
Contemporary Trends in the Digital Transformation of Sports Organizations as Business Entities

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Contemporary Trends in the Digital Transformation of Sports Organizations as Business Entities

Abstract

Digital transformation is one of the defining processes of contemporary society, affecting nearly every sphere of economic, social, and legal life, including sport. Sport increasingly operates as part of the digital economy and is developing into a professional and commercial activity in which technological innovation, information technologies, and legal mechanisms play a decisive role. In sport, digital transformation entails not merely the deployment of information technologies within existing processes, but also fundamental changes to business models, organizational structures, and methods of value creation in the digital environment. This paper analyzes contemporary trends in the digital transformation of sports organizations as business entities, with particular emphasis on the legal framework of the Republic of Serbia and its alignment with European and international standards. The research employs a qualitative methodological approach, combining descriptive-analytical, normative, and comparative legal methods with case studies of digital transformation in Serbian sports organizations. Particular attention is devoted to the legal and organizational aspects of digital operations, including digital registries, electronic contracts, data-management systems, digital platforms for competition administration and audience engagement, and the use of analytics in sports management. The analysis demonstrates that digital transformation promotes professionalization, efficiency, and transparency within the sports system, while simultaneously raising challenges concerning data protection, cybersecurity, copyright, and ethics. The findings indicate that successful digital transformation of the sports sector requires an integrated approach linking technological development, legal regulation, and organizational modernization, together with an active role for the state and sports institutions in aligning domestic practice with international standards.

Keywords: digital transformation, sports law, digital registries, sports organizations

Introduction

Digital transformation is one of the defining trends of contemporary society and the global economy. The development of information and communication technologies has substantially changed the way organizations, markets, and social systems operate. Sport occupies a distinctive position in this process because of its economic, social, and media dimensions. Contemporary sport is no longer exclusively a recreational or social activity. As part of the broader trend toward modernization, it has become a complex system in which economic, legal, and technological processes intersect. The professionalization of sport, the growth of media rights, and the global popularity of sporting events are among the principal factors transforming sport into a significant segment of the modern economy. Sports organizations now operate as business entities, applying market principles and contemporary management models.

Digital transformation in sport entails not only the application of information technologies, but also fundamental changes to business models, organizational structures, and methods of value creation (Kraus et al., 2021). Digital technologies enable more efficient financial and administrative management, improved marketing, the development of new models for monetizing sports content, and more effective audience

engagement. They also reshape legal relationships through electronic contracts, digital registries, and platforms for administering sports procedures. In the Republic of Serbia, the digital transformation of sport is taking place within the existing legal system, alongside gradual alignment with European standards governing electronic business, data protection, and cybersecurity. The purpose of this paper is to define the digital transformation of sports law conceptually, examine its impact on the operation of sports organizations, analyze the applicable legal framework, and identify the challenges and potential opportunities arising from this process.

Methodology

The research is based on a qualitative methodological approach and employs several scientific methods. The descriptive-analytical method was used to examine the phenomenon of digital transformation in sport and identify its principal trends. The normative method was applied to analyze legislation governing sport, electronic business, and personal data protection. A comparative legal method was also used to compare national legislation with relevant international standards and practices. The research was supplemented by case studies analyzing examples of digital transformation in sports organizations in the Republic of Serbia.

Digital Transformation of Sport in the Republic of Serbia

Digital transformation refers to the strategic use of digital technologies to improve business models, processes, communication, and overall efficiency (Ebert, C., & Duarte, C. H. C., 2018; Lozic, J., & Cikovic, K. F., 2024). Unlike digitization, which involves converting analogue content into digital form, digital transformation requires the integration of information systems, cloud computing, big-data analytics, artificial intelligence, blockchain solutions, and digital platforms (Sarker, I. H., 2021).

In sport, digital transformation facilitates more efficient resource management, better communication with fans and partners, the development of new revenue streams, and increased competitiveness (Dašić, G., 2023). The digitalization of sports law encompasses the adaptation of legal rules and institutions to new forms of digital business, including electronic contracts, digital athlete registries, electronic documentation, and digital competition platforms. The objective of the digital transformation of sports law is to create a faster, more transparent, and more efficient legal system while safeguarding the rights and obligations of all stakeholders in sport.

