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Sport Soft Power 2025 States Ranking by **PIDS** | Polish Institute for Sports Diplomacy



What is this ranking?

The ranking is the first in Central and Eastern Europe to assess the extent to which countries use sports to conduct policy and build their image and brand. The ranking was created as a result of the Polish Institute for Sports Diplomacy's (PIDS) original research on sport soft power.

Primary objective of this analysis is to determine the real power of sports diplomacy of selected states.

Study included 60 countries that consider sports as part of their soft power, i.e. their ability to build political power and a good reputation. 30 of analyzed countries are ranked in the Report.

The analysis takes into account: the degree to which sports are used in states' policies, sports sponsorship of public and private entities, the presence of sport executives of a given nationality in the decision-making bodies of international federations, the recognition and successes of athletes, and the involvement of states in organizing sporting events.

The PIDS ranking will be released annually, allowing trends to be identified and highlighting changes in the degree of states' involvement in conducting sports diplomacy.

CRITERION NO. 1

Number of representatives of
a country in the governing bodies
of international sports
organizations

CRITERION NO. 2

The degree of use of sport in the
state's foreign policy

CRITERION NO. 3

Sports performance of individual
athletes, national teams and sports
clubs

CRITERION NO. 4

Global recognition of athletes,
teams, sports tournaments,
leagues and events

CRITERION NO. 5

Organization of international
sports events

CRITERION NO. 6

Involvement of state and private
enterprises in sponsoring sports
organizations and big events



Evaluation criteria and methodology

The ranking presents **30 countries** with the **most developed sports diplomacy skills and those most actively building and using sport soft power**. In the process of creating the ranking, **6 criteria** were taken into account.

In **criterion No. 1**, points were awarded in proportion to the number of representatives of a country in the governing bodies of the analyzed international sports organizations (list in the following section).

In **criterion No. 2**, the authors individually evaluated the degree to which sports is used by a given country as a political tool and a way to shape its image.

Criterion No. 3 involves an analysis of sports performance in the selected sporting events (list in the following section). Points were awarded according to the importance and prestige of the event.

In **criterion No. 4**, the authors evaluated the global recognition of a country's athletes, teams, tournaments and events. They took into account their media coverage and marketing potential.

For **criterion No. 5**, the hosts of the most important and prestigious sporting events were analyzed. Host countries were awarded points depending on the importance and media coverage of a particular event. Additional points were awarded to the organizers of the Summer Olympic Games, as the largest sporting event. Points were also given to the hosts of the recent and future Winter Olympics, as well as the FIFA World Cups and Euros. This is to recognize the importance of these events over a period longer than it was conducted.

Criterion No. 6 is an analysis of the involvement of state and private companies from a given country in sponsorship of international sports. Points were awarded for sponsorship of selected events (in proportion to their importance and prestige) and sports organizations, as well as for the presence in the sponsors' grid of the most recognizable sport clubs and teams.

Due to the nature of the Report, higher points were given to companies that directly indicate their country of origin in their name.

Each criterion is rated separately on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means weakest and 10 means strongest potential.

The individual scores for each criterion make up the final score, which is a weighted average. The final score is a calculated index. The maximum index value is 10, and the lowest is 0. The index is presented to two decimal places.

Athletes representing England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are considered as representatives of the United Kingdom. In the case of Russia and Belarus, the results of athletes from these countries were included, even if they competed as neutral athletes.

The assessment is based on data for the year 2024. Setting specific time frames ensures transparency in assessments and maintains their real, current value.

At the same time, in the case of the Olympic Games (Summer and Winter), as well as the World and European football championships (as football is the most global and media-attracting sport), the results achieved at those events and the fact that they are hosted by a given country are taken into account for more than a year. This is due to the fact that these events resonate in public opinion and the offices of sports and political organizations for much longer than their duration.

