



# BACKGROUND GUIDE



## FIFA

**FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE FOOTBALL  
ASSOCIATION**

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**SMIS MUN '25**

**IMAGINE · INSPIRE · INNOVATE**



# LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD



Dear Delegates,

It is with great honour that we welcome you all to the FIFA committee at Smis MUN, 2025. As the representatives of national footballing associations at the FIFA, you are tasked towards debating, deliberating and reaching a consensus on the agenda at hand.

As you are aware, the committee will be discussing the agenda “Discussion on the creation of an Anti-Doping framework in international football with special emphasis on youth levels”. This background guide has been designed to help you get started on your research. However, this document shouldn’t be your only source of research. Building upon the outlook presented by this guide, you are expected to carry out your own research to promote effective and fun debate, given the vague matter of substance under discussion.



# **LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD**



Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Executive Board at any time prior to or during the conference in case you have any queries about the agenda or the rules of procedure. We are here to help you during the conference at all times. We request the delegates to not view this conference as a zero-sum game. Model UN conferences are collaborative rather than competitive and we would like to keep this spirit alive during our committee.

With that being said, we wish you all good luck and eagerly look forward to the conference.

With warm regards,

Chairperson: Siva Narayan

Vice Chairperson: Shivank Talwar (Shivanktalwar@gmail.com)



# ABOUT FIFA



**FIFA** (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) is the world governing body of association football (soccer), founded in Paris in 1904. FIFA is headquartered in Zürich, and its membership includes more than 200 national football associations. As association football's governing authority, FIFA sets the rules of play, establishes standards for refereeing and coaching, oversees international player transfers, organizes the World Cup (both men's and women's) and other international tournaments, and promotes the global development of the sport.



# ABOUT FIFA



FIFA is led by a secretary-general who oversees the organization's operations. The FIFA Council, a strategic oversight body consisting of 37 members, appoints the secretary-general. The FIFA Council is headed by a president and eight vice presidents. Members are elected to four-year terms and may serve no more than three terms. The main legislative body is the FIFA Congress, and each of the national organizations has one delegate in the Congress. The Congress elects the president, approves the budget, and chooses the location of future World Cup tournaments. The Football Tribunal, created in 2021, resolves disputes and makes decisions on regulatory applications. The universal rules that govern the play of football are independently maintained by the International Football Association Board (IFAB), the organization that determines which rules to introduce or discontinue. FIFA joined the IFAB in 1913 and holds half of the votes (the other half are controlled by England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). Each national association belongs to one of six regional confederations, covering Africa (CAF), Asia (AFC), Europe (UEFA), South America (CONMEBOL), Oceania (OFC), and North America, Central America, and the Caribbean (CONCACAF).



# **AN OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA :**



***Agenda: "Discussion on the creation of an Anti-Doping framework in international football with special emphasis on youth levels"***

The use of performance-enhancing drugs by teams and individual players had been suspected since at least the 1930s; FIFA introduced drug tests in 1966, and occasionally drug users were uncovered, such as Willie Johnston of Scotland at the 1978 World Cup finals. But FIFA regulations were tightened in the 1980s after the sharp rise in offenses among Olympic athletes, the appearance of new drugs such as the steroid nandrolone, and the use of drugs by stars such as Argentina's Diego Maradona in 1994. While FIFA has authorized lengthy worldwide bans of players who fail drug tests, discrepancies remain between nations and confederations over the intensity of testing and the legal status of specific drugs.



# **AN OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA : (CONT.)**



While elite professional football has increasingly robust anti-doping measures, youth football—especially at grassroots and development levels—remains vulnerable. This agenda invites delegates to explore how FIFA and its member associations can take more proactive and coordinated steps to prevent doping, educate young players, and ensure that the integrity of the game is protected from the earliest stages of a player's career.

At the heart of this discussion is the need to balance fairness, health, and player protection. Youth athletes are uniquely susceptible to the pressures of performance, peer influence, and misinformation about supplements or banned substances. They may also lack the education and support systems that adult professionals have access to. As such, this committee is tasked with considering how international frameworks—like the World Anti-Doping Code, FIFA's regulations, and the UNESCO Convention—can be better implemented or adapted for youth-specific contexts. Delegates will also need to assess how FIFA can work with governments, confederations, and national federations to improve testing, education, and ethical oversight across all levels of the sport.



# GLOBAL ANTI-DOPING FRAMEWORK



At the international level, anti-doping efforts are coordinated by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The World Anti-Doping Code (the Code) is a unified set of rules that applies to all sports and countries. Sports organizations (like FIFA) and National Olympic Committees adopt the Code, which defines prohibited substances/methods and standardizes testing procedures. WADA monitors compliance and maintains the Global Prohibited List.

In 2005, UNESCO adopted the International Convention against Doping in Sport, a nearly-universal treaty. Under this Convention, States Parties commit to harmonize anti-doping laws and cooperate internationally. For example, each country “undertakes to adopt appropriate measures” – such as legislation, regulations or policies – to implement anti-doping. The treaty explicitly promotes education: it requires governments to support anti-doping education and training programs that inform athletes and support personnel about the ethical and health harms of doping.

