

Original Article

Legal aspects of sport during the COVID-19 pandemic - case study of Poland in the global context

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic made a huge impact on sports. Due to increased risk of virus transmission, governments across the world decided to introduce regulations restricting or even banning physical activity in sport facilities. This led to cancellation or postponement of numerous sport events at the outbreak of the pandemic. International and domestic health and sports authorities prepared guidelines and laws implementing safety rules including a variety of public health and social measures applicable in different phases of development of the virus. Such strategies on dealing with the pandemic were crucial in terms of reopening sports for normal training and competition. This article gives a general overview of global literature and official documents introduced by the World Health Organization and several international sports federations concerning legal aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic in reference to sport. It presents the current and further research fields in sports law relating to the consequences of coronavirus both for elite and amateur sport. This concerns particularly the impact of public health and social measures on the financial condition of the sport industry as well as planning of policies enabling the restoration of sport in a post-COVID reality. Moreover the paper presents an evolution of COVID-legislation in connection to sports on the example of Poland. The study shows that dynamic changes of the pandemic hinder the development and implementation of a clear strategy on how to deal with the illness and get back to mass sport. Instead constant modifications of prevention regulation are introduced which may lead to chaos and incomprehension of current rules. An analysis of the Polish legislation on COVID may lead to adoption of good practice solutions and avoidance of mistakes by stakeholders and policymakers in other countries.

KeyWords: COVID-19, coronavirus, pandemic, regulations, Poland, elite sport, amateur sport, safety measures, social distancing, public health, sports law.

Introduction

The global COVID-19 outbreak at the beginning of 2020 has left a very big mark on all areas of life. Sport was also affected by consequences of the lockdown. Although similar infectious diseases occurred in the recent past (eg. mosquito-transmitted diseases, such as Zika and Yellow Fever during the 2010 FIFA World Cup held in Brazil; Duarte Muñoz, Meyer, 2020) this pandemic hit the sport industry in a way comparable only to times of World War II when official competitions have been halted in some countries for a couple of years though sports leagues in neutral states were able to maintain activity during the conflict (Tovar, 2021). This time however professional and amateur games have been interrupted, while many sporting events, including the Tokyo Olympics and Euro 2020, have been canceled or postponed. At an early stage of the pandemic some sports governing bodies have struggled to continue elite competitions. This was the case with UEFA Champions League which was highly criticized by the public because of Italian club Atalanta's last-16 clash against Spanish side Valencia. Especially the first game in Bergamo (the home of Atalanta) was described as a "biological bomb" as it turned the city into the centre of Italy's coronavirus outbreak (Independent, 2020). Therefore after a rapid increase in the incidence of the virus UEFA immediately decided to stop the European competitions.

As it is described in literature, restrictions to prevent the spread of the disease have affected elite (Clarkson et al., 2020; Drewes et al., 2021; Gouveia, Pereira, 2021) and amateur clubs (Parrish, Lam, 2021) as well as youth (Kelly et al., 2020) grassroots (Grix et al., 2020), recreational and lifestyle sports (Smith, 2020). Legal instruments used to ensure health safety affected also lives of sports enthusiasts and recreational athletes (not excluding disabled people) (Fitzgerald, 2020), who were deprived of access to daily physical exercises and participation in individual action sports. Regulations also influenced all economic sectors related to sports what had and will have dire consequences for both enterprises and laborers, including those involved in event organization (Sheptak, Menaker, 2020) or betting on sports competitions (Garcia-Garcia et al., 2020).

The impact of normative solutions for counteracting COVID-19 on sport has not been described in the literature so far. Although many articles on sport in the context of the pandemic have been published, most of

them were devoted to medical aspects of the coronavirus and its effects on the ability to perform physical activity. A significant number of publications have described sport in the age of a pandemic from the perspective of social, economic and management sciences. However, no article has been published that focuses explicitly on juridical issues concerning sport in the light of COVID-19. Thus this paper fills a gap in literature on sports law concerning the impact of the novel pandemic on contemporary sports.

The purpose of this article is to present the legal aspects related to combating the pandemic in global context and on the example of Poland. An ordered overview of current literature on the impact of COVID-19 on sports in the light of law should be useful for further research in the fields of sports law and other social sciences. Moreover the presentation of the case of Poland gives an insight on how a government deals with the pandemic by applying social distancing and public health solutions referring to sports on different levels. Policymakers and stakeholders in other countries may use this study to follow good practices and avoid mistakes in implementing COVID-19 strategies in sports.