PIDS Ranking 2025

Place	Country	Index
1.	UNITED STATES	9.57
2.	FRANCE	7.97
3.	ITALY	7.69
4.	UNITED KINGDOM	7.29
5.	CHINA	6.77
6.	SPAIN	6.72
7.	GERMANY	6.12
8.	QATAR	5.32
9.	JAPAN	5.04
10.	AUSTRALIA	5.00
11.	SAUDI ARABIA	4.99
12.	NETHERLANDS	4.69
13.	CANADA	4.21
14.	ARGENTINA	4.13
15.	SOUTH KOREA	3.97
16.	BRAZIL	3.98
17.	SWITZERLAND	3.81
18.	HUNGARY	3.61
19.	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	3.59
20.	AUSTRIA	3.44
21.	RUSSIA	3.37
22.	INDIA	3.31
23.	SWEDEN	3.24
24.	MEXICO	3.16
25.	BELGIUM	3.11
26.	POLAND	3.04
27.	SLOVENIA	2.95
28.	UKRAINE	2.94
29.	NORWAY	2.87
30.	CZECH REPUBLIC	2.80



United States is the most represented country in the decision-making bodies of sports organizations. Among the sponsors of major sports events, the largest number of companies originate from the United States. Well-known around the world are not only American athletes, but also domestic tournaments and leagues - NBA, NHL or NFL - and clubs. Americans won the medal classification of the Paris Olympics. In 2024 they also had multiple achievements in tennis, golf, athletics and swimming. United States also already gain political and image-related profits from hosting next year's FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. The low score in the criterion "Sports in state policy" is a result, among other things, of the system-based separation of sports from the state administration (there is no sports department). On the way of preparations for the organization of the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics, however, there will be an increase in the state's involvement in sports.



France owes its position primarily to the organization of the Summer Olympics (in addition, the French won more than 60 medals at the Games), as well as the high visibility of French athletes and prestigious competitions organized in the country, which have tourist and image significance - such as Tour de France, French Open. Ensuring that the Games are organized in a safe and smooth way was an important political goal for the French authorities, which is also reflected in the Ranking.



Italy has recorded numerous successes of its athletes in 2024 - especially in tennis, the most media-attracted individual sport. Italy's position is also influenced by an above-average commitment to hosting prestigious events at its soil (led by Giro d'Italia) and a high number of Italian representatives on the governing bodies of international sports federations. The Italians are also actively pursuing sports diplomacy, which is the responsibility of a government unit established for this purpose.



4th place - **United Kingdom**

The popularity of the Premier League and the clubs that play there gives UK wide access to media markets around the world. UK also have significant power in cabinet actions, heading many international organizations. Two Britons are running for the head of the IOC.

5th place - **China**

The Olympic year was an opportunity to confirm the high level of performance of Chinese athletes - they fought to the end to win the medal table of the Games. China is also pursuing a policy of sports investment - including sponsorships and so-called stadium diplomacy.

6th place - **Spain**

Real Madrid and FC Barcelona are among the most recognizable global sports brands. This is accompanied by successes - last year Real celebrated winning the Champions League, and Spain celebrated its players' European championship.

7th place - **Germany**

The hosts of the last EURO did not note spectacular sporting successes last year. But they have the second highest number of companies, after the US, sponsoring major sporting events and sports organizations.

8th place - **Qatar**

Sport remains one of Qatar's priority areas build its international recognition and good reputation. In addition to organizing events (in 2024 Qatar won the Asian Cup), the Qataris also rely on activities inside sports organizations, where - unlike Saudi Arabia, for example - it has numerous representatives.

9th place - **Japan**

Japan recorded solid results in all the analyzed criteria. It performed below average only in the organization of sporting events. Three Japanese brands decided not to renew their partnership agreements with the IOC.

10th place - **Australia**

The continental key of selecting members of the governing bodies of international sports federations means that Oceania's largest country is well represented there. Australia also has an active sports policy, translating into sporting successes - the Australians ranked 4th in the medal table of the last Olympics. Australian companies do not actually engage in sponsoring international sports.

Ranking PIDS 2025

Criterion No. 1 - TOP 15

Number of representatives of a country in the governing bodies of international sports organizations

Place	Country
1.	UNITED STATES
2.	UNITED KINGDOM
3.	AUSTRALIA
4.	CANADA
5.	ITALY
6.	SPAIN
7.	FRANCE
8.	JAPAN
9.	GERMANY
10.	CHINA
11.	QATAR
12.	SWEDEN
13.	BRAZIL
14.	NEW ZELAND
15.	SWITZERLAND

The number of representatives of a country in the governing bodies of international sports organizations is a typical “cabinet” element of sport soft power. The boards create the policy of a given federation and have a decisive influence on the granting of rights to organize sporting events or on the sale of broadcasting rights. According to the statutes of these organizations, the member's nationality should not provide benefits for the country from which the official comes. However, in many cases it determines the decisions made of the official in question. The presence of representatives of a given country in the federation's governing bodies also provides an opportunity to obtain information from insiders.

