

# Sports and Social Cohesion in the Western Balkans

## Historical and Structural Findings

- Sports evolution shaped by politics.
- Civic participation within sport mostly limited or co-opted.
- Governance dominated by clientelism and political elites.
- Sport used for non-sporting objectives.

## Contemporary Governance Challenges

- Politicization undermines inclusive sport governance.
- Centralized decision-making, limited athlete participation.
- Reforms vocal rather than practical.
- Strategic priority: depoliticize governance, strengthen civic engagement.

## Conclusion and Policy Implications

Sports in the Western Balkans reflect broader socio-political realities. Politics co-opt sports as both unifying and polarizing tools, undermining their potential for social cohesion. Inclusive, depoliticized governance is needed to build trust, community participation, and democratic practices.