Contemporary sports organizations in the Republic of Serbia increasingly operate as business entities and enter into sponsorship, marketing, media-rights, athlete-transfer, and event-organization agreements (Papaloukas, M., 2008). Sport is thereby moving beyond its traditional social and recreational sphere and becoming an integral part of the modern economy. Digital technologies enable the integration of business processes and improve transparency and efficiency (Pavićević, A., & Kastratović, M. A., 2025). The legal framework for the digital transformation of sport in the Republic of Serbia consists of key statutes that enable sports organizations to conduct digital operations securely. The Sports Act defines the legal status of clubs, federations, and athletes and provides a basis for electronic registries and digital contract administration. The Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Trust Services in Electronic Business grants electronic documents legal effect equivalent to that of paper documents. The Personal

Data Protection Act and the GDPR safeguard the privacy and security of athletes' and employees' personal and biometric data. Together, these regulations provide the foundation for an efficient, transparent, and legally secure digitalization of the sports system. In the context of digital transformation, the registration of sports organizations as business entities acquires additional importance, because the transition to electronic procedures and digital registration systems is a key step in modernizing the sports sector (Vasić, M., & Bulatović, P., 2023).

In addition to normative and administrative digitalization, significant changes have occurred in sports disciplinary and arbitration proceedings. International institutions such as the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, as well as numerous national sports tribunals, permit the electronic filing of appeals, digital submission of documents, and online hearings. This practice is particularly important for athletes from different countries because it enables disputes to be resolved more quickly and affordably without requiring physical attendance at hearings. The use of digital evidence, including video recordings, GPS data, and electronic records, has become standard practice, while simultaneously creating a need for legal rules that guarantee the authenticity and integrity of digital materials (Matić, T., & Matić, S., 2020). The digitalization of sport also raises new issues concerning agreements governing athletes' name, image, and likeness (NIL) rights, as well as the protection of digital sports content (Kastratović, M., & Todorović, E., 2025, p. 193).

The distinctive nature of sports contracts also lies in the fact that, in addition to general legal rules, the specific rules and regulations of sports federations must be taken into account. This normative complexity frequently gives rise to legal disputes, because contractual relationships must be aligned with the autonomous sports rules governing the operation of the sports system (Kastratović, M., 2025, p. 32). In the contemporary sports sector, EU regulatory and strategic policy integrates multiple areas of action and contributes to the development of a coherent sports strategy, thereby supporting the sustainable, ethical, and competitive development of sport in the digital age (Kastratović, M., 2025).

Case Studies: Red Star Belgrade FC and the Basketball Federation of Serbia

The digital transformation of sports organizations in the Republic of Serbia can be examined through concrete examples of the application of modern information technologies in clubs and sports federations. The practices of FK Crvena zvezda (Red Star Belgrade FC) and the Basketball Federation of Serbia are particularly instructive, demonstrating how digital tools contribute to the modernization of sports-organization management. Red Star Belgrade FC is one of the leading examples of digital transformation in Serbian sport. The club introduced a digital ticketing system using QR codes and electronic access control, thereby improving ticket sales, attendance records, and event security. In parallel, customer relationship management (CRM) systems were developed to collect and analyze fan data, enabling personalized marketing campaigns and more effective audience relationship management. In the sporting domain, analytical platforms are used to monitor athletes' physical parameters, including GPS tracking and biomechanical analysis, thereby contributing to training optimization and injury prevention. These systems are implemented within the applicable legal framework of the Republic of Serbia. The Sports Act provides for the maintenance of athlete and contract records, while the Personal Data Protection Act, aligned with the GDPR, governs the processing of athletes' and fans' personal and biometric data.

Digital tickets and electronic records are regulated by the Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Trust Services in Electronic Business, while the Information Security Act governs the protection of digital databases and servers. This example demonstrates how digitalization can improve administrative processes, sports management, and audience engagement.

