



## THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ELITE SPORT IN MOROCCO: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

[Étapes de traitement de l'article]

Date de soumission : 28-06-2025 / Date de retour d'instruction : 05-07-2025 / Date de publication : 15-07-2025

**Soukayna KARYOUH**

Faculty of Educational Sciences, Mohammed V University in Rabat

✉ [soukayna.karyouh14@gmail.com](mailto:soukayna.karyouh14@gmail.com)

&

**Moulay Smail HAFIDI ALAOUI**

Faculty of Educational Sciences, Mohammed V University in Rabat,

University Professor, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco

✉ [hafidi.alaoui@um5.ac.ma](mailto:hafidi.alaoui@um5.ac.ma)

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate the obstacles facing Moroccan elite-level sport and to identify areas for improvement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with various sports experts, alongside a thorough documentary analysis of official sport-related materials. The study reveals that the institutionalization of elite-level sport in Morocco faces significant legal and organizational challenges. Legally, there is a lack of clear guidelines regarding the organization and functioning of sports in today's globalized context. Organizationally, the development of national elite-level sports is hindered by deficiencies in human, financial, infrastructural, and training resources. These challenges need to be addressed to improve the current state of elite-level sports in Morocco.

**Keywords:** institutionalization; elite-level sports; sports policy; governance; challenges.

## L'INSTITUTIONNALISATION DU SPORT DE HAUT NIVEAU AU MAROC : DEFIS ET PERSPECTIVES

**Résumé :** Le but de cette recherche est d'analyser d'une part les défis les plus criants des dysfonctionnements de notre sport d'excellence. Et identifier d'autre part les différents paramètres susceptibles d'améliorer la situation actuelle du sport de haut niveau au Maroc. Pour ce faire, nous nous sommes basés sur des entretiens semi directifs auprès des différents acteurs et dirigeants du sport de haut niveau national (manager sportif, directeur technique, juriste sportif, journaliste sportif, responsables administratifs, professeurs chercheurs).

Les principaux résultats de cette étude montrent que les défis dont

l'institutionnalisation du sport de haut niveau est confrontée sont d'ordre juridique et organisationnel : le premier se manifeste comme insuffisants ou incertains. Le deuxième aspect présente lui-même des maux qui ravagent le développement du sport de haut niveau national Marocain à savoir : une faiblesse au niveau des ressources humaines, financières, infrastructurels et de formations.

**Mots clés :** institutionnalisation, sport de haut niveau, politique sportive, défis.

## **Introduction**

For several years now, national elite-level sport in Morocco has faced a series of dysfunctions that hinder its institutionalization. A Royal Letter identified these dysfunctions, highlighting issues related to governance, infrastructure, financing, and training, and outlining the foundational principles of the strategy to be adopted. However, more than eleven years after its adoption, the Ministry of Youth and Sport estimates that only a small percentage of the actions have been implemented, leaving mass and competitive sports to suffer from the same problems (PolitiqueSportiveVF-2.pdf, n.d.).

In addition to these challenges, the Covid-19 health crisis, which has affected both Morocco and the world, has exacerbated the economic and institutional difficulties within the sports sector. This situation has had adverse effects on sports organizations and employees across all sectors of activity (Akari, 2021).

These obstacles have significantly affected national sports performance, which remains modest in both elite and mass sport. About elite-level sports, the focus of this study, the High Council of Accounts' report published in March 2022 noted a marked decline in the performance of Moroccan elite athletes, particularly in the Olympic Games, which serves as a key indicator of Moroccan sport's global standing. According to the same report, Morocco's representation at the Olympics has steadily declined, dropping from 61 athletes at the 2004 Athens Games to 49 athletes at the 2016 Rio Games, and then to just 48 athletes at the Tokyo 2020 Games. This is still lower than the 51 athletes who participated in the 2000 Sydney Games. Furthermore, the number of Olympic medals won by Moroccan athletes has also varied, with 3 medals (two gold and one silver) at the 2004 Athens Games, one bronze at Rio 2016, and one gold at Tokyo 2020.

Given these findings, it is essential to conduct nationwide surveys to identify the challenges hindering the institutionalization of elite-level sports in Morocco. It is also crucial to develop research protocols to examine the causes of dysfunction and the decline in elite-level sport, and to propose practical and effective solutions.

