

# SPAIN

Capital: **Madrid** | Population: **48 million**

Lead body for sport development: **National Sports Council**



Government Support	C
Elite Sport Rank	17
Elite Sport Rank Per Capita	36

## Youth Sport Participation Grade **B+**

Known internationally for its accomplished FC Barcelona and Real Madrid football (soccer) teams, as well as the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup champions, Spain also has produced top athletes in basketball, cycling, tennis and other sports. Its success flows from high youth participation rates and club academy coaches renowned for developing talent. The federal government has more of an influence on sport governance than countries in northern Europe.

Housed within the federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the National Sports Council or the High Council for Sports ([Consejo Superior de Deportes, CSD](#)) is the government agency responsible for sport policy in Spain. The CSD is charged with the planning, promotion, and development of physical activity and sports while also serving as the connection between the government and Spanish Olympic Committee. The CSD works in coordination with local authorities, regional, state, and local governments, other ministerial bodies, universities and schools, and the private sector, including professional sports leagues, to execute strategies.

The [national sport policy](#), which includes objectives by the year 2030, aims to encourage sport and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle for youth and adults. The plan prioritizes: (a) support for school sports, (b) support for university sports, and (c) promoting physical activity for all to combat a sedentary lifestyle. Although the directives for sport are highly centralized within the CSD, the execution of grassroots or community sports is largely done through the 17 autonomous regions. The 17 regional governments are tasked with regulating sport at different levels, managing their own sport services, overseeing the territorial federations and clubs, organizing competitions, constructing facilities, and certifying sport qualifications for high-performing athletes. Each region governs differently. By law, town councils serving populations of more than 20,000 inhabitants are obligated to provide sport services for their citizens.

Sport in Spain is implemented through clubs, groups of clubs, sport federations, or professional leagues. Embedded within the sport structure and operating throughout the whole of the country are the National Sport Federations. Sport federations are private entities with the responsibility to promote their sport specialty and to design and carry out plans for top performing athletes. There are 65 national sport federations in Spain, 30 of which can send athletes to the Olympics and thus report to the [Spanish Olympic Committee](#).

The Olympic committee, in coordination with the national sport federations, the Sports Council, and the Ministry of Sport, have created a plan of care to promote high-performance athletes. [The Program of Care to the Sportsman](#) is designed to provide comprehensive services (medical, education, performance, etc.) to the most elite athletes aiming for international podium success. The qualification process for elite athletes is highly structured and driven by national laws that govern elite sport.

