Beat: Sports

MINISTERS M. FERRARI, N. FORISSIER & S. PAPIN SHAPE THE NEXT DECADE OF 10 YEARS

OF THE SPORT INDUSTRY/STADE DE FRANCE

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USPA NEWS - Today, 2nd June 2026, our reporter covered the anniversary of 10 years of successful outcomes of the “sport industry platform” signed by former Economy & Finance Minister with Patrick kanner, Minister of Sport, on site, in person, at the Stade de France, for USPA. Arriving at Gate U, the dedicated press entrance, I immediately understood that this was not just another ceremonial evening. Ramps were firmly installed, clearly signposted, and circulation routes were easy to follow even in a wheelchair; from security to reception staff, everyone seemed briefed and genuinely attentive to people with reduced mobility. In a country where accessibility is still too often treated as an afterthought, this practical care already said something about the kind of “sport industry platform” France wants to build: one that does not leave anyone at the door. Yet the symbolic power of this 10th anniversary went far beyond gestures of hospitality. Ten years earlier, in March 2016, Emmanuel Macron then Minister of Economy and Finance, not yet a head of state and certainly not known as a great athlete had signed the founding agreement of the “Filière Sport” “sport industry platform”.

At a time when few believed that sport could become a real growth engine, he had the political intuition that this sector could add two or three percentage points of GDP over time, provided it was treated as a full?fledged industry rather than a mere leisure policy.
A decade later, the circle closed at the Stade de France. Under the spotlights of the same stadium that hosted Paris 2024, three ministers Marina Ferrari for Sports, Youth and Community Life; Nicolas Forissier for Foreign Trade and Attractiveness; and Serge Papin for SMEs, Commerce, Crafts, Tourism and Purchasing Power gathered around top?level athletes, federation leaders, entrepreneurs and sponsors to celebrate this intuition made concrete. Together, they reviewed ten years that have transformed sport from a sectorial public policy into a strategic industry, and they began to sketch the long?term strategy that will shape the next decade for France’s sport ecosystem.

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Before any panel began, inclusion became tangible in a very simple scene. Olivier Ginon, President of GL Events, not only took part in the discussions as a major industrial player; he also behaved like a true gentleman, personally making sure I had priority access to the lift. It may sound like a detail, but for wheelchair users in France it is a rare and precious experience not to have to fight for the basic right to use an elevator. That evening, accessibility was not a slogan, it was a lived reality.

FRANCE’S SPORT INDUSTRY AT 10: FROM PARIS 2024 TO A NEW LONG-TERM STRATEGY
SPORT AS A STRATEGIC AND SOCIAL ISSUE
Today, France increasingly recognises that sport is not just a show or a matter of medals, but a strategic issue in education, culture, social cohesion and even the environment. Behind each podium, there are clubs, volunteers, educators, entrepreneurs and local authorities whose work helps to strengthen the social fabric and give meaning to the “common good”. In this perspective, medals are not only symbols; they are indicators of collective effort, of shared investment, and of the capacity of a society to generate role models and shared narratives.

10 YEARS OF THE SPORT INDUSTRY: STADE DE FRANCE MILESTONE: MINISTERS MARINA FERRARI, NICOLAS FORISSIER, SERGE PAPIN PRESENT THEIR REVIEW AND VISION

Major events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games create moments of national unity, but they also expose structural inequalities in access to sport, mental health challenges and the fragility of local clubs. When a club closes, it is not just an activity that disappears; it is a piece of the Republic that fades away, a space of socialization, discipline and mutual aid that vanishes. The debates at the Stade de France insisted on this dual reality: the celebration of success on the one hand, and on the other the urgent need to address precarity, unequal access and the deterioration of the grassroots ecosystem.

MARINA FERRARI: FROM EMMANUEL MACRON'S INTUITION TO A MATURE INDUSTRY

Marina Ferrari, Minister for Sports, Youth and Community Life, began by saluting the political intuition of Emmanuel Macron and Patrick Kanner, who launched the Sport Industry initiative in 2016. The results, she insisted, "speak for themselves": the share of the population practicing sport has risen from around 50% to more than 60%, with particularly strong progress among women, seniors and children. Beyond the social impact, the Minister stressed that the Filiere Sport has become a fully?fledged economic sector: from 37 Billion euros in 2016, the turnover has risen towards 80+ Billion, with more than 150 000 companies, 450 000 jobs and around 2,6–2,7% of national GDP.

Coming from a region where winter sports represent roughly half of the local economy, Ferrari illustrated how sport irrigates entire territories, from transport and tourism to innovation and mobility. She called for moving beyond "French bashing" and recognizing sport as a major contributor to competitiveness and attractiveness. With projections of global sport?related markets reaching 3 000 Billion Euros by 2030 and 6 000 Billion by 2050, she argued that France must position itself as a reference country at the crossroads of sport, major events and new technologies, building on the momentum of Paris 2024 and preparing for the 2030 Winter Games in the Alps.