## **1. Methodology**

### **1.1. Type of study**

This study aims to assess the extent to which elite-level sport in Morocco meets the requirements for institutionalization and to identify the constraints hindering its



development.. To gather relevant information on these issues, we conducted field interviews to collect data and provide answers to the research questions.

### 1.2. Data collection instrument

Data collection methods differ in terms of researcher-participant interaction, resource requirements, the quantity of information collected, and the depth of insights obtained. In this study, we employed two primary data collection methods: a documentary review and semi-structured interviews

### 1.3. Sampling and analysis methods

Our sample includes 12 elite sport stakeholders, such as federation presidents, technical directors, sports lawyers, journalists, administrators, and academic researchers. In the first part of the survey, descriptive statistics were applied to the database constructed during the various survey phases to analyze the Moroccan elite sports movement. The results were expressed as percentages and presented in tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation. Additionally, a thematic analysis was conducted on the data gathered from the interviews to generate qualitative variables. These results will be used to confirm or refute the research hypotheses.

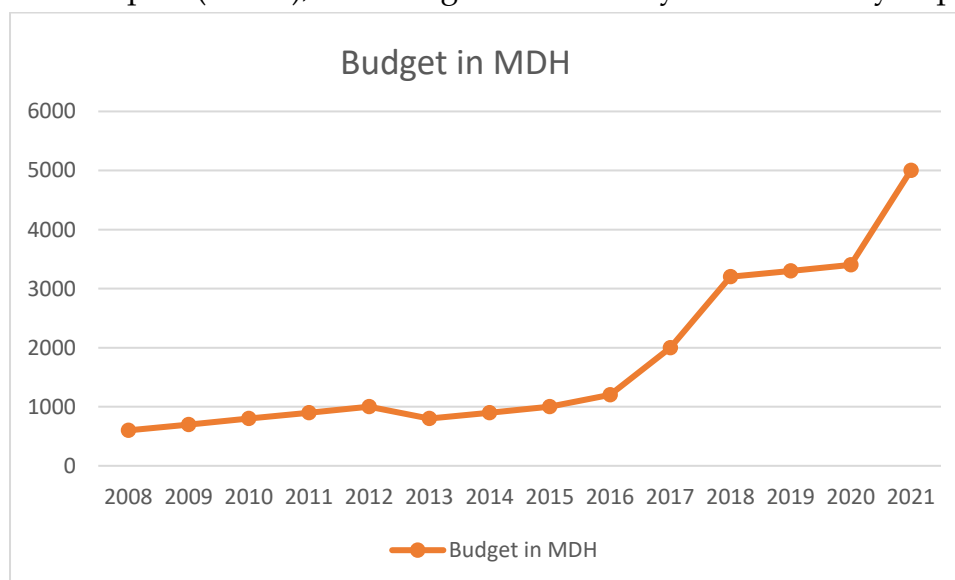
## 2. Results

### 2.1. Diagnosis of elite sport in MOROCCO

Numerous studies have been published about sports in Morocco. The investigations carried out focus primarily on economic, political, legal, and managerial aspects. These studies are based on documentary analysis and surveys conducted with officials from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and various sports federations.

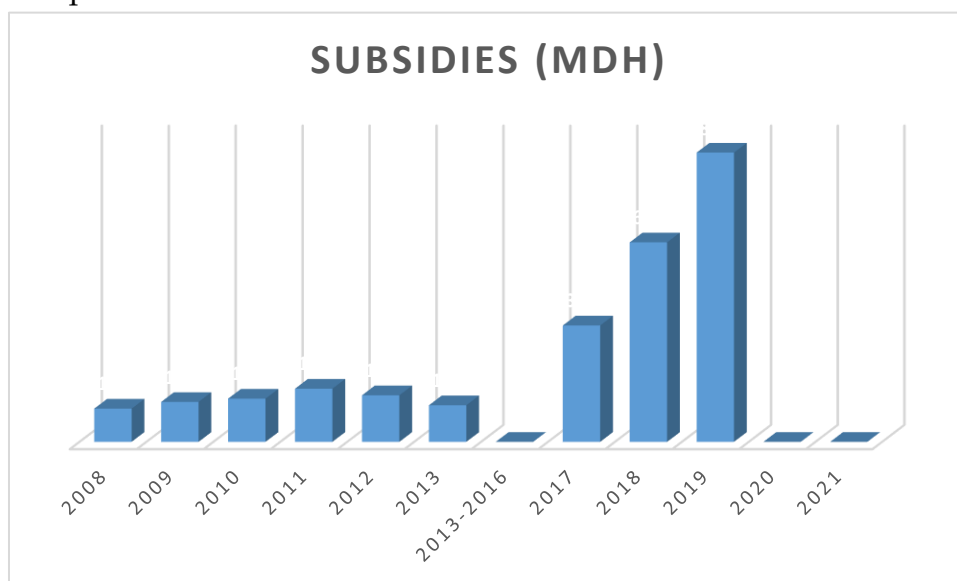
#### 2.1.1. Analysis of the budget allocated to sport in Morocco:

The following graphs illustrate the evolution of the budget allocated to sport in Morocco, particularly at the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Moroccan Royal Federation of Sport (FRMS), according to the Ministry's 2021 Activity Report.



**Figure 1: Evolution of the Ministry of Sports' budget in MDH.**

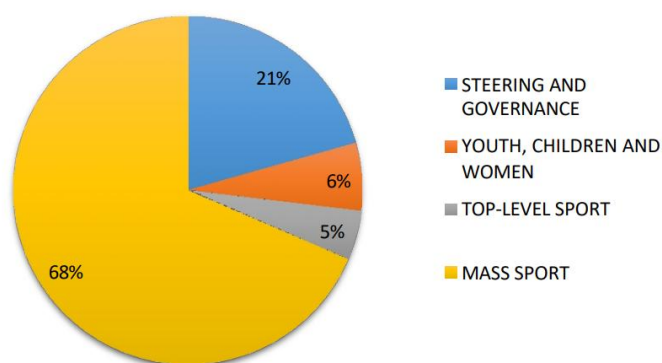
There has been a notable increase in the budget allocated to sport. For instance, in 2020, the budget was 252 million euros, which represents an increase of 10% compared to 2019.

**Figure 2: Evolution of subsidies granted by the FNDS to the FRSM in MDH.**

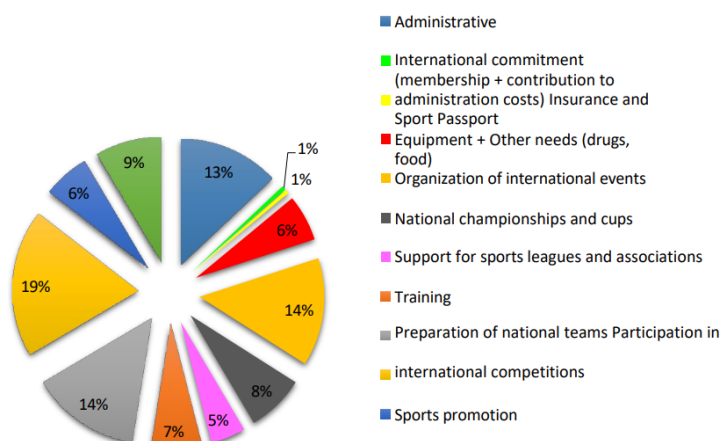
The graph demonstrates that the total amount of subsidies granted to the FRSM fluctuates, depending on the budgets allocated by the State and the FNDS's shareholding value. Football consistently receives the largest portion of these subsidies, with amounts steadily increasing (Akari & Ouaddaadaa, 2021).

### 2.1.2. Analysis of Ministry of Youth and Sports' expenditure according to the Finance Bill 2020:

The following graph shows that the budget allocated to elite-level sports is the lowest among the Ministry's investment programs, accounting for approximately 5%.

**Figure 3: Percentage of expenditure by the Ministry of Youth and Sports by program, according to PLF 2020.**

### 2.1.3. Analysis of expenditure at the level of the FRSM:



**Figure 4: Breakdown of the FRSM provisional budget by category for the year 2020.**

As shown in the figure, the FRSM allocates a significant portion of its budget to administrative expenses, equivalent to what is spent on preparing national teams and organizing sporting events (Ouaddaadaa, 2021).

## 2.2. Presentation of interview results :

The results of the interviews are structured around two main themes that emerged from the data: legal and organizational dimensions. These two aspects are critical to the institutionalization of elite-level sports in Morocco.

