

## LEGAL FOUNDATIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESPORTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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**Annotation.** The article examines the specific features of the legal regulation of e-sports, analyzing both international and national approaches to its qualification and legal status. The author highlights key issues related to the protection of esports players' rights, taxation of prize money, intellectual property, regulation of contractual relations, and cybersecurity. Special attention is paid to the legal practice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, where esports is officially recognized as a sport, allowing the application of sports legislation norms and providing state support. The article also analyzes international legal acts and recommendations affecting the legal status of esports. The author concludes that further improvement of legislation is necessary to ensure the transparency and sustainability of the esports industry as a legitimate form of professional activity.

**Keywords:** esports, legal regulation, intellectual property, taxation, labor relations, sports law, contractual relations, international law, Uzbekistan, cybersecurity.

**Introduction.** Esports, or electronic sports, is a form of organized video gaming competition in which players or teams compete against each other at a professional level using computer or console platforms [4]. Unlike traditional video games, it is characterized by strict rules, the presence of professional leagues and international tournaments, and significant prize pools, forming an entire industry with millions of viewers worldwide [5].

Internationally, esports is viewed as a phenomenon that combines competitive sports, elements of the entertainment industry, and innovative digital technologies. The International Esports Federation ( IESF ) defines it as a competitive activity that requires strategic thinking, rapid reaction times, team coordination, and strong psychological skills [3]. Furthermore, a number of countries, including South Korea, China, the United States, and Russia, have officially recognized esports as a sport, enshrining its status in relevant regulations [6].

This recognition has opened the door to the institutionalization of esports, the development of specialized federations, the creation of professional clubs, and the implementation of educational programs for training esports athletes. Furthermore, the recognition of e-sports allows states to apply sports law, provide tax and financial incentives, and incorporate esports into national physical education and sports strategies.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, eSports also received official legal status as a sport, marking an important step in its development and integration into the state sports regulation system [1; 2]. This decision created the legal preconditions for state support, the organization of national tournaments, participation in international competitions, and attracting investment in the eSports industry. At the same time, this raises a number of legal issues related to the taxation of prize money, the protection of eSports athletes' rights, intellectual property, cybersecurity, and the regulation of contractual relations.

Thus, studying the legal regulation of eSports in Uzbekistan appears relevant and practically significant, as it allows us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing legal framework, as well as identify areas for its further improvement, taking into account international experience and national characteristics.



**Research methods.** In preparing this article, a combination of general scientific and specialized legal methods was used, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the legal regulation of eSports both internationally and in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

**Comparative legal analysis.** This method was used to compare the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the regulations of foreign countries (South Korea, the United States, China, and the European Union), as well as with international recommendations and documents developed by the International Esports Federation (IESF), the International Olympic Committee (IOC), UNESCO, and other organizations. This approach allowed us to identify key trends and differences in approaches to qualifying esports, determining its legal status, taxing prize funds, and regulating contractual relations.

**A systems approach.** This allowed us to consider esports not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a complex socio-legal category, located at the intersection of sports, labor, tax, information, and copyright law. This allowed us to identify the interconnections between individual legal institutions and demonstrate how changes in one area of law (for example, tax law) impact others (for example, labor or sports law).

**Doctrinal analysis.** A study of scientific literature, monographs, dissertations, and publications in specialized legal journals allowed us to identify modern theoretical approaches to understanding esports and its legal regulation. Particular attention was paid to Uzbek scientific doctrine and its relationship with international concepts. This method allowed for the systematization and critical evaluation of existing scientific views and made it possible to identify gaps in the theoretical development of the issue.

**Empirical Method.** The practical basis of the study included an analysis of the Republic of Uzbekistan's regulatory legal acts governing sports, intellectual property, information technology, and taxation. Additionally, the activities of government agencies and specialized federations were examined, as well as law enforcement practices related to the organization of eSports tournaments, player contracts, and prize fund taxation.

**The historical and legal method** was used to study the development of legal regulation of esports, from the first steps of its institutionalization in Uzbekistan to its official recognition as a sport. This allowed us to trace the evolution of state policy and identify the factors that influenced the consolidation of esports in the national legal system.

**The formal legal method** was used to analyze the content of legal norms enshrined in laws and regulations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as to identify their internal logic, structure, and compliance with international legal standards.

**Research results.** International experience in the legal regulation of eSports. An analysis of international practice demonstrates the existence of various models of legal regulation of eSports, determined by the socio-economic and legal characteristics of specific countries:

**South Korea** is a recognized leader in the institutionalization of esports. The Korea Esports Association ( KeSPA ) was established and actively operates here, serving as the country's regulator and oversight body. The association is responsible for licensing players and clubs, organizing tournaments, standardizing rules, and ensuring legal protection for participants. Thanks to a strict regulatory framework, esports in the Republic of Korea has become part of national sports policy and has received support through educational and youth programs.

**The United States** is characterized by a so-called industrial approach, whereby legal regulation is based not on a single, specialized law, but through the application of labor, tax, copyright, and contract law. In the United States, the practice of concluding employment contracts with eSports players is actively used, providing for job guarantees, wages, health insurance, and copyright protection. Particular attention is paid to the tax regulation of players' income from prize pools, sponsorships, and advertising agreements.



**China** was one of the first countries to legally recognize esports as an official sport. Chinese government agencies have implemented a system for training professional personnel, including training coaches, referees, and analysts at specialized educational institutions. Esports is considered part of the national digital economy strategy, and government support is aimed at developing infrastructure and creating a legal environment to attract investment.

**European Union.** Within the EU, there is no single, unified system for esports regulation, due to differences in national legal systems. However, individual countries, such as **France** and **Germany**, have taken steps to create their own legal frameworks. For example, France has adopted a law establishing the legal status of esports athletes and regulating contracts with players, while Germany focuses on taxation and intellectual property protection.

#### **National Regulation in the Republic of Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan demonstrates dynamic development of legal regulation of eSports, although it is still in its infancy:

In **2018, eSports was officially recognized as a sport**, which created the basis for its further institutionalization and legal regulation.

**The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Physical Culture and Sports"** and a number of bylaws apply to the activities of eSports organizations; however, they do not always take into account the specifics of digital technologies and the virtual gaming environment.

In practice, **problems arise in the area of labor relations**, as employment contracts with eSports athletes are extremely rare. Civil law contracts (CLCs) predominate, and they do not provide comprehensive social protection for players.

There are **gaps in tax regulation**: there are no clear mechanisms for taxing prize payments, income from advertising contracts and broadcasts, which reduces the transparency of financial flows.

Particular attention is required to the issue of **legal regulation of intellectual property** related to the use of game content, software licensing and the protection of developers' copyrights.

**Ensuring cybersecurity** remains a pressing issue, including the development and implementation of anti-cheat systems aimed at combating rule violations and ensuring the fairness of competitions.

Thus, the results of the study confirm the need for further improvement of the national legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in order to harmonize it with international practice, eliminate existing legal gaps and form a comprehensive regulatory framework that takes into account the interdisciplinary nature of eSports.

**Conclusion.** Esports in Uzbekistan already enjoys legal status as an official sport, but its full development requires legislative improvement. Based on international experience, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive legal framework that includes tax, labor, copyright, and sports laws, as well as cybersecurity regulations. This will help transform esports into a sustainable and competitive sector of the national economy.

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