



Federation of the European
Sporting Goods Industry

FESI PLAYBOOK

SHAPING THE FUTURE EUROPEAN POLICY
AGENDA

A MANIFESTO 2024-2029



JANUARY 2024

ABOUT FESI

COMPANIES IN EUROPE

>1800

Founded in 1960 FESI, the Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry, is the unique pre-competitive platform representing the interests of the sporting goods industry in Europe, advancing its members' priorities and promoting initiatives that benefit the sector, EU citizens and the society as a whole.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

> 90

Located in Brussels, at the core of the European institutions, FESI is the unique stakeholder that provides sporting goods companies with the possibility to leverage their expertise into one steady and coherent voice in Brussels, allowing them to benefit from the many advantages offered by the EU's single market of nearly 500 million consumers.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

>10

FESI represents the interests of approximately 1.800 sporting goods manufacturers (85% of the European market) through its National Sporting Goods Industry Federations and its directly affiliated member companies. 70-75% of FESI's membership is made up of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. In total, the European Sporting Goods Industry employs over 700.000 EU citizens and has an annual turnover of some €81 billion.



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RECOMMENDATIONS



FOREWORD

Neil Narriman - FESI President

When I was elected president of FESI in December of 2019, no one could have imagined the multitude of ways in which the world and the sporting goods industry would be turned upside down in a matter of months. The COVID-19 pandemic shook our society down to its core, stripping away the joys and freedoms we had taken for granted for decades. And yet, amidst the chaos and intensifying solitude of our homes, hope and new opportunities arose.

The pandemic showed that for too long Europe has ignored the importance of our health and well-being, and the instrumental role sport plays in promoting these essential aspects. Indeed, sport emerged as a salvation in one of our most difficult periods, offering solace, hope and a way out.

In these trying times, we learned to adapt and innovate. Our industry embraced e-commerce, sustainable practices, and digital marketing, catering to society's needs in new and future-proof ways. We also recognised the importance of solidarity, working closely with our partners and government bodies to navigate the turbulent times.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we see a landscape filled with opportunities to rebuild and reshape our society. The pandemic stressed the need and desire for a more active Europe, to ensure peace of mind and a healthier collective. What is more, the EU, as a collective entity, has shown resilience and unity. As is our responsibility, we would like to remind the future policy leaders of our industry's potential to contribute significantly to the EU's economic recovery, foster sustainability, and promote the accessibility of sport for all.

As President of FESI, I believe that our future is bright. We envision a Europe where sport thrives, where our industry flourishes, and where the benefits of sport are accessible to all, regardless of age, background, or ability.



In light of the upcoming European elections, we will be presented with renewed opportunities to fight for policies that support inclusivity in sport and that can be enjoyed in safe environments built through sustainable means.

That is why, over the next five years, we want to ensure that European policy is directed at building a prosperous future, which can only be achieved through supporting the green transition.

Europe's future must also set out a robust plan to become a digital leader. With the rise of virtual worlds, the European Union must be ready to seize impending opportunities, but equally, it must be prepared to address the mountain of challenges that such a novel field presents. These changes can only be made by adopting harmonised policies at EU level, thus putting an end to the burdensome patchwork of national legislations.

In conclusion, I wish to send a clear message to the future decision-makers of Europe, emphasising our unwavering commitment to fostering a more sustainable and robust sporting goods industry for a healthier and more resilient society. I therefore hope to see continued and enhanced cooperation in shaping policies that will advance Europe's position as a global leader and innovator over the next five years. Together, let us chart a course towards a greener and stronger future for all.

1.DRIVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS

THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY NEEDS SUPPORTIVE POLICIES, SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION, AND COLLABORATION TO ACCELERATE A COMPETITIVE GREEN TRANSITION

Accelerating the green transition with effective tools

Under the upcoming European mandate, decisive policies are required to accelerate the green transition within the sporting goods industry. To achieve this, FESI calls for the EU to **ensure policy coherence and reduce administrative burdens and inconsistencies** that may hinder the widespread adoption of sustainable practices. This includes facilitating access to recycled materials, promoting eco-design principles, and implementing an updated Textile Labelling Regulation that accommodates digital labels and provides modern and harmonised rules.