The Basketball Federation of Serbia provides an example of the institutional digital transformation of the sports system. The Federation has developed an integrated digital infrastructure encompassing electronic licences for players, coaches, and referees, digital applications, and electronic match records. These solutions simplify administrative procedures, increase the transparency of competitions, and reduce the likelihood of technical errors. The Federation has also developed online education platforms for coaches and referees, thereby improving the professional-development system and aligning it with European sports standards. Digital databases covering youth national teams, together with video analytics and advanced statistical tools, contribute to systematic talent development and improved sports planning. From a legal perspective, the Federation's digital processes are based on the Sports Act, the Personal Data Protection Act, and the Law on Archival Material and Archival Activities, which provides for the preservation of digital records, licences, and contracts as archival material.

The analysis of these examples demonstrates that digital transformation contributes to the modernization of sports organizations and increases both management efficiency and transparency within the sports system. At the same time, further development requires the integration of advanced analytical tools, the interconnection of databases, and continuous staff training in order to enable data-driven decision-making and strengthen the security of digital systems.

Comparative Legal Overview

Digital transformation is one of the principal developmental processes shaping contemporary sport, which is increasingly recognized as a significant economic activity. Sports organizations now generate revenue through the digital distribution of content, e-commerce, data management, and digital marketing, making the legal framework governing digital operations increasingly important. Although there is no legislation devoted exclusively to the digital transformation of sport, the relevant rules derive from the broader body of digital and market legislation. In this context, a comparative analysis of the regulatory framework of the European Union (EU) and the legislation of the Republic of Serbia is particularly significant. The EU legal framework is characterized by a high degree of regulatory development in the field of the digital market. Of particular relevance are the Digital Services Act (DSA), which regulates the responsibility of digital platforms and the protection of users, and the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which seeks to preserve fair competition in digital markets. In the field of data protection, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) plays a central role by establishing standards for the processing of the personal data of athletes, members, and users of digital services. Directive 2000/31/EC, which regulates information-society services and electronic commerce, also remains relevant. The comparative analysis shows that the EU has a developed and specialized regulatory framework for digital markets and digital platforms. By contrast, Serbian legislation regulates digital transformation indirectly through general legislation governing electronic commerce, data protection, digital assets, and the sports sector. This approach provides a basic legal framework for the digital operations of sports organizations, but it does not yet include the specific digital-market regulatory mechanisms found in EU law. Table 1 presents a

comparative overview of the principal areas of regulation in the EU and the Republic of Serbia. The analysis indicates a higher level of regulatory development within the EU legal system, while continued alignment with EU law remains an important direction for the further development of Serbian legislation governing the digital transformation of sport.

Table 1. Digital Transformation of Sport: A Comparative Analysis of EU Law and the Legislation of the Republic of Serbia

Area of regulation	EU regulations	Serbian legislation
Digital services and platforms	Digital Services Act	Law on Electronic Commerce
Competition in digital markets	Digital Markets Act	Competition Act
Personal data protection	General Data Protection Regulation	Personal Data Protection Act
Electronic commerce and digital transactions	Directive 2000/31/EC	Law on Electronic Commerce
Digital assets and innovative business models	The EU develops regulation through financial and digital strategies (e.g., markets in crypto-assets and digital finance)	Digital Assets Act
Sports sector	The EU has no legislation specifically governing the digital transformation of sport; general digital regulations apply	Sports Act

Source: Authors' own analysis

International Study: “Sports Fans Demand More Dynamic Digital Content, Powered by AI”

A major international study published by IBM in 2025, entitled “Sports Fans Demand More Dynamic Digital Content, Powered by AI,” examines the impact of artificial intelligence and digital technologies on the way fans consume sport (IBM Study: Sports Fans Demand More Dynamic Digital Content, Powered by AI, 2025). The survey included 20,864 respondents from twelve countries. Its findings show that 85% of fans recognize the importance of integrating technology into the sports experience, while 63% trust content generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence. Mobile sports applications are particularly significant: 73% of respondents use them, primarily to follow live scores and real-time statistics. The study also identifies growing demand for personalized content and analytical insights and concludes that artificial intelligence will have a decisive influence on sports consumption by 2027 (Kastratović, E., & Dragić, M., 2025, p. 93). At the same time, the growing reliance on digital platforms and continuous online engagement should also be considered from the perspective of potential behavioral and social risks, since previous research has associated the expansion of information technologies with problematic patterns of technology use and Internet addiction (Bjelajac et al., 2022).

