

An Analysis of Sport Management and Administrative Control in Ombudsman Decisions

Recep FEDAI¹, Erdal DEMİR², Ferhat AKTAŞ³

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution of Türkiye concerning sport within the relationship between sport management, public administration and administrative control. The study analyses the administrative problem areas reflected in sport-related decisions, the legal and managerial principles considered by the Institution, and the control function that recommendation decisions may perform in sport management.

Method: The study was designed as a qualitative case study. The research data were obtained from publicly accessible decisions in the Institution's Decisions Database. Eight decisions directly related to sport management were included in the study. The data were analyzed through document analysis and directed content analysis.

Results: Four main themes were identified: coaching certificates and qualification procedures; athlete transfer and club-related procedures; school sports and competition processes; and arbitration, refereeing and reasoned decision-making. The findings indicate that sport-related disputes mainly concern documentation, the right to apply, the exercise of discretionary power, reasoning, equality, transparency and administrative procedure.

Conclusion: The findings show that sport management has a clear public administration dimension, since many disputes arise from administrative acts and practices carried out by federations, provincial directorates, educational institutions and other public bodies. Although the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution are not legally binding, they may serve as a relevant source for examining administrative control in sport management and for tracing the practical meaning of good administration principles.

Keywords: Ombudsman Institution, Sport Management, Public Administration, Administrative Control.

ÖZET

Kamu Denetçiliği Kararlarında Spor Yönetimi ve İdari Denetim Üzerine Bir Analiz

Amaç: Bu çalışmada, Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu'nun spor alanına ilişkin kararları spor yönetimi, kamu yönetimi ve idari denetim ilişkisi içinde incelenmektedir. Araştırmanın amacı, Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu (KDK) kararlarına yansıyan spor uyuşmazlıklarının hangi idari sorun alanlarında toplandığını, kurumun hangi hukuki ve yönetsel ilkeleri dikkate aldığını ve tavsiye kararlarının spor yönetiminde nasıl bir denetim işlevi üstlenebileceğini analiz etmektir.

Yöntem: Nitel araştırma yaklaşımıyla tasarlanan çalışmada, KDK'nın kamuya açık Kararlar Bilgi Bankası üzerinden erişilen kararları taranmıştır. Spor yönetimiyle doğrudan ilişkili olduğu belirlenen sekiz karar araştırma kapsamına alınmıştır. Veriler, doküman incelemesi ve yönlendirilmiş içerik analizi yaklaşımıyla değerlendirilmiştir.

Bulgular: İncelenen kararlar dört ana tema altında sınıflandırılmıştır: Antrenörlük belgesi ve yeterlilik işlemleri; sporcu geçişi ve kulüp işlemleri; okul sporları ve müsabaka süreçleri;

¹ Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, Lapseki Meslek Yüksekokulu/Türkiye, ORCID NO: 0000-0002-5547-0048, receptedai@comu.edu.tr

² Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi/Türkiye, ORCID NO: 0000-0001-9478-5045, erdaldemir23@hotmail.com

³ Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, Yenice Meslek Yüksekokulu/Türkiye, ORCID NO: 0000-0003-0010-5876, ferhataktas@comu.edu.tr

tahkim, hakemlik ve gerekçeli karar sorunları. Bulgular, spor uyuşmazlıklarının belge düzeni, başvuru hakkı, takdir yetkisinin kullanımı, gerekçelendirme, eşitlik, şeffaflık ve idari usul gibi başlıklarda yoğunlaştığına işaret etmektedir.

Sonuç: Spor yönetimi yalnızca müsabaka kurallarının uygulanmasına dayalı teknik bir alan değildir. Federasyonlar, il müdürlükleri, eğitim kurumları ve diğer idari birimler aracılığıyla yürütülen işlem ve uygulamalar, spor alanındaki uyuşmazlıkların kamu yönetimi boyutunu güçlendirmektedir. KDK kararları bağlayıcı olmamakla birlikte, spor yönetiminde idari işleyişin denetlenmesi ve iyi yönetim ilkelerinin uygulamadaki karşılığının izlenmesi bakımından dikkate değer bir kaynak olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, Spor Yönetimi, Kamu Yönetimi, İdari Denetim.

INTRODUCTION

Non-judicial remedies have gained increasing importance in recent years in the resolution of administrative disputes arising in sport management. The field of sports is not limited to competition and performance-related processes. The acts and practices of public authorities, affiliated institutions, federations, local governments and educational institutions also fall within the administrative framework of sport management. Therefore, it is not sufficient to assess sports-related disputes merely as technical matters connected with the conduct of sporting activities. The manner in which the administration makes decisions, establishes administrative acts and interacts with applicants constitutes one of the factors that produces legal and administrative consequences in sport management.