Equally important is the need to develop legislation that actively encourages companies to invest in green initiatives through the **creation of incentives for sustainable practices and innovation**. Regulatory coherence is crucial to streamlining operations, while fostering public-private partnerships will harness collective expertise and resources, promoting collaborative efforts in research and development, and the adoption of green technologies. These comprehensive measures will be instrumental in advancing the sporting goods industry toward a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

Unlocking the potential of the internal market and put an end to 27 mini-circular economies

The sporting goods industry faces a significant hurdle in its endeavour to fulfill the objectives of the EU Green Deal: a patchwork of conflicting and misaligned national initiatives, incentivising the continuation of the status quo. These national initiatives, spanning from diverging eco-modulation fees under EPR schemes, to national sorting and eco-sorting labels, as well intended as they may be, pose a significant challenge to completing a circular economy by preventing the scaling of sustainable solutions, the creation of a seamless single market and the provision of clear and unified information to European consumers. For these reasons, we call for regulatory harmonisation as a solution to streamline operations, reduce compliance costs, and reinforce the integrity of the single market, ultimately enabling a more scalable EU-wide green transition and a circular economy. Additionally, we urge the European Commission to **focus on the correct enforcement of existing EU legislation** vis-à-vis Member States and **supporting the sector with additional guidance on adopted Green Deal legislation** to ensure all these new regulations are correctly applied and do not create unforeseen additional rules for operators.



2.FOSTERING THE DIGITAL AGE

THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY NEEDS LEGAL CERTAINTY AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR A SAFER DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Protecting Intellectual Property, consumers and brands' assets in Virtual Worlds

FESI supports the European Union to lead the way in fostering the development of virtual worlds. We firmly believe that embracing these emerging digital domains has the potential to revolutionise fan engagement, create fresh revenue streams for businesses, and enhance inclusivity in sport participation. The EU must **collaborate with industry stakeholders to establish guidelines that prioritise user safety, data privacy, and brands' assets protection within these virtual spaces**. By supporting innovative projects that combine the physical and digital dimensions of sport, the EU can create unprecedented opportunities for European sporting goods manufacturers and enhance Europe's global position as a hub for cutting-edge sporting experiences. The EU's strategy on Web 4.0 and virtual worlds marks a progressive step towards harnessing the potential of the digital era for various industries, including the sporting goods sector.

By recognising the transformative power of virtual experiences, the EU demonstrates its commitment to fostering innovation and inclusive engagement. However, the current strategy may not be sufficient when it comes to robust Intellectual Property (IP) protection. The Metaverse, being a complex and rapidly evolving digital landscape, poses unique challenges regarding IP rights enforcement. These challenges include issues related to copyright infringement, brand misuse, and the unauthorised replication of patented technologies. Therefore, to fully safeguard the interests of businesses, creators, and innovators in the digital realm, it is imperative for the EU to **prioritise more robust and binding measures for IP protection**. Addressing both the innovative opportunities of the Metaverse and the importance of preserving IP rights will help drive digital transformation of the EU economy and society.

Ensuring that what is illegal offline is also illegal online

To foster innovation and safeguard the competitiveness of the European sporting goods industry, FESI calls upon the EU to reinforce the protection of Intellectual Property (IP) rights in the digital realm. Establishing a robust and agile framework for IP protection is essential to combat counterfeiting, both online and offline, as well as the unauthorised use of patented technologies. Effective online enforcement of IP rights by the EU will create an environment conducive to investment in research and development, promoting creativity, and empowering European sporting goods companies to thrive in the global marketplace. Additionally, the EU should **promote education and awareness campaigns that underscore the significance of IP protection in the digital age and its positive impact on sustaining innovation.**

The Digital Services Act (DSA) and the IP Toolbox represent commendable efforts by the EU to protect Intellectual Property (IP) rights and to address the challenges posed by the digital landscape. However, while these measures constitute a positive step forward, they are unfortunately not sufficient to effectively combat the pervasive issue of counterfeiting and the presence of fake and dangerous products, both online and offline. The scale and complexity of counterfeiting operations demand a more comprehensive and dynamic approach, involving cooperation between stakeholders, preventive and proactive actions from intermediaries, robust enforcement mechanisms, and innovative technologies. **Strengthening the coordination between law enforcement agencies, e-commerce platforms, and IP rights holders** is essential to swiftly identify and remove counterfeited products from the market. Only through a multifaceted strategy that combines legislative action, international collaboration, and cutting-edge technology can the EU effectively safeguard consumers, protect legitimate businesses, and ensure the integrity of the digital marketplace.



