



SAUDI ARABIA'S SPORTS AND GAMING LEGAL RENAISSANCE UNDER VISION 2030

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a sports and gaming renaissance, driven by Vision 2030, ambitious national initiatives, significant investments, and world-class infrastructure. The Kingdom seeks to position itself as a global hub for professional sports, esports, and digital gaming, fostering talent development, innovation, and international engagement. In parallel, it is modernizing its legal and regulatory framework to protect investors, athletes, and intellectual property, aligning domestic laws with international standards. This integrated strategy reflects a clear ambition to establish Saudi Arabia as a premier global destination for sports and gaming.

Since its launch in 2016, Vision 2030 has identified sports and gaming as key pillars of economic diversification, national branding, and soft power, formally recognizing them as national industries. These sectors are supported by integrated legal, institutional, and investment frameworks that provide regulatory certainty and incentives for both local and international stakeholders. Reformed corporate structures now allow sports clubs and gaming ventures to operate as joint-stock companies, supported by the Public Investment Fund ("PIF"). The Companies Law (Royal Decree No. M/132 of 2022), together with Capital Market Authority regulations, establishes mechanisms for public offerings, shareholder protection, and transparent governance. Foreign investment is further encouraged through streamlined licensing procedures, special economic zones, and targeted tax incentives.

The Investment Law (Royal Decree No. M/19 of 2024) removed sector-specific ownership restrictions, permitting 100% foreign ownership in certain entertainment and gaming activities. Oversight is exercised by the Ministry of Sport and national federations, while the Saudi Sports Arbitration Center ("SSAC") provides specialized dispute resolution under the Arbitration Law, ensuring enforceability of domestic and international awards.



SPORTS AND GAMING MARKET EXPANSION SUPPORTED BY LEGAL INNOVATION

Investment in Saudi Arabia's sports and gaming sectors has accelerated, reflecting commercial growth supported by regulatory maturity. The Saudi Pro League now reaches more than 230 million viewers globally, while the Kingdom hosts major international sporting events across multiple disciplines. In parallel, the National Gaming and Esports Strategy ("NGES"), launched in 2022, drives sector growth in alignment with Vision 2030.

PIF's acquisitions of global gaming leaders such as ESL FACEIT Group, Scopely, and Electronic Arts—exceeding USD 60 billion—are subject to Saudi merger control requirements under the Competition Law (Royal Decree No. M/75 of 2019) and review by the General Authority for Competition. These transactions involve complex legal structuring across M&A regulation, intellectual property, governance, cybersecurity, AML compliance, and data protection, underscoring the importance of robust due diligence and contractual safeguards.



REGULATORY FRAMEWORK: ENSURING LEGAL CERTAINTY AND INVESTOR PROTECTION

A comprehensive regulatory ecosystem underpins the sports, gaming, and esports sectors, providing operational clarity and investor confidence. Esports is fully professionalized, supported by enforceable player contracts, labor law compliance, and specialized dispute resolution mechanisms.

Intellectual property rights are protected by the Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property ("SAIP") in line with the Berne Convention and the TRIPS Agreement, covering copyright, trademarks, digital assets, and broadcasting and streaming rights. Data protection and cybersecurity obligations form a core component of the regulatory framework as the Kingdom expands its digital economy.

Foreign investors benefit from transparent licensing regimes administered by the Ministry of Investment ("MISA"), alongside access to commercial courts and arbitration. Labor reforms support lawful recruitment of foreign talent and reinforce contractual enforceability across sports and gaming operations.

REGULATORY PATHWAYS FOR DIGITAL CONTENT AND GAMING PLATFORMS

Operators of digital content and gaming platforms must classify their services—such as OTT, IPTV, Online Gaming, or Esports—to determine applicable licensing, registration, or notification requirements. Multi-service platforms must comply with the regulatory conditions applicable to each activity.

Licensing applications are submitted to the Communications, Space and Technology Commission ("CST"), supported by incorporation documents, business plans, technical information, and the appointment of a Platform Liaison Officer. Licensed services must launch within prescribed timelines and comply with ongoing reporting, renewal, and coordination requirements involving MISA, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority ("ZATCA"). This structured process enhances legal certainty and operational predictability.

LEGAL PROTECTIONS AND EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

Saudi corporate and commercial laws ensure the enforceability of sponsorships, player contracts, media rights, and acquisitions. The Commercial Courts Law (Royal Decree No. M/93 of 2020) provides specialized jurisdiction for business disputes, complemented by intellectual property enforcement mechanisms. Regulatory initiatives addressing AI, virtual economies, and emerging technologies clarify data protection, cybersecurity, and digital ownership.





A SECURE LEGAL ENVIRONMENT FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS

Saudi Arabia has established a stable, transparent, and internationally aligned legal framework for sports, esports, and gaming. Through modern corporate legislation, liberalized foreign ownership rules, strong IP protection, and reliable dispute resolution mechanisms, the Kingdom offers foreign investors a predictable and secure environment for long-term participation. This regulatory maturity creates significant opportunities across club ownership, gaming platforms, esports teams, content development, sponsorships, and technology investment, positioning Saudi Arabia as a leading regional and global hub for sports and gaming under Vision 2030.

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