

Athleten Deutschland e.V.
Friedbergstraße 19
14057 Berlin
E-mail: presse@athleten-deutschland.org
www.athleten-deutschland.org

Rule 50: Response to Permission to Promote Diversity and Tolerance on the Field of Play

Berlin, July 22, 2021. Athleten Deutschland is pleased for Nike Lorenz, captain of the German national field hockey team, who [has been permitted](#) to wear a rainbow band as a symbol of diversity by the IOC and FIH. The permission was granted at the joint request of the DOSB and the German Hockey Federation.

In September 2020, Athleten Deutschland had already suggested a similar review process in our [position paper on athletes' freedom of expression](#). Up to now, we have unsuccessfully demanded clarification *"as to whether and in what form a preliminary examination can be set up on the admissibility of certain (especially written and symbolic) intended expressions of opinion in the direct competition context."* Such a preliminary examination has now apparently taken place as a reaction of the federations to the [courageous efforts of an athlete](#).

It is true that the blanket ban on expressions during sporting competitions on the field of play has only recently been [confirmed](#) by the IOC. However, blanket restrictions on freedom of expression, for example on the field of play or on the podium, can no longer be upheld following today's decision.

In light of today's precedent, all athletes should have the opportunity to submit such a request in advance of any planned expressions or statements to give them peace of mind and alleviate concerns about sanctions. Such a process should be set up and accompanied by independent experts.

In addition, there continues to be much uncertainty and confusion about the exact sanctioning process and the type and degree of possible sanctioning measures following violations of Rule 50.2. While the International Federations have leeway of their own in interpreting the rules, the exact interplay between the IOC, International Federations and National Olympic Committees in the event of sanctions remains unclear. This chaos acts as a deterrent for athletes who might refrain from making planned statements to protect themselves and/or their teams.

In April 2021, Athleten Deutschland [asked the DOSB](#) *"to examine its role and possible responsibilities in the sanctioning practice of rule violations."* In addition, we requested, following the example of the USOPC, *"that sanctions not be imposed on German athletes who exercise their right to freedom of expression peacefully and within the framework of the values of our free and democratic society."*

The problems and issues outlined above are not new and decision makers in national and international federations should have been aware of them for months. The questions of reviewing expressions and sanctioning were anticipated and communicated by Athleten Deutschland as well as by other athletes' and players' associations.

It is therefore unfortunate that in Germany, too, there has been neglect to address these issues proactively and in due time during a debate that has been taking place for more than a year. Today's decision is even more important for the future. It is a signal of hope and an opportunity for sport. Athletes should be able to speak out peacefully and within the framework of human rights.

About Athleten Deutschland e.V.:

Athleten Deutschland was founded in 2017 to give Germany's elite athletes a real say for the first time. The association is committed to fundamentally change the German and international sporting system. Our focus is to represent, protect and empower our members.

We fight for working conditions which allow our members to fulfil their full potential as athletes and human beings alike. We stand for fair and clean sport, free from abuse and violence, manipulation, and mismanagement. To fulfil our mission, we collaborate with various stakeholders from politics, business, science, and civil society, as well as like-minded partners in Europe and around the world.

Athletes Germany is funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community based on a resolution of the German Bundestag.