Material & methods

For the purpose of this article two research methods have been used - a desk research and a case study.

The study performed in the desk research was based on analyzing, compiling and processing of information from existing sources. The sources analyzed in the research were scientific publications, press articles, guidelines and other official documents prepared by sports governing bodies as well as legal acts issued by Polish authorities and judgements given by Polish courts.

Most of the analyzed articles were accessible in open databases (i.a. Scopus), others have been published online on home pages of specific scientific journals. Media releases and documents from formal sources were available on official websites. Laws and regulations in force on the territory of Poland were available in commercial online database LEX run by Wolters Kluwer, although they are also presented on the web in the Polish Journal of Laws. The same applies to judgments of the Polish regional administrative courts and Supreme Court which can be looked up in LEX as well as uploaded from open databases collecting verdicts of administrative and common courts in Poland.

To show the global context of the pandemic's impact on sports a number of publications have been cited, yet there were few sources from literature which directly referred to this subject of this article. Therefore most positions in the references concern the issues of social distancing and limitations in sports in the light of economics, management and other social studies.

The case study concerns the situation of sports in Poland in relation to legal instruments introduced to counteract COVID-19. A description of this case was drawn up on the basis of legal acts issued by several Polish authorities (the parliament, ministers) between March 2020 and March 2021. A broader context of these findings is given by numerous judgements of regional administrative courts and a verdict of the Polish Supreme Court which focused on the problem of legality of safety measures approved in the country.

Results of the desk research on global context of legal aspects of COVID-19 in sports

In one of the few papers relating to legal aspects Garcia et. al (2020) point out several problems connected with the pandemic which will challenge the legal industry in particular in the field of health and safety-at-work laws. These issues are i.a. infections of players or injuries suffered during shortened pre-season preparations, or because of intensive game schedules. The authors also note that the traditional autonomy of sports may be limited by state law to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This thesis refers to the concept of "supervised autonomy" of sports which has been described by Ken Foster in relation to EU law (Foster, 2000). Regardless of restrictions imposed by national laws, governing bodies of international sports federations introduce their own rules for the times of COVID-19. One of the examples is FIFA which prepared a guideline called "COVID-19 Football regulatory issues" (FIFA, 2020).

Parnell et al. (2020) describe measures which should be undertaken to prevent a spread of diseases during mass gatherings and sporting events. The authors indicate existing documents of the World Health Organization which give recommendations on public health issues of mass gatherings (WHO, 2011, 2020a). The latest WHO guidebooks prepared strictly for mass events in response to the coronavirus are from May 2020 (WHO, 2020b, 2020c). They contain instructions to governing bodies on risk assessment as well as public health and social measures applicable at individual and community level depending on the virus' transmission scenario (no reported cases, sporadic cases, clusters of cases and community transmission). In the recommendations for mass gatherings the WHO states that implementing strict movement and physical distancing measures makes it unlikely to allow mass gatherings to take place. On the other hand in countries where restrictive measures are being progressively adjusted, a decision to organize mass events makes rules and conditions of organization a highly relevant factor (WHO, 2020b). This is particularly crucial in the context of mass sport events like the upcoming Euro 2020 postponed to 2021, which was initially planned to be held in 12 European countries. The organizers of such tournaments have to face a great challenge given the fact that travel is one of the key contributors to disease transmission (Parnell et al., 2020; Tian et al., 2020). Fear of contracting the virus may result in reduced ticket demand anyway as shows a research on stadium attendances in top European soccer leagues at the early stage of the pandemic (Reade, Singleton, 2020).

As a way to prevent high levels of virus transmission S.H. Ebrahim et al. (2020) propose a list of community mitigation strategies. They include the following precautions:

- Cancellation of ad hoc events and suspension of events with superspreader potential,
- Use of social distancing measures to reduce direct and close contact between people in the community,
- Travel restrictions, including reduced flights and public transport and route restrictions without compromising essential services,
- Voluntary home quarantine of members of household contacts,
- Changes to funeral services to minimise crowd size and exposure to body fluids of the diseased,
- Clear communication from national and international health authorities to ensure verified information and avoid fake news, rumours, and panic (S.H. Ebrahim et al., 2020).