The Ombudsman Institution functions as an administrative control body that examines complaints concerning the functioning of the administration within the framework of human rights, legality, equity and the principles of good administration. In this respect, the Ombudsman Institution may be considered one of the institutional control mechanisms available for the assessment of administrative disputes in the field of sports (Law No. 6328, 2012).

According to Law No. 6328, the Ombudsman Institution is mandated to examine, investigate and make recommendations to the administration regarding all kinds of acts, actions, attitudes and conduct of the administration in terms of their compliance with law and equity. The Institution's mandate is regulated in a manner that covers different aspects of administrative functioning. The relevant regulation also states that the principles of good administration shall be taken into consideration during the examination process (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2013).

The fact that “education, youth and sports” is included as a separate category among the applications submitted to the Ombudsman Institution suggests that administrative disputes

related to sports have a certain place on the Institution's agenda. However, the classification of applications arising from scholarships, loans, dormitories, student affairs and sporting activities under the same heading makes it difficult to directly identify decisions specific to the field of sports. The existence of different types of decisions, such as rejection, recommendation, partial recommendation and amicable settlement, also makes it necessary to further delimit the scope of the research.

This study examines the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution concerning the field of sports by considering these limitations. The accessible decision texts, particularly recommendation decisions, make it possible to trace which administrative act or practice the Ombudsman Institution considered problematic and on which legal or administrative principles it based its assessment. Among the decisions examined, the prominent issues include coaching certificates and professional qualifications, competition processes within the scope of school sports, consent and transfer procedures concerning sports clubs, the publication of arbitration board decisions (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2024a; Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2025a).

The decisions are evaluated within the framework of the principles of good administration and the limits of recommendation-based control. Accordingly, the aim is to examine the administrative problem areas in which sports-related disputes reflected in the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution are concentrated. The study also discusses which principles the Ombudsman Institution invokes, what types of recommendations it addresses to the administration, and how these recommendations may correspond to practice.

The distinctive aspect of the study is that it does not treat the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution merely as texts through which individual applications are concluded. Rather, the decisions are read as documents that make it possible to assess the administrative problems encountered during the implementation of public policies in the field of sports and to understand the points at which the administration is cautioned to take corrective action.

The study does not claim to provide a quantitative inventory of all decisions of the Ombudsman Institution concerning the field of sports. The scope of the research is limited to the decisions identified as being directly related to sport management among the records available in the Ombudsman Institution Decisions Database. Since the heading "education, youth and sports" includes different types of applications together, it was necessary to identify decisions concerning the field of sports through a criteria-based selection process.

The analysis focuses on the issues around which the selected decisions are concentrated, the grounds on which they are based, and the types of assessments they contain regarding administrative functioning. The dataset was constructed by selecting the records directly related to the research question, and analysis was conducted on the basis of the decisions identified as relevant to sport management.

Studies on the Ombudsman Institution and the Literature on the Field of Sports

Studies on the Ombudsman Institution generally focus on the Institution's legal status, functioning, types of decisions, effectiveness and contribution to public administration. Efe and Demirci (2013) consider the ombudsman institution because of the emerging need for new mechanisms of rights seeking in contemporary public administration. According to the authors, the ombudsman mechanism, which is based on the principles of independence, impartiality and equity, functions as a control instrument that may contribute to the operation of public administration in greater conformity with the rule of law, transparency and the principles of good administration.

The study conducted by Akyıldız and Sevinç (2021), based on annual reports also emphasizes that the Ombudsman Institution is not merely a body that records complaints. In that study, the Institution is examined as a control body that evaluates the acts, actions, attitudes and conduct of the administration in terms of their compliance with law and equity.

Köseoğlu (2024) evaluates the Ombudsman Institution as a relatively fast and low-cost remedy based on expert assessment. According to the author, the Institution has a function that may contribute to the resolution of certain disputes without their being brought before the courts. Asta's (2025) assessment based on activity reports focuses on the relationship between the Institution's types of decisions and its impact on administrative functioning. The study states that amicable settlement and recommendation decisions reflect the Institution's capacity to promote reconciliation and guide the administration. It is also noted that as the level of compliance by administrations with recommendation decisions increases, the impact of the Ombudsman Institution on administrative practices may also become stronger.