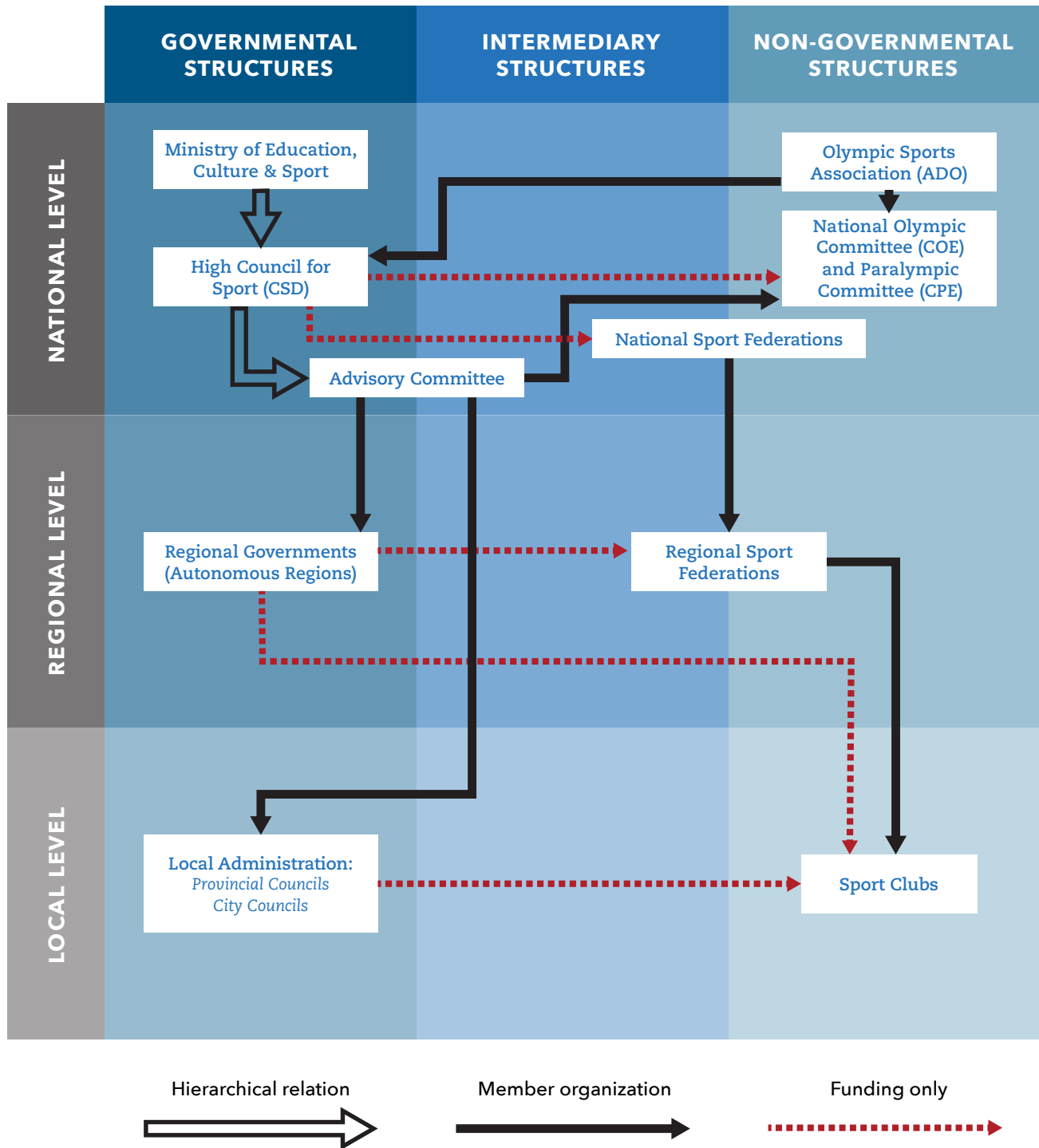
Spain relies heavily on public and private sector financing for sport. The 1992 Barcelona Olympics marked the first time the CSD accepted sponsorships. In 2021, the CSD granted €251 million (approximately \$276 million USD) to sport, health, and facilities — 95% more than in 2016. The government hopes sport will be one of 10 levers to revive the economy post-COVID.

Currently, there is no specific mechanism for athletes to report abuse. Allegations of illegal behavior are processed through Spain's police and judicial system.

## WHAT WE LIKE

Leo Messi. Xavi. Andrés Iniesta. Pau Gasol. Ricky Rubio. Alexia Putellas. Aitana Bonmatí. All are soccer and basketball stars that emerged from one club, FC Barcelona, which has developed game-changing talent in several sports through its **youth academies**. The club system is well-developed in Spain, divided into three legal types: 1) Elementary sport clubs that are simple organizations that offer local and regional competition and are subject to limited regulation, 2) Basic sport clubs that join more ambitious leagues; and 3) Sport Limited Companies, private entities that play at a professional level and are subject to different regulations.

# Sport Governance in Spain



Most grades in Youth Sport Participation and Government Support categories are drawn from a 2022 report prepared by the [Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance](#), a not-for-profit comprised of researchers, health professionals and stakeholders who work together to advance physical activity in children and adolescents around the world. Report cards for the 57 countries evaluated are based on a harmonized framework and standardized grading rubric, as reflected in the [Global Matrix 4.0](#). A grade of C, for instance, means a country is "succeeding with about half (47-53%) of children." The Government Support grade is given by experts in that country based on "evidence of leadership and commitment" by government "in providing physical activity opportunities or participation of children and adolescents through policy, legislation or regulation." No grades were offered in the Global Matrix report for Government Support for Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom and the U.S., so the Aspen Institute consulted experts in each of those country to offer one, using the same criteria. In the U.S., the "D" grade was the weighted grade offered by 90 experts engaged with Project Play, including youth sport industry leaders at the NextUp Conference hosted by LeagueApps.

The Elite Sport Rank and Elite Sport Rank Per Capita categories are drawn from [Greatest Sporting Nation](#), a website that analyzes elite international competition results in Olympic and other sports, not including those that involve animals or cars. The first category is a measure of the total number of athletes and teams in 2022 who performed well in competition, while the latter calculates results relative to a nation's total population.