### 2.2.1. At legal level :

Morocco has made significant legislative progress in the field of sports. In response to concerns raised by both the population and the State, several important laws have been passed:

- Law 30.09 on physical education and sports,
- Law 09.09 to combat violence in stadiums,
- Law 97.12 on anti-doping.

These legislative reforms have enhanced the value of sports as a tool for performance, as well as for economic, social, and health contributions. They have particularly benefited elite-level sports by fostering the development of professionalism.

### 2.2.2. At organizational level:

#### ➤ Human resources challenges

The level of training for management and technical staff in the sports sector does not meet the professionalization requirements of the industry. Although the demand for qualified sports professionals is increasing, the supply remains insufficient to meet sectoral needs. Additionally, there are no specific training programs for elite-level athletes within the national education system. The multiplicity of stakeholders and their divergent interests further hinder the adoption of a unified strategy for sports development, limiting the full potential of Moroccan athletes.

#### ➤ Financing challenges

Interviewees highlighted that the budget of the Ministry of Youth and Sports has steadily increased from 1999 to 2021, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed

VI, demonstrating a strong commitment to promoting sports, particularly at the elite level. However, most of the funding for sports, including infrastructure development, subsidies to federations, management training, and preparation of elite athletes, still comes from the public sector. The participation of other economic agents, such as local authorities, businesses, and households, remains limited. The financial challenges faced by Moroccan sports federations were also emphasized.

#### ➤ *Infrastructure challenges*

The analysis of the interviews reveals several issues with sports infrastructure in Morocco, including inadequacy, regional disparities, lack of maintenance, and limited resources. Interviewees expressed concerns about the risk of certain sports, such as handball and volleyball, disappearing from schools due to the lack of space and specialized staff to teach these disciplines.

#### ➤ *Training challenges:*

Interviewees pointed out a lack of progress in the training system for sports-related professions, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Lack of mapping of sports-related professions and existing training programs: There is no centralized resource that lists all sports-related professions and the training programs available to access them.
2. Lack of data on the gap between current training offerings and the demand for sports managers: It is difficult to determine whether current training programs meet the labor market demand in the sports sector.
3. Lack of measures to promote volunteering in technical management: There are insufficient measures in place to encourage volunteering in technical management roles, which could help train new coaches.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The interviews suggest that while legislative reforms have strengthened legal frameworks in the sports sector, they have failed to address key groups such as retired and reconverted athletes. This omission raises concerns about the lack of consideration for this group in the drafting of laws related to elite-level sports (Takhalouicht, 2018). Furthermore, it is important to note that the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the institutional body responsible for overseeing the sector, does not yet maintain an official list of elite-level athletes that is updated annually, as is the case in countries like France (Takhalouicht, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic also exposed the fragility of the sports sector, with many workers being undeclared and lacking social protection (Akari, 2021).

From an organizational perspective, human resources are crucial to the functioning of sports organizations. However, the number of human resources currently mobilized is insufficient to meet the existing challenges, a finding supported by a 2019 report from the French Economic, Social, and Environmental Council (PolitiqueSportiveVF-2.pdf, n.d.). Another study on human resource management practices within sports federations highlights the absence of dedicated HR departments in many federations (Frej & Guedira, 2018). Additionally, the allocation of subsidies to sports does not appear to follow a coherent or



transparent pattern. The current training systems for sports, technical, and administrative managers are also inadequate. Furthermore, there is insufficient private funding, and sports marketing remains underdeveloped (Benslimane, 2018).

In conclusion, elite-level sports in Morocco face numerous challenges, particularly with regard to recognizing different categories of athletes, formalizing jobs within the sector, strengthening human resources, and developing financing and sports marketing strategies.

#### *Synthesis:*

Based on this interpretation, we have synthesized the results in the form of a SWOT matrix, which serves as an essential tool for gaining a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of elite-level sports in Morocco, as well as identifying key levers for action. This diagnosis offers a structured overview of internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats impacting the development of elite-level sports in Morocco.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	Internal
➤ Existence of legislative reforms in the sports sector.	➤ Lack of consideration for reconverted athletes in legal texts.
➤ Potential for infrastructure development.	➤ The sector is still considered informal, with many workers lacking social protection and legal recognition.
➤ Commitment from sports players and managers.	➤ Insufficient mobilization of human resources and lack of HR departments within sports federations.