Discussion

The digital transformation of sports law constitutes a profound structural change that extends far beyond the mere introduction of new technologies into the sports system. The traditional administrative model of governance is being replaced by an integrated and interoperable system connecting sports organizations, public authorities, and international sports federations. This approach improves the transparency, accountability, and efficiency of legal and administrative procedures in sport and thereby redefines the core principles of sports-organization governance. Digital transformation is particularly evident in the introduction of electronic contracts, digital athlete registries, and blockchain technology for verifying results, transfers, and other legally relevant facts (Vasić Garić, M., 2026). These systems enable more precise monitoring of contractual obligations, more effective oversight of financial flows, and faster communication among participants in the sports system. As a result, legal certainty is enhanced and the scope for manipulation or administrative error is reduced. Smart contracts are of particular importance because they automate the performance of contractual obligations on the basis of predefined conditions, increasing the transparency of financial transactions and reducing the likelihood of disputes between contracting parties (Bernstein, J., 2018, p. 95). In addition to their institutional and legal effects, developments in the digital transformation of sports law have significant social implications. Electronic databases, public registries, and digital communication systems make legal information and procedures more accessible to athletes, coaches, and other participants in the sports system. They thereby strengthen the accountability of sports stakeholders, reduce the risks of corruption and discrimination, and increase public confidence in sports institutions. The economic dimension of contemporary sport is another important aspect of digital transformation. Sports organizations increasingly operate as business entities within the digital economy, where electronic business, digital marketing, and automated financial flows enable more efficient resource management and revenue diversification. Such development nevertheless requires a high level of legal and digital literacy, together with adequate mechanisms for protecting data, copyright, and cybersecurity (Vasić, M., 2025). This need becomes even more pronounced with the increasing integration of artificial intelligence into digital systems, as research into the criminal capacities of artificial narrow intelligence points to the possibility that technologies developed for legitimate purposes may also be adapted for harmful or criminal applications (Bjelajac et al., 2023). Digital transformation therefore necessitates the development of a new legal culture and new ethical standards for business conduct in sport.

At the international level, digital platforms developed by organizations such as FIFA and UEFA provide important examples of standardization and transparency in sports governance. FIFA has established a digital platform that publicly records changes in players' national associations, thereby providing a centralized and reliable record of relevant data. Similarly, UEFA uses digital player-registration systems for its competitions, enabling automatic verification of eligibility requirements and helping to prevent irregularities. The Court of Arbitration for Sport also plays an important role in enhancing legal certainty through digital databases and online arbitration procedures, which facilitate faster and more transparent resolution of sports disputes. Despite its many benefits, however, the digital transformation of sports law faces several challenges. The most significant include the development of adequate digital infrastructure, the standardization of procedures, continuous professional training, and the timely adaptation of legal rules to rapid technological change. Particular attention must be devoted to

personal data protection and digital accountability in order to ensure that digitalization strengthens the integrity, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of sport.

Conclusion

The digital transformation of sport is one of the most significant processes in the contemporary development of sports organizations, encompassing simultaneous technological, organizational, and legal change. The analysis conducted in this paper demonstrates that digital technologies substantially affect the operation of sports organizations, transforming them from traditional social institutions into complex organizational systems functioning within the modern digital economy. In this environment, sport increasingly acquires the characteristics of an economic activity in which information technologies, digital platforms, and data-management systems become essential instruments of governance, communication, and value creation.