OLIVIER GINON GL EVENTS CEOs INCLUSIVE SPORT WALKING ON TWO LEGS

Olivier Ginon, President of GL Events, summarized the new French ambition with a simple image: sport walks on two legs. One leg is economic attractiveness, international influence and major events that showcase French expertise; the other is inclusion, social impact and the "sport culture" that reaches all territories and all publics. Without this second leg, he argued, there can be no legitimate "sport industry". The next ten years must therefore build a field that is more accessible, more inclusive and more emancipatory, capable of both rallying and lifting up those who are furthest from practice.

GL Events CEO recalled that ten years ago, in 2016, Emmanuel Macron, then minister of the economy, had the intuition that sport could become a lever for growth and national prestige, and that this intuition was shared by the first partners around the fledgling Sport Industry platform. For a group like GL Events, active in hospitality, events and sport, the Filiere Sport quickly appeared as a strategic ecosystem capable of projecting an extraordinarily positive image of France abroad. Olivier Ginon underlined that the March 2016 signature of the first agreement was a founding moment: since then, thousands of events in metropolitan France and overseas territories have helped structure an "industrial" approach to sport, from amateur practice and youth programs to major international competitions.

PHILIPPE DIALLO FEDERATION FRANCE OF FOOTBALL's CEO, MARIE-AMELIE LE FUR & THE SOCIAL RETURN ON SPORT

Philippe Diallo, President of the French Football Federation and of COSMOS, highlighted the growing body of evidence on the social and economic returns of sport. Studies conducted at national level on "sport?health" suggest that regular physical activity can save public authorities between 190 and 200 Billion Euros over the long term in healthcare and social costs. Diallo insisted on the need to translate these national findings at territorial level, so that local authorities, clubs and sponsors can rely on robust impact measurements to open new dialogues and justify investments in sport infrastructures and program.

Marie?Amelie Le Fur, President of the National Sport Agency and multiple Paralympic champion, emphasized the inclusive dimension of this agenda. She explained how the Agency has helped create or support thousands of inclusive clubs, trained to welcome people with disabilities, and how program such as "5000 facilities" aim to diversify the geography of equipment and increase gender?mixing

in practice. For her, sport is a 360?degree public policy for people with disabilities: without sport, health deteriorates faster, autonomy is reduced and social isolation increases. Accessible equipment (for example, through Decathlon's "Handisport" lines) and targeted programs like "Team Go Girls" in partnership with Nike, reaching 15 000 underprivileged girls in 11 cities, are, in her words, changing the paradigm.

DECATHLON FOUNDATION: DESIGNING FOR ALL BODIES

Representatives of the Decathlon Foundation recalled a turning point ten years ago, when a customer with a disability called to say that he could not find equipment allowing him to play sport with his child. This led the company to create a dedicated "Handisport" brand, working on solutions for different types of disabilities with design teams and engineers. While Decathlon itself is celebrating its 50th anniversary, the "Handisport" brand is only ten years old, but the ambition is clear: in forty years' time, they hope that inclusive sport equipment will be considered standard, not niche. The Foundation also develops programs linking sport and health (for example for women with cancer, in partnership with associations such as Dragon Boat teams) and projects for social reintegration of under?privileged students. New facilities and a dedicated site attached to the Foundation are planned, confirming that innovation in sport equipment is increasingly inseparable from social responsibility.

STADE ROCHELAIS AND THE CLUB AS LOCAL ECONOMIC ENGINE

Pierre Venayre, CEO of Stade Rochelais, offered a concrete example of how a professional club can act as both an economic and social engine. The club has been "sold out" for ten years, operates with a budget of around 20 million euros and brings together more than 1 200 partner companies in the La Rochelle area. Inspired by German?style governance, with strong shareholder engagement, the club remains profitable while maintaining deep links with amateur rugby: over 1 000 licenses, a strong women's rugby section, wheelchair rugby initiatives and educational programs in priority neighborhoods.

Pierre Venayre estimated that rugby as a whole represents around 3 billion euros and insisted that clubs are genuine economic actors and investors in their territories. Stade Rochelais is, for example, building a new performance centre and has invested in a former holiday residence (18 million Euros) to create facilities for its players and staff. For him, the lesson is clear: professional clubs must be both economic players and solidarity partners for the amateur world.

SERGE PAPIN: MADE IN FRANCE AND THE MARATHON NATION

Minister Serge Papin, Minister for SMEs, Commerce, Crafts, Tourism and Purchasing Power, used the Covid period as a reminder of how essential sport is to everyday life. Confinement created a huge appetite for physical activity and helped feed a boom in "sport tourism": France now hosts some of the most popular marathons in the world, from Paris to La Rochelle, combining events, hospitality and new technologies. Minister Serge Papin noted that with connected applications sometimes integrating artificial intelligence thousands of participants in the Paris Marathon improved their times thanks to coaching and data?driven training.