3. PAVING THE WAY TO TRADE PROSPERITY

THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY NEEDS COMPREHENSIVE FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS FOR A MORE OUTWARD-ORIENTED EUROPEAN ECONOMY

Adopting a comprehensive trade approach for a more resilient economy

FESI urges the newly elected Members of the European Parliament to recognise the pressing need to resolutely deliver on the EU's ambitious trade agenda, particularly at the bilateral level. We emphasise the critical importance of **concluding ongoing trade negotiations and actively engaging in open discussions with potential new trade partners**. This proactive approach is vital to expanding market access and promoting economic growth. Equally significant is the imperative to diversify supply chains, especially in light of recent global disruptions that have underscored the vulnerability of concentrated supply sources. **Achieving supply chain diversification** can be facilitated thanks to the ratification of Free Trade Agreements with simpler and more flexible rules of origin. By endorsing supply chain diversification, the EU can help fortify the resilience of our industry and the broader European business ecosystem. We stress the overarching goal of achieving free, fair, and sustainable trade that extends not only to businesses within Europe but also to those beyond our borders. By promoting such a comprehensive approach to international trade, we can enable the sporting goods industry to thrive and, in doing so, make a meaningful contribution to the global economic landscape.



Bolstering fair trade through open markets

In an era where protectionism is on the rise worldwide, FESI asks that the EU take a resolute stance in **combating market access barriers in third countries**. Governments around the globe are increasingly adopting regulations and practices that undermine the fundamental principles of free trade, often disregarding established WTO laws and norms. The EU must assume a leadership role in championing the interests of its businesses. By **advocating for a fair-trade environment**, the European Commission can ensure that European companies are competing on a level playing field globally. This commitment is crucial not only for the prosperity of our industry but also for the overall economic well-being of the European economy. The European Commission's unwavering support in this endeavour would consequently help protect the rights and interests of European companies, foster global economic stability, and, most importantly, ensure that international markets remain open, accessible, and in accordance with established international trade norms.

4. BUILDING A FUTURE-PROOF PRODUCT COMPLIANCE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY NEEDS A MORE INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO CONSUMER PROTECTION TAILORED TO TODAY'S REALITIES

Applying the existing legislative framework in accordance with the principle of proportionality and science-based evidence

FESI recognises the paramount importance of a clear and comprehensive legislative framework, ensuring the safety of all products made available to consumers on the European market. However, while we fully endorse the need for robust regulations that safeguard consumers, we believe that it is equally critical to approach this task with an eye toward efficiency and coherence. To ensure consumer protection, we advocate for a mindful approach that **avoids unnecessary duplication of regulatory efforts**. Rather than reinventing the regulatory wheel, the EU should prioritise the quality and effectiveness of legislation over quantity. Coherence within the legislative framework must be of utmost importance. A harmonised set of regulations will ensure consistency, thereby strengthening the foundation of consumer safety and industry compliance. **Science-based evidence should be the cornerstone of the EU's legislative decisions**, allowing for a well-informed and sound approach to product safety. Proportionality must therefore guide our efforts to optimise consumer safety without impeding innovation or imposing undue burdens on the industry.

Introducing digital labels for stronger and more sustainable consumer protection

FESI calls upon EU policymakers to consistently **explore the merits of digital labelling as an innovative and forward-thinking alternative to traditional physical labels**. Recent studies have revealed that a large majority of consumers promptly discard product labels after purchase, rendering these labels ineffective for conveying vital information over a product's lifetime. E-labeling presents a solution that can address this challenge effectively. It ensures that essential information and instructions remain accessible, even to second-hand buyers, thus contributing to enhanced product safety and consumer awareness. Adopting digital labelling not only has the potential to reduce waste but also offers the advantage of providing consistently up-to-date information in an easily readable format. It is imperative to address the inconsistencies that have emerged in the European Commission's previous regulatory proposals, where certain regulations have allowed for e-labelling, while others have not. We urge European policymakers to **align these regulations**, recognising the advantages of e-labeling in its capacity to enhance both environmental sustainability and consumer empowerment. By embracing digital labelling, we can take a significant step forward in product compliance and consumer protection.