Weight in Rank: 1

Ranking PIDS 2025

Criterion No. 2 - TOP 15

Degree of use of sports in the foreign policy of the state

Place	Country
1.	SAUDI ARABIA
2.	QATAR
3.	CHINA
4.	RUSSIA
5.	HUNGARY
6.	FRANCE
7.	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
8.	AZERBAIJAN
9.	TÜRKIYE
10.	INDIA
11.	SOUTH KOREA
12.	AUSTRALIA
13.	UKRAINE
14.	UNITED KINGDOM
15.	ITALY

The conscious use of sports as a tool in the international politics illustrates the degree to which countries believe in the potential of sport soft power.

The sports-political agenda could be realized in different ways, such as funding sports clubs and events with public money, implementing a state sports strategy, involving sports in achieving the goals of the foreign policy or naturalizing athletes to improve country's sports performance. The degree of involvement of politicians in a country's acquisition of rights to host sports events should also be considered here.

Weight in Rank: 2

Ranking PIDS 2025

Criterion No. 3 - TOP 15

Sports performance of individual athletes, national teams and sports clubs from the country

Place	Country
1.	UNITED STATES
2.	ITALY
3.	UNITED KINGDOM
4.	SPAIN
5.	CHINA
6.	NETHERLANDS
7.	FRANCE
8.	JAPAN
9.	CANADA
10.	GERMANY
11.	SWITZERLAND
12.	INDIA
13.	AUSTRALIA
14.	UKRAINE
15.	SLOVENIA

The successes of individual athletes and sports clubs are one of the most important elements of a country's sport soft power. This is because they are an exemplification of its strength, easily understandable and easily comparable for the public. Sports performance is seen as evidence of a country's high level of organizational and financial capacities. Therefore, political and economic powers of a given country are often evaluated through the prism of sports power. A high place in the medal table of the Olympic Games is an object of desire and an expression of prestige.

Weight in Rank: 3

Ranking PIDS 2025

Criterion No. 4 - TOP 15

Global recognition of athletes, teams, sports tournaments and leagues from a country

Place	Country
1.	UNITED STATES
2.	UNITED KINGDOM
3.	SPAIN
4.	FRANCE
5.	BRAZIL
6.	ARGENTINA
7.	ITALY
8.	PORTUGAL
9.	GERMANY
10.	NETHERLANDS
11.	POLAND
12.	CHINA
13.	AUSTRALIA
14.	SERBIA
15.	SLOVENIA

A country's soft power also consists of elements that are de facto outside its control. These include the popularity and recognition of athletes, clubs, leagues or tournaments from a country. This is extremely important from the point of view of building a positive image and positive impressions among the citizens of other countries. This is reflected, for example, by increasingly bold attempts to use athletes in promotional campaigns of given countries, regions or cities. An important resource here is the social media reach of the athletes in question, which today has a high marketing value not only for themselves.

Weight in Rank: 3

Ranking PIDS 2025

Criterion No. 5 - TOP 15

Hosting international sporting events

Place	Country
1.	FRANCE
2.	UNITED STATES
3.	ITALY
4.	QATAR
5.	UNITED KINGDOM
6.	SPAIN
7.	CHINA
8.	SAUDI ARABIA
9.	CANADA
10.	GERMANY
11.	AUSTRALIA
12.	MEXICO
13.	HUNGARY
14.	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
15.	NETHERLANDS

From sporting giga-, mega- and major-events, periodic prestigious sporting events, to world championships in disciplines with lesser media coverage, hosting the international sporting events at every level represents the most important resource of national sports soft power. The organization of these events provides evidence of efficiency and diplomatic and negotiating competences. It also provides an opportunity to showcase a country's political and cultural agenda during an event. Major events could be also a boost to the economic and social development of the host country.

Weight in Rank: 4

Ranking PIDS 2025

Criterion No. 6 - TOP 15

Involvement of state-owned and private companies from the country in sponsoring international sports organizations and big sporting events

Place	Country
1.	UNITED STATES
2.	SAUDI ARABIA
3.	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
4.	GERMANY
5.	CHINA
6.	JAPAN
7.	QATAR
8.	SOUTH KOREA
9.	GREAT BRITAIN
10.	FRANCE
11.	SWITZERLAND
12.	AUSTRIA
13.	RWANDA
14.	NETHERLANDS
15.	SPAIN

Involvement in sports sponsorships goes beyond the classic understanding of sports marketing - both for private and state-owned companies. Sponsorship agreements related to major sporting events, organizations and the most recognizable football clubs should be considered in a broader context than just business. For some companies, sports sponsorship directly impacts the formation of the so-called national brand. Of particular importance here are companies building direct links to their country of origin, for example by including it in their name.

