



Case study for the 2023 EEB National competitions

MORAL COST OF ENJOYING THE SPORT

Hosting a major international sporting event, particularly the Olympics and the World Cups, puts the country in the global spotlight, provides a cash injection for tourism, and offers a city or country the opportunity to rebuild or develop its infrastructure. However, it also involves an immense financial commitment and major risks. The 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, for example, came at a huge cost. It amounted to US\$15 billion, including a cost overrun of at least 75%, and was the most expensive World Cup in FIFA's history. As of mid-2014, Brazil was experiencing its worst recession in 25 years, with severe cuts in health and education funds, partly due to high expenses of organising for the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

Large investments for major sporting events are increasingly difficult to justify. In recent years, Boston, Budapest, Davos, Hamburg, Krakow, Munich, Rome, and Stockholm have withdrawn their bids. Due to lack of applicants, the 2022 Winter Olympics were awarded to Beijing - a city not known as a winter sports centre.

Qatar, host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, did not have to consider the same economic reasons as Brasil in its bid. For Qatar, this sporting event was an investment in its global position. The cost overruns and apparent losses are the price the country was willing to pay to host the event. These included also the bribes paid to FIFA's Executive Committee to win the bid. Qatar is the first Arab country to host a FIFA World Cup. One of the most criticized aspects of the tournament was FIFA's decision to award hosting rights to a country that does not recognize basic civil rights for all its citizens. This World Cup is widely considered one of the most controversial FIFA World Cups in history.

Qatar, however, is not the first World Cup to be fraught with moral concerns, and it most likely will not be the last. Like Qatar, Russia used the last FIFA World Cup to sportswash¹ its reputation. In 1978, dictatorial Argentina hosted the World Cup, resulting in mass deaths. The second ever World Cup was hosted by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

The World Cup is by far the most popular single sporting event in the world. It curbs individualism and connects people into community, uniting them as a nation. There is no doubt that this event brings people together, it is a dream for the players, a highlight for the fans, and for many the ultimate source of entertainment and pride.

But how can we watch international sporting events knowing that huge sums of money are being spent on building the infrastructure and organising the event, while at the same time cuts are being made in other important areas, such as health and education services, or even thousands of people may die to build the infrastructure needed for the event, while working long hours in oppressive heat for a tiny wage?

Please, address these dilemmas:

- Where do we draw the line and with whom does moral responsibility lie for these cases?
- Do individuals have a moral responsibility towards such controversial sporting events? Should we watch, cheer, and ignore the obvious violations or abstain and protest the organisation of the event?

¹ Sportswashing is the practice of individuals, groups, corporations, or governments using sports to enhance their reputations damaged by misconduct, and has become a common tool of soft power.