In practice, most countries have National Anti-Doping Organizations (NADOs) that carry out testing and education. Sports governing bodies (like FIFA and its confederations) enforce the WADA Code via their own regulations and testing at competitions. The UNESCO Convention and the Code together ensure broad coverage: UNESCO treaty membership is nearly universal, making it “the second most ratified of all UNESCO treaties.” This global framework provides a foundation for football’s own anti-doping policies.



# **FIFA'S ANTI-DOPING REGULATIONS AND EFFORTS**



FIFA has its own Anti-Doping Regulations (ADR), updated in 2021 to align with the latest WADA Code. The ADR establish FIFA's testing processes and sanctions for doping violations. Notably, the 2021 ADR introduced a special category for minors and inexperienced players. This recognizes that young players (and those without international experience) face different circumstances. FIFA defines "protected persons" as athletes who are minors or who lack high-level experience. Under the ADR, protected persons can receive reduced sanctions and a relaxed burden of proof if they violate anti-doping rules. This reflects both concern for young athletes' welfare and the idea that youth might lack awareness.



# **FIFA'S ANTI-DOPING REGULATIONS AND EFFORTS**



FIFA's Anti-Doping Unit conducts tests at major tournaments. The FIFA Anti-Doping Report 2023 highlights significant efforts: for example, FIFA expanded testing at youth World Cups (U-17 and U-20) in 2023, adding more out-of-competition tests and introducing dry-blood-spot testing for youth players. In that year FIFA conducted 1,592 doping tests (2,616 samples) across seven competitions, finding only one Adverse Analytical Finding (and it had a legitimate Therapeutic Use Exemption). FIFA also ramped up testing for women's competitions, and worked with confederations (e.g. an agreement with CONCACAF) to multiply testing eightfold. These actions show FIFA treating anti-doping as a "central pillar" of the sport's integrity.

FIFA's ADR also stress education. The 2021 revisions added an expanded definition of "education" and called for stronger anti-doping education of all stakeholders. In practice, FIFA and confederations hold workshops and share educational materials (e.g. about the testing process and athletes' responsibilities) to build awareness. For example, FIFA reports collaborating on training programs with NADOs and confederations to strengthen local anti-doping efforts.



# DOPING IN FOOTBALL



Historically, football has seen relatively few doping scandals compared to sports like cycling or track and field. Testing tends to focus on major tournaments (World Cups, Champions League, etc.), while lower levels see little testing. Nevertheless, the risk remains: elite footballers may try performance enhancers (e.g. stimulants) or recreational drugs, and even young hopefuls might experiment. Football authorities, like all sports, must guard against such behaviour.

Anti-doping in football is governed not only by FIFA but also by continental confederations and national associations. Under WADA rules, football is subject to WADA inspections of its anti-doping system. FIFA's alignment with WADA means that any footballer (pro or amateur) could, in theory, be tested under FIFA's regime or a National Anti-Doping Organization. In practice, however, youth football (especially below national youth teams) often lacks routine testing. This creates a policy gap: minors may use performance aids with little chance of detection unless they reach high-level competitions.



# **YOUTH ATHLETES AND DOPING**



Youth players deserve special focus for several reasons. Biologically and socially, minors are still developing physically and mentally. They may lack full understanding of doping risks, and they may be under pressure from coaches or parents. A World Anti-Doping Agency study (“Operation Refuge”) found that minors who doped often cited external pressure: e.g., young female athletes pressured by coaches to stay under ideal weight were driven to use diuretics or other substances. In short, the drive to succeed and “make it” in football can push impressionable youth toward risky shortcuts.

While comprehensive global data on football-specific youth doping are scarce, broad data reveal the scope of the issue across sports. For instance, WADA reports that 1,500+ positive doping tests involved over 1,400 minors since 2012. Among those, the youngest athlete tested was only 8 years old, and the youngest sanctioned was 12. Diuretics, stimulants and anabolic steroids were the most common substances in these cases. Sport Integrity Australia (the Australian NADO) notes that since 2012 there were 1,518 adverse findings against 1,416 minors, reflecting similar trends. Most of these cases originated in countries like Russia, India, China (often in weightlifting, athletics, etc. – not football), but they underscore that doping among teenagers and even pre-teens is a reality.



# **YOUTH ATHLETES AND DOPING**



Both WADA and FIFA recognize that minors are different. As FIFA's rules state, a "protected person" (a minor or inexperienced athlete) receives more lenient treatment for first-time doping offenses. Similarly, the WADA Code defines protected persons (under age 16, and 16–17 with parental consent) to allow reduced sanctions in case of inadvertent doping. This reflects the idea that a child's violation may stem more from ignorance or pressure than from intent to cheat. For example, Sport Integrity Australia explains that minors under 18 are mostly classified as protected persons and are treated differently in the anti-doping process.

