



The Federal Republic of Germany has submitted the state aid measure for Oldenburg's professional football to the DG Competition for review

European competition watchdog examines publicly owned football stadium

Oldenburg – As the city of Oldenburg has now confirmed, the final version of the notification documents was sent to the European Commission on 4 February 2026. This followed a three-year campaign by the Campaign "KEIN StadionBau" against the interference in the European single market. "We feared that the outgoing mayor, Jürgen Krogmann (SPD), would follow the example of the stadiums in Regensburg and Offenbach," says Klaas Brumann, spokesperson for the NGO. "Our impression is that these cities are also subsidizing their football stadiums illegally."

Expensive hospitality, VIP boxes and heated pitches instead of swimming pools and school sports

"Many city leaders are pushing ahead with their prestige projects, like little kings." They spend a particularly large amount of taxpayers' money on football stadiums," explains Brumann, "because politicians apparently believe this might increase their popularity." At the same time, these same politicians complain about their municipalities' financial difficulties. In real life, voters are suffering from a lack of childcare, dilapidated schools, crumbling bridges, roads in need of repair and cuts to climate adaptation funding. Brumann: "Recent election results for example in Kaiserslautern in Rhineland-Palatinate show how low a city with a large football stadium can sink."

Football companies competing for talent and sponsors

Commercial football competes for the most powerful sponsors and the best talent. Fan shops, VIP hospitalities and boxes subsidized with taxpayer money are intended to make home stadiums more attractive to commercial sponsors. Floodlights and the climate-killing "lawn heating" ensure

that matches always kick off on time for live TV broadcasts, to avoid deductions in the television revenues.

The improved profitability resulting from city subsidies allows football businesses to attract more expensive footballers. Football companies from Denmark, Norway, and Austria, among others, are also competing for the same talents. However, these competitors usually receive far less public funding for their stadiums. The spokesperson for "KEIN StadionBau" condemns German tax doping: "Hardly any country benefits more from the freedom of movement and the single market as Germany." He argues that it is unsportsmanlike and economically damaging that German politicians are using city coffers to undermine the principles of fair competition. "Even though it is a mammoth task, we are committed to turning off the money tap and thus establishing a market-based and fair system in European football."

Hello Kerkrade, Randers and Strasbourg! Your intervention in the internal market is subject to notification.

Whenever arenas are planned for commercial entertainment sports, public funds may only be released once it has been clarified whether an infrastructure project complies with the rules of the European single market. Cities like Bucharest, Cottbus and Lommel are currently facing this process. Due to the planned renovation of the stadium of the "VfL Osnabrück GmbH & Co. KG aA", the mayoral candidate Prof. Dr. Thomas Groß ("Die Linke") submitted so-called market information to the Brussels competition authority this week. According to the spokesperson for the Oldenburg campaign, this information reveals that the public funding for the renovation works planned for Osnabrück's stadium exceeds the threshold. Groß considers the project to be illegal state aid. The campaign "KEIN StadionBau" stated that it had repeatedly asked the current mayor to immediately initiate the EU notification procedure. This procedure examines, among other things, whether the usage concept meets the requirements and how the project can be adapted, if necessary, to ensure its compliance with competition law.

Does German men's football receive a €380 million subsidy from empty city coffers?

The city of Oldenburg plans to finance a new stadium for the „VfB Oldenburg Fußball GmbH“ entirely with taxpayer's money. The third-division stadium for only 10.000 spectators is slated to receive an annual subsidy of €2.6 million after its completion. If all German cities and municipalities were to subsidize the stadiums of the top four tiers of German football as much as Oldenburg is planning, the total would amount to €380 million per year. According to the Campaign's spokesperson Brumann, most municipalities pay significantly lower subsidies. "We will take action against this financial doping," he said. He argued that it is unacceptable for a system, in which millions are spent on transfers and in which its stars can become immensely wealthy, to be subsidized from cash-strapped city coffers.

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Further information:

What is state aid for professional sports infrastructure? What is the European single market? Why can a municipal football stadium be considered an unlawful interference with the free single market? What does the European competition authority do, when does it intervene, and what are the consequences? Explained in under 11 minutes: youtu.be/8ZrSgqJ5nm8

State aid in Oldenburg:

keinstadionbau.de/unzulassige-beihilfe-fur-den-stadionneubau-in-oldenburg

This press release is available online: <https://bit.ly/DGCompetition>

Background information:

The campaign "KEIN StadionBau" aims to prevent the city of Oldenburg from building a second football stadium, which is to be financed entirely by taxpayers' money. The estimated construction costs exceed €50 million. Along the way, the NGO has examined the tricks of the football industry, which relieve the cash-strapped coffers of German municipalities of many millions.