Most professional and amateur leagues closed the stadiums at the outbreak of COVID-19 and in the further step had to postpone or cancel the competitions. At the same time sports governing bodies from countries where the number of infections initially increased slowly, decided to continue the games. One of the first elite championships which decided to keep on playing was the Australian Football League. The league board introduced a package of organizational changes such as reducing the season's length, shortening games, taking out the spectators from sports venues, washing the footballs, and abolishing the traditional handshake between team captains at the start of each game (Bingaman, 2020). These actions have resulted in a momentary rise of attention on Australian football among sport fans in the United States since all professional sports games in this country have been stopped (Google Trends, 2020). A similar increase of interest was observed in relation to professional sports leagues in East Asia which re-opened already in late spring, while many other countries were still under strict lockdown (Tan, Lee, 2020; Nauright et al, 2020). This experience has later resulted in introducing policies on returning to elite sport competitions in other countries.

To prevent the sports audience to lose their connection to daily soccer TV channels, i.a. in Germany, broadcasted historical matches from international and domestic cup tournaments or emulated whole Bundesliga matchdays as they would have taken place live. Another temporary alternative to live soccer were eSports tournaments, e.g. FIFA20 videogame events with live coverage on YouTube and official soccer association websites (Schallhorn, Kunert, 2020).

Nevertheless a study on English soccer shows that sports events without spectators lead to serious financial consequences for clubs. This concerns mostly those playing in lower leagues, because of their strong dependency on matchday income (Bond et al., 2020; Reade, Singleton, 2020). Therefore empty stadiums is a big jeopardy for them unlike for Premier League clubs which insisted on finding solutions to continue playing even without fans. That is connected with their income structure in which matchday revenue has been constantly marginalized in the last years (Bond et al., 2020). This stands mainly for sponsorship (Górecka, 2020) and broadcasting profits from all around the world. These aspects have finally lead to decisions on behind-closed-doors games not only in England but in all European top divisions and UEFA tournaments (UEFA, 2020).

Not only the preparation of mass sports events and elite competitions has become a difficult task. As was predicted by Duarte Muñoz and Meyer even returning to regular training was a slow and complex process (Duarte Muñoz, Meyer, 2020). Taking Germany as an example first teams of major soccer clubs like Bayern Munich managed to resume exercising in small groups without spectators already within four weeks of Bundesliga suspension (Goal.com, 2020). But amateur soccer players had to wait much longer for restarting daily training sessions. Depending on the laws of a federal state reopening of sports took place between June and September 2020 (Fussball.de, 2020). Worth mentioning is that implemented safety measures are generally tailored to outdoor sports whilst indoor sports disciplines still suffer from restrictions (apart from elite athletes). Thus, especially contactless outdoor sports like golf could make an important contribution to encouraging people to be active and play sports even during a pandemic (Huth, Billion, 2021). On the other hand a possible solution for indoor disciplines might be the concept of certificates of equivalence which could allow sports centers to re-open safely and more rapidly (Blocken et al, 2020).

Social distancing measures during the lockdown lead also to seeking alternative training opportunities among amateur and recreational athletes. As many sports centers have been shut lots of consumers turned to online solutions like video training sessions (Sowier-Kasprzyk, Widawska-Stanis, 2020). Some of them (i.a. mixed-reality application called ZWIFT) proved to resemble traditional training methods even for elite sportsmen (Westmattmann et al., 2020).

The return to sport on every possible level is a matter which will be constantly discussed among governments, stakeholders and the media. This debate should be focusing mainly on the issues of volunteering and security management (Ludvigsen, Hayton, 2020). Depending on the development of the pandemic and access to vaccines one should expect a gradual process as proposed by international sports federations (FIH, 2020, World Rugby, 2020). In a guideline "Safely Returning to Hockey in view of the COVID-19 pandemic" the International Hockey Federation describes five possible steps for returning to domestic and international competition in hockey (IHF FIH, 2020). The decisions to move to the next stage should be related to regional/local regulations on public gathering, social distancing and travel restrictions as well as National Olympic Committee recommendations. Stage one will be a return to training basing on social and gathering rules. Stage two refers to regional competitions which hinge on gathering (up to 200 people) and domestical

travel restrictions. Stage three allowing cross border competitions could be introduced while abolishing the closure of borders and loosening of quarantine rules after moving between countries. In stage five trans-continental competitions may be reestablished when intercontinental travel limitations will be passed. And finally in a new post-vaccine reality normal hockey competition could be reintroduced (IHF FIH, 2020).

