supports credible terms	Exposes dependency	Clarifies partner contributions	Staff time and agreed records; readily stopped if burden exceeds decision value
2. Multi-year participation commitment / board	Useful with enforceable funding	Limit promise to secured portion	Requires joint authority	Less discretion; expand only after funding and capacity are secured; reopen if either fails
3. Shared provision / partnership lead	Avoid duplicate support	Depends on willing funders	Fits this arrangement	Coordination and shared control; begin with one existing service; stop expansion if access narrows or costs shift
4. Defer permanent expansion, retain funded minimum / board and treasury	May miss favourable terms	Protects against unreliable income	May delay beneficial cooperation	Reversible waiting has an opportunity cost; set a review date and protect an explicit minimum

Option 1 is useful across the three futures under an agreed effort ceiling. Its purpose is to change or confirm a decision, not create a reporting system. Options 2 and 3 become stronger when counterparties accept enforceable obligations. Option 4 is legitimate when commitments remain insecure, but indefinite waiting can preserve exclusion.

A bounded next step

Propose an **eight-week exercise with three willing clubs**, led by a finance lead who has yet to be appointed. Agree a ceiling of two working days per organisation. Reconcile one route from commitment to receipt and a defined service, then examine participation charges and administrative effort with a participant perspective. This tests whether a decision-relevant gap exists; it does not estimate causal impact.

Continue only if the route is traceable, a material choice changes or is credibly confirmed, and effort stays proportionate. Stop or redesign if funds cannot be disentangled, necessary access is unavailable, or administration adds no decision value. No partners have been recruited and no exercise has been run.

Watchlist for the next board discussion

Baseline review: 12 September 2026. All roles are proposed and unassigned; dates are suggested manual checks.

Indicator	Current baseline / trigger	Proposed role; next check
W1: EU policy and funding	Document expected; finances unresolved → inspect any published mechanism or beneficiary rule	Policy; 15 December 2026
W2: Transfer terms and reliability	Own receipts, evidence requirements and decision reasons need a baseline → act on missed payments; compare requirements and their influence on terms at the next renewal	Finance; 15 January 2027, contractual dates and next renewal
W3: Public and participant support	Allocation/design examples; local receipts absent → reconcile differences that change the service budget	Partnerships; 15 January 2027
W4: Household and volunteer burden	No focal baseline → establish it, then agree a threshold tied to the affordable offer	Delivery; 15 November 2026
W5: Alternative organiser support	Intentions and organisational developments → require binding beneficiary terms and payment evidence	Policy/finance; 15 December 2026

The advice should change if existing arrangements demonstrably provide reliable access with little hidden burden, or if local evidence shows that service timing and belonging matter more than funding gaps.

Separately, W2 tests the report's longer-term accountability hypothesis locally: compare current funder evidence requirements and documented decision reasons with the next renewal. Stronger requirements that affect terms support it; unchanged requirements with other considerations governing decisions weaken its local relevance. Missing records remain a gap. The eight-week exercise does not test a European trend. The full report supplies the programme examples and dated sources behind the watchlist.

Evidence limit: desk research, no new field interviews or beneficiary-level audit. Published institutional information is more visible than informal participation and excluded households. The original framing and synthesis were accepted on 12 September 2026. Independent first-pass reviews and targeted clarification checks are complete. The user accepted the revised content and authorised website publication on 12 September 2026. Version 0.4 updates publication status; no implementation of the proposed exercise is recorded.