



FIFA – World Cup 2026

Topic A: Evaluating the impact of expanding the number of teams in FIFA tournaments.

Topic B: Regulating player release for international matches during congested club schedules.



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Letter From the Chair

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the FIFA Congress Committee in EMUN 2026! We are María Cristina Zinser and Nicolás de la Vega and we are glad to serve as your Chair and Co-Chair in this thought-provoking committee. We are excited to guide you through the engaging discussions as we delve into the challenges and opportunities in the exciting world of international football.

The topics of this session will portray the intricate connection that sports, diplomacy, and governance have. As we first examine the impact of expanding the number of teams in the FIFA tournaments, a fundamental decision that will carry out the implication of global representation, competitive balance, and feasibility. Second, we will address the pressing matter of regulating player release for international matches amid busy club schedules, where such issues not only include schedule and financial interests, but player welfare.

As members of such a thought-provoking committee, you are tasked with the responsibility of representing your countries' perspectives with integrity and accuracy whilst maintaining diplomacy. We encourage you to do a thorough investigation, not only investigating surface level, but your countries' economic, political, and cultural interests in football affairs. Your passionate participation as well as reasoned arguments and collaborative spirit will be the basis for a productive and fun committee experience.

While the topics discussed are serious and intricate, we hope that it is a fun and enjoyable process. We wish you the best in your preparation.

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Committee Overview

The FIFA Congress is the supreme legislative body of FIFA, which is composed of all the member associations (which are 211). The Congress makes key decisions on the rules regarding: international football, governance reforms, future of global football development, and tournament structures.

Having one annual meeting and extraordinary meetings when deemed necessary, the FIFA Congress has a key role in shaping policies. Not only do they affect government structures, but also ethics reforms, tournament structures, development initiatives, and player reforms.

Through the committee, delegates will explore negotiation, debate skills, research, and resolutions. Not only will they fully acquire an understanding of global sports, but an understanding of cooperation and diplomacy.

Recent Actions

Sports bind society together, so we must acknowledge the importance of the players and rules. In recent years, FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) has made imperative changes such as updating the World Cup from 32 to 48 teams in the 2026 tournament. The games will be hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Not only have they been expanding, but they are updating the format that includes 16 groups of 3 teams (with only the top 2 advancing), which differs from the original 4-team groups. Concerns have been raised about scheduling conflicts and burnout as well as sparking debates on the FIFA International Match Calendar and the balance between national teams and clubs. At the same time, they have implemented initiatives that improve global football development, increase funding, reform member associations, and expand youth competitions.



Background of the Topic

Topic A: Evaluating the impact of expanding the number of teams in FIFA tournaments.

Increasing the FIFA World Cup from 32 to 48 teams starting from 2026 is among the largest reforms since the inception of football. On the positive side, such a move reflects FIFA's commitment to global inclusivity and the realization that football has indeed become the world's game. Smaller nations then stand a better chance of qualifying, giving more fans throughout Africa, Asia, and the Middle East a sense of pride on a global stage. As examples, Panama's participation in 2018 and Morocco's run to the semifinals in 2022 showed that so-called "smaller" nations can compete with more established giants, evoking national pride and international attention.

However, the enlargement has been opposed. One of the reasons given is that introducing additional teams would dilute the quality of competition, leading to lopsided matches and less excitement in the early stages. Logistically, issues also persist: more teams would mean more matches, more costs for the host countries, and larger carbon footprints by virtue of travel. The United States, Mexico, and Canada would need to carry heavy infrastructural loads to host this new version.

From a commercial perspective, expansion is lucrative. The more games, the more television revenue, sponsorships, and ticket sales. FIFA predicts billions of dollars in additional revenue. But the question is, does the desire for finances obscure the principles of fair play and player welfare? For most clubs and leagues, this expansion could extend the football calendar still further, increasing the conflict between club and country.

Delegates must juggle competitiveness and inclusiveness, profit and equity, international representation and logistics. This debate extends beyond football—it reflects broader themes of globalization, geopolitics, and the business of sport.

Topic B: Regulating player release for international matches during congested club schedules.

Clubs versus national teams is now one of the source of tension in the modern game. Players are in the middle of a tug-of-war: their clubs pay their salaries and rely on them to bring home domestic and European titles, while their countries look to them for international duty and sometimes deep cultural and emotional loyalty.