Results on the case study of Poland

Referring to the recommendations proposed by the World Health Organization the Polish government has adopted a strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infections including a number of public health and social measures. The first step was made shortly after the WHO officially characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic (WHO, 2020d). On 13 March 2020 the Polish Minister of Health issued a regulation on the state of epidemiological threat (Minister of Health, 2020a). Already one week later another act was issued – this time on the state of the epidemic (Minister of Health, 2020b). Both regulations have been released under to art. 46 pt. 2 and 4 of the law on preventing and combating infections and infectious diseases in humans (Law of 5 December, 2008). Pursuant to this rule the Ministry of Health is authorized to establish temporary restrictions i.a. in moving and traveling, functioning of institutions and workplaces, organizing of events and gatherings as well as obligations to certain sanitary behaviors related to functioning of industrial, service and trade facilities. Accordingly the Minister completely prohibited the running of any enterprise active in sport, recreation or entertainment and banned operating of swimming pools, gyms and fitness clubs.

These restrictions applied until end of March 2020 but meanwhile on 8 March an amendment of the law of 5 December 2008 was passed in the Polish Parliament. It added art. 46a and 46b to the law which empowered the Council of Ministers to introducesimilar limitations to those previously assigned to the competence of the Minister of Health. These two articles have become a subject of much controversyin the media. According to the Polish constitution (art. 92) a statutory provision empowering an authority toissue a regulation executing a parliamentary law should contain three mandatory elements: (1) the authority competent to issue the regulation, (2) the scope of matters of the regulation and (3) guidelines concerning the content of the regulation (Constitution, 1997). The heavily discussed art. 46b did not meet the last mentioned requirement. Moreover limitations of constitutional freedoms and rights should be established exclusively in parliamentary laws and only during a so called state of natural disaster which is regulated in the Polish constitution. What's more art. 46b authorized the Council of Ministers to issue certain restrictions for citizens and not a complete prohibition of their freedoms what has happened at the outbreak of the pandemic in Spring 2020.

Consequently, the provision was considered unconstitutional by many lawyers and entrepreneurs, what would mean that the lockdown regulation is illegal. Although the Polish Government continually persisted that the rules were correct, citizens (mainly entrepreneurs from the catering industry) punished by sanitary authorities for not following the restrictions brought complaints to administrative courts all over Poland. By mid of March 2021 over a dozen regional administrative courts issued judgements which invalidated the imposed penalties stating that regulations by the Council of Ministers were issued without a valid legal basis due to the imprecision of art. 46b.Eventually even the Supreme Court confirmed this line of interpretation by issuing a judgment on 16 March 2021 (Gazeta Prawna, 2021). Nevertheless a parliamentary regulation in the Polish legal system is valid until an invalidating verdict of the Constitutional Tribunal which so far has not even started any procedures due to political reasons. Therefore despite numerous court judgments, the restrictions remain still in force.

Since March 2020 the Polish government has already issued 13 regulations executing the mentioned art. 46b of law of 5 December 2008. Additionally, almost all of them have been amended many times. Altogether the Council of Ministers passed exactly 51 regulations until mid of February 2021. This has been heavily criticized mainly because of a state of uncertainty on how to behave. Constantly changing laws hinder the daily functioning of entrepreneurs and ordinary citizens. On the other hand it must be admitted that the development of the global pandemic was very dynamic. Next waves of COVID-19 dramatically increased the number of infections and deaths all over the world what necessitated the introduction of new rules of public health and social distancing measures. Poland was no exception.

Many of the amended rules concerned also the world of sports. As mentioned above, initially all aspects of physical activity have been banned (Council of Ministers, 2020a). Due to the far-reaching limitations in movement, this even applied to the possibility of practicing recreational outdoor sports like jogging. Access to parks and forests was forbidden, walks were limited to necessary life situations such as shopping or traveling to workplaces. Later the restrictions on sports have been gradually loosen.