Weight in Rank: 3

International sports organizations included in the analysis

International Olympic Committee (IOC)

The continental Olympic committees (OCA, EOC, PSO, ANOCA, ONOC)

International Paralympic Committee (IPC)

Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC)

International Federation of Football (FIFA)

Continental soccer federations (AFC, UEFA, CONCACAF, CONMEBOL, CAF, OFC)

International Basketball Federation (FIBA)

International Volleyball Federation (FIVB)

International Handball Federation (IHF)

International Tennis Federation (ITF)

International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)

International Skating Union (ISU)

International Gymnastics Federation (FIG)

International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS)

International Cycling Union (UCI)

International Cricket Council (ICC)

World Athletics

World Rugby

World Aquatics

International Boxing Association (IBA), World Boxing

International Automobile Federation (FIA)

International Baseball and Softball Federation (WBSC)

International Chess Federation (FIDE)

International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF)

Association of Professional Tennis Professionals (ATP)

Women's Tennis Association (WTA)

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

The International Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne (CAS).

In addition, leagues, tournaments, boxing matches, races and sports clubs with the highest global recognition were also included in the analysis on the adopted criteria.

International sporting events included in the analysis

Olympic Games Paris 2024

Paralympic Games Paris 2024

UEFA Euro 2024

Copa America 2024

Africa Cup of Nations 2024

AFC Asian Cup 2024

UEFA Champions League, AFC Champions League, CAF Champions League, Copa Libertadores

FIFA Intercontinental Cup

Euroleague

Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon, US Open

ATP 1000 and WTA 1000 tournaments

ATP Finals, WTA Finals

Davis Cup, Billie Jean King Cup

Tour de France, Giro d'Italia, Vuelta a Espana

Diamond League

World T20 cricket championship

Formula 1 Grand Prix

WRC rallies

IIHF World Championships Top Division

World table tennis team championships

Chess Olympiad

World Cup in alpine skiing

Boxing events (Usyk vs Fury, Joshua vs Ngannou, Alvarez vs Munguia, Alvarez vs Berlanga, Joshua vs Dubois)

And other competitions of world championship rank - also in less media-attracted disciplines - and other prestigious events and tournaments.

60

Number of countries under
analysis

55

Number of international
sporting events organized in
2024 included in the analysis

13

That's how many sports
organizations and sporting
events included in the analysis
were supported by the largest
global sports sponsor in 2024 -
Emirates (airlines)

50

Number of US companies
sponsoring international sports

27%

Percentage of the overall
assessment of the sport soft
power of countries is their
involvement in the organization
of sporting events

2026

A year of hosting the World Cup
is already affecting the sports
soft power of host countries

ABOUT US

The **Polish Institute for Sports Diplomacy** is a research center (think-tank) that conducts analytical activities in the field of the relationship between sports and politics, with a particular focus on sports diplomacy. Sport and politics, as we understand them today, have been interacting since the early 20th century, but it is only in the last two decades that research into this phenomenon has intensified - in the public sphere as well as in the scientific sphere.

Sports diplomacy in the 21st century involves international policy actors, public institutions, sports organizations, athletes, fans, NGOs, advertisers and sponsors, and the public.

The research and analysis of the Polish Institute for Sports Diplomacy covers a broad spectrum of issues, which include the political science of sports, sports in international politics, the economics of sports, the sociology of sports, the cultural significance of sports, sports law, sports marketing and sponsorship, and technological development in sports.

The mission of the Polish Institute for Sports Diplomacy is to raise awareness of, and educate all participants in sports diplomacy about the processes involved and their importance.

The Institute's published commentaries, opinions, research, analysis and reports will help achieve these goals. The Polish Institute for Sports Diplomacy also provides expertise to sports organizations (federations and clubs), athletes and public institutions, in order to equip athletes and sports activists with basic knowledge of the current geopolitical situation, with regard to current and future sports events and their non-sports significance.

The Institute is also open to cooperation with academic centers, private entities and the media.

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The funds obtained will be used to develop the Institute



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