5. PROMOTING ACTIVE LIFESTYLES ACROSS EUROPE

THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY NEEDS SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO BE ENSHRINED AS ESSENTIAL PILLARS OF A HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Advancing inclusivity in sport

FESI calls upon the EU to **ensure that sport and physical activity become accessible and welcoming to all individuals**, regardless of gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic, or socio-economic background. We call on EU decision-makers to **foster the creation of inclusive sport environments** that cater to the needs of individuals with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, children, and other underrepresented groups. Additionally, we urge the EU to implement targeted policies and initiatives that not only encourage but also empower women's participation in sport. This involves breaking down gender barriers and actively promoting gender equality within sporting domains. By fostering a diverse and inclusive sporting landscape, the EU can unlock the potential of sport as a unifying force. In doing so, it will advance social cohesion and promote health and well-being for all European citizens.

Developing safe and sustainable sporting environments

FESI urges the EU to take proactive steps in promoting a culture of active lifestyles by **encouraging the development of safe and sustainable sport infrastructures across Europe**. Prioritising the creation and modernisation of sport facilities that cater to the diverse needs of the public, will allow the EU to champion the practice of sport and physical activity, thereby promoting overall well-being and social cohesion. Publicly accessible, barrier-free and well-designed sport infrastructures will serve as the cornerstone for inclusive engagement, enabling individuals of all ages, abilities, gender and backgrounds to partake safely in sport with confidence and enthusiasm. Safeguard mechanisms in sport, safe sport infrastructures including e.g., separate changing rooms in sport facilities or better lighting systems in streets, as well as a better provision of sport equipment for disabled people is indispensable. Here, the **establishment of well-defined EU standards** across Europe is imperative. Such standards will create an environment where people have the chance to engage in sport with confidence, dignity, and comfort, empowering them to fully participate and thrive in the sporting arena. Furthermore, investing in sustainability will ensure that these sport infrastructures stand as a testament to the EU's commitment to environmental responsibility. This commitment safeguards the future of sport, ensuring its accessibility and enjoyment for generations to come.



FESI'S 20 RECOMMENDATIONS



Sustainability

- 01** Ensure policy coherence and reduce administrative burdens & inconsistencies between legislations
- 02** Focus on the correct enforcement of existing EU legislation on sustainability
- 03** Provide implementation guidance for economic operators
- 04** Create incentives for sustainable practices



Digital

- 05** Collaborate with industry stakeholders to establish guidelines on virtual worlds
- 06** Prioritise more robust and binding measures for IP protection
- 07** Promote education and awareness campaigns on IP protection online
- 08** Strengthen coordination with law enforcement agencies, e-commerce platforms, and IPR holders



Trade

- 09** Conclude ongoing trade negotiations and open discussions with potential new trade partners
- 10** Achieve supply chain diversification
- 11** Combat market access barriers in third countries
- 12** Advocate for a fair-trade environment



Product Compliance

- 13** Avoid unnecessary duplication of regulatory efforts on product compliance legislation
- 14** Ensure EU legislative decisions are in accordance with science-based evidence
- 15** Explore the merits of digital labelling as an alternative to traditional physical labels
- 16** Align existing regulations on product compliance



Sport

- 17** Ensure sport becomes accessible and welcoming to all individuals
- 18** Foster the creation of inclusive sport environments
- 19** Encourage the development of safe and sustainable sport infrastructures across Europe
- 20** Establish well-defined EU standards for the safety of sport infrastructures

CONTACT

GET IN TOUCH WITH OUR TEAM!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION REGARDING THE PROPOSALS LAID OUT IN OUR MANIFESTO, FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT TO OUR BRUSSELS-BASED POLICY EXPERTS:



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