Operation Refuge and follow-up reports highlight the heavy personal toll on young athletes who are sanctioned. One WADA statement noted the "deep trauma and isolation" experienced by minors after a doping violation. This underlines that strict punishments alone may cause harm; child welfare and rehabilitation must also be considered.



# **YOUTH ATHLETES AND DOPING**



Interestingly, available data suggest youth players are tested mainly in competition. Sport Integrity Australia reports that minors were tested with no advance notice 60% of the time in competition, making them twice as likely to be caught doping in-competition than out-of-competition. This may be because out-of-competition programs are harder to run at the grassroots level. In FIFA's tournaments (like U-17 and U-20 World Cups), this has begun to change: FIFA now includes out-of-competition tests and even innovative dry-blood-spot tests for youth players



# EDUCATION AND PREVENTION FOR YOUTH



Experts agree that education is critical. UNESCO's Convention specifically calls on States to implement anti-doping education covering "the harm of doping to the ethical values of sport" and its health consequences. FIFA and confederations are encouraged to do the same within football. In practice, this means school and club programs, coach training, and awareness campaigns. Without early education, minors may not know the rules or risks before trying prohibited substances.

Some initiatives already target youth. For example, Germany's National Anti-Doping Agency launched "Together Against Doping" (Gemeinsam gegen Doping), a modular education program for athletes of all ages. It offers units on topics from basic anti-doping facts to nutrition and supplements, allowing young players to learn in an age-appropriate way. WADA also provides resources like interactive e-learning courses and teacher toolkits aimed at making young athletes aware of anti-doping. Sport Integrity Australia (SIA) reports that it requires underage athletes to complete education before any testing is done – ensuring that youth know their rights and responsibilities before being part of a control. SIA even offers virtual reality "doping-control simulations" so young athletes can practice the process and alleviate anxiety.



# **EDUCATION AND PREVENTION FOR YOUTH**



Besides facts about the Prohibited List, education emphasizes values: fair play, health, and integrity. UNESCO and WADA promote values-based education, teaching athletes to see doping as contrary to the spirit of sport. Coaches and schools can play a role in instilling these values early, so children grow up viewing performance enhancers as unacceptable shortcuts.



# LEGAL AND POLICY GAPS



Despite strong international frameworks, many gaps remain. FIFA's anti-doping program naturally covers its own competitions, but grassroots youth leagues and clubs often lack formal policies or testing. In many countries, doping laws focus on elite sport and may not explicitly address youth sport. This can leave enforcement spotty and education non-mandatory.

As SIA notes, there is limited academic research on why minors dope. Without data on youth motivations and local prevalence (especially in football), it's hard to design targeted prevention. This knowledge gap means policies may not address the root causes (e.g. coach behavior, peer influence).

Current rules tend to penalize infractions (suspensions, bans) even for minors. Critics argue there is a policy gap in providing support: minors need counseling and rehabilitation more than punishment. The WADA Code's reduced sanctions for minors help, but there is no uniform requirement that sport bodies assist suspended youth in returning to clean sport.



# LEGAL AND POLICY GAPS



Not all football associations have the same level of anti-doping capacity. Wealthier nations and confederations may have more resources for youth education and testing, while poorer countries might struggle. FIFA could help set minimum standards and support education funding across all regions.

Some banned substances (stimulants, diuretics) are also abused recreationally or medically. Youth might inadvertently ingest them (e.g. through contaminated supplements). More precise regulations and awareness about these “substances of abuse” (as FIFA ADR now calls them) are needed, especially for minors who might use ADHD medications or diet pills.



# CASE EXAMPLES:



The 2023 FIFA U-17 and U-20 World Cups saw expanded anti-doping measures. Introducing innovative testing methods (e.g. dried blood spots) at these youth events was a first. These tournaments serve as case studies: they show FIFA's ability to apply strict controls to adolescents in a high-stakes setting. Other youth competitions could follow suit.

While not football-specific, WADA's 2024 Operation Refuge study (summarized above) has put youth doping on the global agenda. Its findings (e.g. the youngest sanctioned was 12) have motivated some sports bodies to act. FIFA Council delegates might use these findings to argue for more youth protection measures in football.

Australia's approach illustrates best practices. SIA pairs testing with mandatory education: no minor is tested without first completing an anti-doping education program. They also ensure parents or guardians are involved in testing procedures for under-18s. Germany's NADA, as mentioned, provides flexible educational modules for young athletes. Such examples show how national policies can integrate youth-specific anti-doping.



## **CASE EXAMPLES:**



Policies often focus on athletes, but coaches and doctors can drive youth doping. WADA and governments could consider making anti-doping education or certification mandatory for youth coaches. In one testimonial, a young athlete described how coaches pushed girls to slow down puberty by doping, showing that coach training is a critical gap. Model FIFA Council delegates might propose initiatives to educate coaches and parents, not just players.