The jammed football schedule has rendered urgency in this matter. Players sometimes compete in 60+ matches per season, league, continental cup (UEFA Champions League or Copa Libertadores), and international cup competitions (World Cup, continental cups, qualifiers, Nations League, etc.). Fatigue and injury are at record levels: stars such as Pedri and Neymar have had chronically recurring injuries that are frequently traceable to overexertion. FIFA's push to host more global events, including the expanded Club World Cup, presents yet another strain.

This creates a political and economic standoff. Clubs—especially in Europe—refuse to send their highest-paid stars for international matches, risking injury and losing millions in revenue. FIFPRO, the players' union globally, has repeatedly warned that burnout puts players' careers and mental health at risk. Small countries complain in the meantime that limiting player release would be discriminatory, as these countries rely heavily on star players who play mainly overseas.

FIFA has proposed amendments to the International Match Calendar, but the compromises are elusive. Is FIFA too strict in regulating clubs to allow national teams to access their best players? Should compensation systems be paid to clubs? Or should the players play a bigger role in controlling their participation?

This debate extends beyond football to labor rights, the economy, and international diplomacy. Whatever resolution is reached regarding this issue will determine the balance of power among FIFA, clubs, and players for decades to come.

Context of the Problem Worldwide

Expansion of Major Tournaments and Calendars

- FIFA has expanded the Men's World Cup from 32 to 48 teams, a change intended to promote inclusivity. Yet, it has raised concerns about fairness, travel demands, and more.
- This inclusion has had its criticism as clubs, leagues, players, and the players' representatives speak about their worries regarding scheduling and welfare. They've also talked about expanding the World Cup to 2029, despite people speaking against it.

Player Welfare Reforms and Public Tensions

- A consensus was achieved after a meeting in New York that announced players will get at least 72 hours of rest before national team duties and then a 21-day rest period after each season ends. FIFA also proposed to have more player representation in the FIFA tribunal.
- FIFA has claimed that the recent measure was to have a player-centered shift. They even accused the FIFPRO of using confrontational tactics and not engaging in respectful negotiation.

Backlash from Player Unions and FIFPRO

- FIFPRO accused FIFA of taking decisions by themselves, claiming they are ignoring players' concerns and governing bodies as it imposes schedule changes. Their evidence is that FIFPRO was not invited to the meeting in July 2025 where the period was struck, arguing that there is no consensus if a major player union wasn't included.
- The European Leagues as well as FIFPRO are prepared to take legal action against FIFA and have complained to the European Commission alleging abuse of power and anti-competitive practices.

Climate, Risk Management, and Extremes

- The 2026 World Cup has been faced with concerns regarding extreme temperatures. Experts claim that this has been a problem for FIFA's climate safety planning, especially since many of these matches were in peak heat hours.

- FIFA has adjusted some cooling break policies, yet these are regarded by critics as “insufficient” and “reactive” responses to global warming, raising further concerns about player safety and scheduling flexibility.

Questions To Consider

- What are some of the advantages of expanding FIFA tournaments to 48 teams? What are some disadvantages?
- How can the influences of modern politics and commerce affect FIFA’s international policies?
- How can smaller football teams and clubs benefit from the expansion?
- How can competitive balance be ensured with the expansion of new teams?
- How can FIFA regulate player release with the club scheduling conflicts and international matches?

Terms and Definitions

FIFPRO (Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels): the global union that represents professional football players and protects their rights on a worldwide basis.

UEFA Champions League: Europe’s prestigious annual club competition that features the top teams from European leagues.

Copa Libertadores: Organized by the CONMEBOL (Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol): it is the top South American club tournament (the equivalent to the Champions League in Europe).

FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association): The global governing body of football that organizes international tournaments, the most well-known being the World Cup.

European Leagues: An association coordinating and representing professional leagues across Europe.

CONMEBOL (Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol): The confederation that governs football in South America and organizes major tournaments (ex. Copa América).



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9. France
10. Brazil
11. Germany
12. Qatar
13. Saudi Arabia
14. Egypt
15. Nigeria
16. Japan
17. Australia
18. South Korea

Sources and Further Reading

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