The findings confirm that digital transformation improves the efficiency, transparency, and professionalization of the sports system. Digital registries, electronic contracts, analytical platforms, and data-management systems enable faster and more reliable administrative procedures, more precise monitoring of contractual relationships, and more effective managerial decision-making. The case studies of Serbian sports organizations, including Red Star Belgrade FC and the Basketball Federation of Serbia, demonstrate that digital solutions can significantly improve organizational structures, sports management, and audience engagement while also increasing the transparency of competitions and administrative processes. The analysis of the legal framework shows that the digital transformation of the Serbian sports sector rests on a broader body of rules governing electronic business, data protection, and the operation of sports organizations. Legislation governing sport, electronic documents and signatures, personal data protection, and digital assets establishes the basic legal preconditions for the development of a digital sports system. The comparative legal analysis nevertheless indicates that the European Union has a more developed regulatory framework for digital markets and digital platforms, underscoring the need for further alignment of Serbian legislation with European standards.

The development of international digital standards in sport constitutes a distinct dimension of digital transformation. Digital platforms and data-management systems developed by international sports organizations such as FIFA and UEFA, together with the digital arbitration mechanisms used by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, confirm that digitalization is becoming an essential instrument for the transparent and efficient governance of sports systems at the global level. These models provide an important point of reference for national sports systems undergoing modernization and alignment with international standards.

Digital transformation also raises new legal and organizational issues, particularly concerning the protection of athletes' personal and biometric data, cybersecurity, copyright in sports content, and ethical standards governing the use of modern technologies. The development of a digital sports system must therefore be accompanied by appropriate regulatory mechanisms and institutional capacity capable of maintaining a balance between technological progress and the protection of fundamental legal principles. The analysis supports the conclusion that the digital transformation of sports organizations is an unavoidable process that will significantly shape the development of the sports sector in the coming years. Its successful implementation requires an integrated approach linking technological development, legal regulation, and the organizational modernization of sports institutions. Only through such coordinated

transformation can a modern, transparent, and efficient sports system be established that is capable of responding to the demands of contemporary digital society and the global sports market. The scientific contribution of this paper lies in its interdisciplinary analysis of the digital transformation of sports organizations as business entities through the integration of legal, economic, and technological perspectives. The paper systematizes contemporary trends in the digitalization of sport and highlights the importance of the legal framework in the transformation of the sports system.

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Savremeni trendovi digitalne transformacije sportskih organizacija kao poslovnih subjekata

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Sažetak

Digitalna transformacija predstavlja jedan od ključnih procesa savremenog društva, koji utiče na gotovo sve sfere ekonomskog, društvenog i pravnog života, uključujući i sport. Sport sve više funkcioniše kao deo digitalne ekonomije i razvija se u profesionalnu i komercijalnu delatnost u kojoj tehnološke inovacije, informacione tehnologije i pravni mehanizmi imaju odlučujuću ulogu. U sportu digitalna transformacija ne podrazumeva samo primenu informacionih tehnologija u okviru postojećih procesa, već i suštinske promene poslovnih modela, organizacionih struktura i načina stvaranja vrednosti u digitalnom okruženju. Ovaj rad analizira savremene trendove digitalne transformacije sportskih organizacija kao poslovnih subjekata, sa posebnim osvrtom na pravni okvir Republike Srbije i njegovu usklađenost sa evropskim i međunarodnim standardima. Istraživanje primenjuje kvalitativni metodološki pristup, kombinujući deskriptivno-analički, normativni i komparativno-pravni metod sa studijama slučaja digitalne transformacije u sportskim organizacijama u Srbiji. Posebna pažnja posvećena je pravnim i organizacionim aspektima digitalnog poslovanja, uključujući digitalne registre, elektronske ugovore, sisteme za upravljanje podacima, digitalne platforme za administraciju takmičenja i angažovanje publike, kao i primenu analitike u upravljanju sportskim organizacijama. Analiza pokazuje da digitalna transformacija doprinosi profesionalizaciji, efikasnosti i transparentnosti sportskog sistema, ali istovremeno otvara izazove u pogledu zaštite podataka, sajber-bezbednosti, autorskih prava i etike. Rezultati ukazuju na to da uspešna digitalna transformacija sportskog sektora zahteva integrisani pristup koji povezuje tehnološki razvoj, pravnu regulativu i organizacionu modernizaciju, uz aktivnu ulogu države i sportskih institucija u usklađivanju domaće prakse sa međunarodnim standardima.

Ključne reči: digitalna transformacija, sportsko pravo, digitalni registri, sportske organizacije