In the beginning of May 2020, just a few days before the planned presidential election, a new regulation made an important exclusion from the ban on sport, recreation or entertainment enterprises (Council of Ministers, 2020b). Most of all it concernednational team athletes preparing for the upcoming Olympics and Paralympics, the top league clubs in speedway as well as elite sports clubs participating in outdoor games organized by national sports federations affiliated to certain international federations, although limited to one of the top three senior divisions and the Polish Cup. The last group in practice concerned only professional soccer. Matches had to be organized without spectators while staff was limited to a small amount of people depending on the facility where the event was taking place.

Moreover a number of outdoor sports infrastructure (i.a. stadiums, football pitches, golf courses, tennis courts, skateparks, go-cart, cycling, riding and canoeing tracks), has been opened also for other clubs and formal entities with the proviso of following safety measures (i.a. verification of the number of players; providing and using of disinfectants; intervals between incoming and outgoing user groups). Particularly important was lifting the obligation for athletes to cover their mouth and nose during training or competition. Worth noting is the fact, that almost every regulation had to be amended immediately due to lack of consultations with stakeholders. For example in mid May 2020 a new act was released extending the list of infrastructure to include i.a. sports halls what enabled indoor athletes to return to training (Council of Ministers, 2020c).

Another significant change took place at the end of May 2020 (Council of Ministers, 2020d) when the government decided to lift the ban on enterprises providing services in improving physical condition. This included first and foremost gyms along with fitness clubs and centers. Furthermore swimming pools and water parks were allowed to be relaunched. Additionally the new regulation opened soccer and speedway stadiums for spectators by up to 25% of their capacity, and from mid June even up to 50% (Council of Ministers, 2020e).

Unsurprisingly, directly after the second presidential elections which took place in June and July (first election was canceled due to safety measures and a split in the governing coalition) the previously ignored rise of infections lead to tighten restrictions. A new regulation issued at the beginning of August (Council of Ministers, 2020f) established yellow and red zones for poviats (second level of local government) with increased number of positive COVID tested. For sports enthusiasts from the affected red territories this meant closed gyms and fitness clubs, soccer and speedway matches in closed stadiums. In yellow ones the limitations did not touch the sports industry with exception to reduced numbers of fans on stadiums (to 25% of their capacity). Moreover it is to be noticed that this regulation also loosened one important aspect, meaning the possibility to avoid quarantine after crossing border in connection with an international sport event taking place in Poland. On top of that, from 1 September 2020 changes have been introduced in the schooling system in regard to physical education lessons which could be organized online (Minister of National Education, 2020a).

The next regulation was passed on 9 October 2020 during the so called second wave of COVID-19 (Council of Ministers, 2020g). This act restored severe restrictions on recreational athletes while preserving the possibility to train and compete in championships for professionals and amateurs training in clubs taking part in games organized by national federations. Gyms, fitness clubs and centers, pools as well as water parks were closed again, however all this infrastructure was still available for elite athletes. This created a very interesting niche on the sports market. Some national sports federation, notably the Polish Tug of War Association, specialized in payable licensing of individuals who would like to become officially professional athletes or even members of the national team to keep using sports facilities. What's more – because of closure of hotels – the described regulation provided for the possibility of using accommodation services by athletes, referees and other persons involved in elite sports events. This opportunity was notably helpful during the annual school winter break when youth players attending to sports championship schools and training in sports clubs were able to go on a sports camp (Minister of National Education, 2020b) while other pupils were not allowed to travel and had to stay at home.

At the end of the year a further regulation (Council of Ministers, 2020h) modified the scope of athletes who were eligible to train and compete in sports infrastructure (which generally was still closed for the masses). This time the rules applied to professional athletes according to art. 2 pt. 143 of regulation (EU) no. 651/2014, athletes who receive a sports scholarship, members of the national, Olympics or Paralympics team, academic athletes as well as sportsmen who compete in professional leagues or those organized by national sports federations regardless of the level. Certain types of sports and facilities (tennis courts, swimming pools, outdoor objects) were also still accessible for recreational athletes. From 26 February 2021 the previously implemented red and yellow zones have been replaced by regions particularly at risk of COVID-19 infection (Council of Ministers, 2020i). In these areas access to swimming pools has been again limited to national team members whereas gyms and fitness clubs / centers were completely closed. Because of a huge rise of infections at the beginning of March 2021 connected with the third wave of the pandemic the newest regulation issued by the Council of Ministers (2020j) dating on 19 March 2021 reintroduced a hard lockdown for recreational sports and organizations not affiliated to a national sports federations. Elite and amateur clubs associated in recognized federation retained their existing status. As for now, the rules are applicable until 9 April 2021.