Opportunities	Threats
External	External
➤ Opportunity to develop partnerships with private organizations to finance elite-level sports.	➤ Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the elite-level sports sector.
➤ Potential for growth in sports marketing and sponsorship activities.	➤ Lack of correlation between the allocation of subsidies and performance evaluation criteria.
➤ Need for training sports, technical, and management staff, creating opportunities for dedicated curricula.	➤ Lack of time for athletes to balance training with school or university commitments.

#### **Conclusion**

The objective of this research project was to identify the challenges facing elite-level sports in Morocco at the institutional level. The study drew on both documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with sports officials and elite athletes. The findings indicate that the main challenges are both legal and organizational in nature.

Legally, the current framework regulating elite-level sports remains insufficiently developed and, in some cases, lacks clarity or specificity, which creates difficulties in a

globalized and rapidly evolving sporting environment. On the organizational front, there is a significant weakness in the training of sports, technical, and administrative staff. Additionally, the educational system for athletes is inadequate, and private sector funding remains insufficient to support the sustainable development of elite-level sports.

### Bibliographic references

- Akari, A. E. (2021). Répercussions du COVID-19 sur la performance des organisations sportives au Maroc. *Revue Internationale des Sciences de Gestion*, 4(2), Article 2. <https://revue-isg.com/index.php/home/article/view/570>
- Akari, A. E., & Ouaddaadaa, M. (2021). La gouvernance financière du sport au Maroc Cas des subventions publiques octroyées aux Fédérations sportives Nationales. *Revue Du Contrôle, de La Comptabilité et de l'audit*, 5(1), Article 1. <https://www.revuecca.com/index.php/home/article/view/682>
- Benslimane, 2018. *Vers une Gouvernance adaptée au Système Sportif Marocain Cas des structures sportives nationales organisées.pdf*. (s. d.).
- Frej, B., & Guedira, M. (2018). L' évaluation des pratiques de gestion des ressources humaines dans les organisations sportives. Cas des fédérations sportives. *Revue du contrôle, de la comptabilité et de l'audit*, 2(3), Article 3. <https://www.revuecca.com/index.php/home/article/view/201>
- *Politique Sportive VF-2.pdf*. (s. d.). Consulté 6 juin 2024, à l'adresse <https://www.cese.ma/media/2020/11/PolitiqueSportiveVF-2.pdf>
- Takhalouicht, N. (2018). *La reconversion des sportifs de haut niveau marocains : Trajectoires sociales et reconversion du capital sportif* [These de doctorat, Strasbourg]. <https://theses.fr/2018STRAG043>
- Takhalouicht, N. (2020). Le sport dans la législation marocaine : Quel statut pour le sportif de haut niveau ? *Revue MarocLaw*. <https://hal.science/hal-03769885>

### Official documents

- Reference texts of the FNDS. Statute of the CNOM.
- Moroccan Sport Law 06-87. Moroccan sports law 30-09.
- Committee governance practices report of the Ministry of Economy and Finance 2020.
- The National Sport Strategy. 2008

### Webography :

- CIO website : <https://www.olympic.org> Site web du MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORT : <http://www.MinistryofYouthandSport.gov.ma/fr> Site du CNOM : <https://cnom.ma/>
- <http://gerard.charreaux.pagesperso-orange.fr/perso/articles/Confiance0698.pdf>
- <http://www.acteursdusport.fr>
- SN. (2021). outdoors. Consulté le novembre 28, 2021, <https://www.outdoors.ma/od-dossiers/au-dela-des-frontieres-le-royaume-uni-une-bonne-gouvernance-pour-un-meilleur-sport-1646/>.
- Quardokus, B. (2021). [www.deutschland.de](http://www.deutschland.de/fr/topic/vie-moderne/loisirs-sport/organisations-sportives). Consulté le novembre 29, 2021, sur deutschland: <https://www.deutschland.de/fr/topic/vie-moderne/loisirs-sport/organisations-sportives>.
- FRETTEL, J. (2021). INSTITUTIONNALISATION. Consulté le 28 novembre, 2021, sur
- Encyclopædia Universalis: <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/institutionnalisation/> INSEP-Éditions. (2020). <http://www.openedition.org/6540>. Consulté le novembre 29, 2021, sur books.openedition.org: <https://books.openedition.org/insep/2529?lang=fr>