He also highlighted success stories in "Made in France" equipment, such as local manufacturers producing jerseys and sportswear for brands like Le Coq Sportif, proving that competitiveness and quality do not have to be outsourced to Asia. For Minister Serge Papin, one of the key messages of this anniversary is that France can still design and produce durable sport equipment on its soil. In his words, the country should "allow itself to be proud from time to time" of its leadership in certain niches, and should better support SMEs that serve the sport industry.

SPORT TECH, BPI FRANCE AND THE SECOND COHORT OF THE ACCELERATOR

The second panel highlighted the rise of "sport tech" and digital innovation. Omar Al Zayat, former head of innovation at the Paris 2024 organizing committee and ex?director of the "Tremplin" incubator, described how initiatives like the "Marathon for All" connected race emerged from careful observation and experimentation. With 17 million French people now using gyms and fitness clubs, a 3?billion?euro market, he argued that flexible, connected forms of practice will remain a structural trend.

Alexandra Romand, co?founder of Kinomap, presented her start?up built around geo-localised outdoor videos to make indoor cycling or running more immersive. Created in 2013, the company now records around 25% growth per year, with 85% of its turnover generated abroad.

Virgile Caillet, delegate general of the Union Sport & Cycle, insisted that innovation is no longer an option but a condition of survival for companies facing fast fashion and intense competition. He identified three main axes of innovation: ecological materials and design (for instance in aquatic centres), digitalisation of equipment and more inclusive, de?gendered use of facilities, particularly for

parasport.

Mustafa Curlu, from BPI France, announced the launch of the second cohort of the Sport Tech Accelerator, emphasizing that sport must be seen as an industry where business models, training centers and technologies need long?term investment. BPI France, he recalled, has mobilized around 300 million euros in financing for start?ups and SMEs in this field and is now looking towards 2030, with a special focus on Alpine territories in view of the Winter Games.

EXPORTING FRENCH KNOW-HOW: SME's MINISTER NICOLAS FORISSIER, BUSINESS FRANCE, LOXAM, GIE FRANCE SPORT EXPERTISE

Nicolas Forissier, Minister delegate for Foreign Trade and Attractiveness, insisted that there is a strong "desire for France" abroad. From Saudi Arabia's mega?project in Riyadh (KIDYIA) to Morocco's success with the Africa Cup of Nations, many countries are turning to French companies for expertise in stadiums, event management and infrastructure. Nicolas Forissier, alongside Philippe Diallo, said they were actively promoting French offers in these markets, presenting sport as an "energy" and a form of national dynamism.

The new Director General of Business France, Louis Margueritte, explained that his teams accompany around 300 companies per year across several sectors, including sport, focusing on infrastructure, transport and health. Upcoming events, such as a France–Senegal match in New York for the 2026 World Cup, will be used as networking opportunities with US clubs and partners. Gerard Deprez, President of Loxam and board member of GIE France Sport Expertise, recalled that the government wanted to develop the sport economy ahead of the Ryder Cup and the Olympic Games, and that the GIE was created to capitalize on the visibility of these events and serve as a springboard for international contracts.

PARIS 2024' SUCCESSFUL LEGACY AND THE ROAD TO WINTER OLYMPIC 2030

Pierre?Antoine Molina, interministerial delegate for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, summarized the "French model" of major events around three pillars: excellence of the industrial and service partners; mobilization of public authorities capable of managing complexity; and a high level of requirements in terms of ESG, inclusion and anti?discrimination. He recalled that Paris 2024 committed to a 50% reduction in CO? emissions compared with Rio 2016, notably through electric power for venues, and that 144 signatories, federations, clubs and other organizations, adopted a shared charter on climate impact and social commitments. Future events, such as the 2027 UCI Cycling World Championships, will build on these standards. The closing words of Marina Ferrari, Serge Papin and Nicolas Forissier converged on the same message: France must capitalize on the know?how demonstrated in 2024, both to continue attracting foreign investment and to support its own SMEs and territories.

Minister of External Trade Nicolas Forissier recalled that, for the seventh year in a row, France is ranked by EY as the most attractive European country for foreign investors, with 93 billion euros of projects announced under the "Choose France" banner. Serge Papin suggested organizing a dedicated event for SMEs supplying sport equipment and services, while calling on businesses to continue sponsoring local clubs and social sport initiatives.

THE NEXT TEN YEARS TO COME MAY BE AS SUCCESSFUL

The 10th anniversary of the Sport Industry platform at the Stade de France was less a nostalgic look back than a rehearsal of the questions France will face over the next decade: how to keep sport accessible while building a global industry; how to integrate artificial intelligence and digital tools without deepening inequalities; how to preserve grassroots clubs while multiplying mega?events; and how to ensure that each euro spent on sport generates both economic growth and social cohesion.

If the first ten years have built a recognised "Filière Sport", the next ten will determine whether France can become a true sport power economically, socially and culturally. In a time when many certainties are shaken, sport remains one of the few spaces where effort, discipline and collective spirit can still be learned and shared.

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