Apart from various safety measures preventing the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19, the Polish government created also other normative solutions in response to the crisis caused by the pandemic. A law of 2 March 2020 (Law of 2 March 2020) introduced a number of support schemes, incentives and facilitations for business and non-profit sector. Sports organizations were eligible to receive state aid under the same conditions as entrepreneurs. It covered inter alia relief from tax and social security contribution, loans and grants. One of the instruments available specifically for individual athletes was an extension of national, Olympics or Paralympics team members scholarships until 4 months after the end of the pandemic. Non-governmental organizations which planned to perform projects co-funded from public grants, were entitled to use these funds for COVID-19 purposes. Sports federations along with the Polish Olympic and Paralympic Committees were also among sport institutions eligible to obtain co-financing from centrally managed public funds for training and anti-doping projects as well as popularization and promotion of sport (Law of 16 April 2020). On the other hand

organizers of sport events were obliged to return money to their participants in case they have been canceled due to the pandemic. Finally, also some organizational facilitation have been provided. As most sport clubs and federations act in the form of association, they were allowed to organize online general meetings of their members or delegates. Moreover the terms of office of board members of national sports federations have been extended until 6 months after the end of the pandemic.

It is worth mentioning that there have been different models on financial support for clubs hit by the COVID crisis. For example German soccer clubs participating in the UEFA Champions League have redistributed an amount of 20 mln EUR to remaining Bundesliga teams (Drewes et. al, 2021). Whereas the Spanish government forced the top soccer division La Liga and the national football (soccer) association to distribute part of their commercial income to smaller Olympic and non-Olympic sports in order to obtain a favorable view to resume soccer competitions (Garcia-Garcia et al., 2020).

Discussion

COVID-19 has created a new situation in world sports -a new reality of great organizational challenges. Everyday physical activity, training and competition of amateur and elite athletes, participation of supporters and staff in local and mega events – these are only the main aspects of sport which were threatened or disrupted by the pandemic. These and many other issues opened a natural need for regulations. International organizations, governments and sports federations have all started seeking solutions to lower the risk of virus transmission and later to safely return to normality. In this chaotic and diverse environment forcing constant amendments of law, many new fields of studies in sports law have opened. This article summarizes legal issues on COVID-19 in sports which have been recently raised in the literature. However only a few of them have been subject of scientific discussion so far, although many aspects seem to be strictly connected with economical implications of the pandemic which were already described in the literature. Due to importance of legal analyzes for stakeholders and policymakers, especially in rapidly changing circumstances, the debate on juridical aspects of COVID-19 in sports definitely should be continued. Also by the academics.

The paper presents also a comprehensive analysis of what happened in Poland's legal system in terms of the pandemic's impact on sports. It points out controversies which have arisen due to the implementation of seemingly unconstitutional regulations. It shows how the Polish government constantly changed the regulations regarding COVID-19 depending on the development of the illness, leaving citizens and sports organizations in a state of uncertainty. This topic still needs in-depth research, notably on the consequences of judgements annulling penalties imposed for non-compliance with public health regulations. Moreover the Polish case study may be compared with legal instruments adopted in other countries. Especially with the purpose to learn from positive and negative experience while working out policies on reopening sports for governing bodies on domestic and international level.

Conclusions

The restrictions introduced to sports will possibly stay with us for a longer period of time, notably in mass sport and mass sport events. Therefore smart strategies of returning to the pre-COVID reality alongside thoughtful provisions of the law are crucial elements of the way to normality. This debate primarily requires the participation of policymakers, sports clubs and athletes or fans. Researchers studying sports law and other experts should also take part in this discussion. Thus, a scientific dialogue on the legal matters of COVID-19 in sports is necessary to support and encourage the discourse with other stakeholders.

The aim of this article was to present a general insight on legal aspects related to combating the pandemic in global context and on the example of Poland. The paper describes main juridical issues arising from the reviewed literature. It also shows the legislative path which was gone through in terms of COVID-19 in sports. Hence it may become the basis for further studies in particular in form of a comparative legal research. Since the fight against the coronavirus is still underway, the review shows that there are still broad research fields to be investigated. Furthermore results of this paper could serve as an analytic material and recommendations for policymakers while preparing strategies for returning to normal functioning of sports.

Conflicts of interest - No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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