In studies on the Ombudsman Institution, the Institution's relationship with governance, democratic participation and the culture of rights seeking constitutes an important area of discussion. Sesli (2021) addresses the visibility and effectiveness of the Ombudsman Institution in the context of participatory democracy. In that study, the Ombudsman Institution is evaluated not only as a channel of administrative control, but also as an application mechanism that may strengthen citizens' contact with public administration.

Günel and Mülazımoğlu (2021), on the other hand, examine the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution in the context of problems of poor governance. According to the authors, openness, accountability, participation, access to information and legality are among the main criteria that determine the quality of public administration.

Hanaşoğlu and Atmaca (2026) focus on a more specific field of public service by examining applications submitted to the Ombudsman Institution by teachers. In that study, personal rights, social security, financial claims, appointment procedures and assignment procedures are evaluated among the main areas of dispute. This example is important in that it shows that the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution cannot be treated merely as texts through which individual applications are concluded. The decisions may also be read as documents suitable for evaluating administrative functioning in a specific field of public service. A similar reading is also possible for the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution concerning the field of sports.

Studies concerning the field of sports mostly focus on management structure, forms of organization and reform processes. Solmaz and Yetim (2018) examine the transformation of the Turkish sports structure within the framework of the new public management approach. According to the authors, the field of sports is not limited solely to the organization of competitions; it should also be addressed as a matter of public administration and organizational structure. In the study, legal and institutional arrangements in sport management are associated with the principles of effectiveness, efficiency, autonomy and strategic management. Within the scope of the literature reviewed for this study, no study was identified that directly examines the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution with specific reference to sport management. Recommendation decisions concerning the field of sports are addressed not merely as texts resulting from individual applications, but as documents that provide data on the functioning of sport management. The rapid implementation of rules in sport management, the fact that decision-making processes produce consequences within a short period and the influence of relatively autonomous structures such as federations distinguish this field, to some extent, from other public services. Nevertheless, it is not sufficient to regard sports-related disputes merely as technical or sector-specific matters.

Applications submitted in this field require a broader examination in terms of participation, control, administrative accountability and the principles of good administration. The decisions of the Ombudsman Institution may be read not only as documents that resolve disputes between the administration and the applicant in the field of sports, but also as sources

that make it possible to evaluate problems encountered in administrative functioning. The study discusses the dimension of sport management that intersects with public administration through the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Ombudsmanship and the Ombudsman Institution in Türkiye

In Türkiye, the ombudsman institution has acquired an institutional structure under the name of the Ombudsman Institution. In Turkish, the concept of ombudsman is explained through terms such as “public auditor”, “arbitrator” and “mediator” (Arslan, 1986). The works of Yılmaz Altuğ, Muammer Oytan and Ömer Baylan shaped early academic assessments on the subject. Altuğ (1968) addressed the ombudsman institution in general terms as a mechanism that protects the individual against the administration’s excess of authority and provided an early framework in the Turkish literature. Oytan (1975) stated that, even if the ombudsman is elected by parliament, the office should act independently of both the government and parliament. He also emphasized the institutional importance of a structure that examines complaints, operates with broad investigative powers and oversees administrative functioning. Baylan (1978), in turn, discussed whether such an institution was needed in Türkiye. In his study, he proposed Turkish equivalents such as *halk denetçisi* [people’s auditor], *parlamento denetçisi* [parliamentary auditor] and *kamu yönetimi başdenetçisi* [chief auditor of public administration], and examined Scandinavian, Anglo-American and continental European examples comparatively.

The establishment of the Ombudsman Institution was not the result of a single regulation completed within a short period. The process of institutionalization was based on a long period of preparation and debate. Türkiye’s development plans gradually placed greater emphasis on resolving disputes between the administration and citizens through non-judicial mechanisms that would be faster, more accessible and more reasonable (Avaner and Fedai, 2021). This tendency became clearer in the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan and the Eighth Five-Year Development Plan, where the need for a complaint examination mechanism independent of the administration was linked to the objective of improving efficiency in public services (DPT, 1996; DPT, 2000).

During the same period, the new public management approach also influenced reform debates. Issues such as the restructuring of the state, the pursuit of effectiveness and efficiency in public services, decentralization and administrative flexibility were at the center of these debates. It may also be argued that external dynamics played a role in the establishment process.

Following the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Türkiye's process of alignment with the European Union gained momentum. With the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, the Copenhagen Criteria, human rights standards and institutional efforts concerning the control of the administration came further to the fore. The Draft Framework Law on Public Administration, discussed in 2003, and Law No. 5548 of 2006 were among the important initiatives aimed at establishing an ombudsman institution in Türkiye. However, the Draft Framework Law on Public Administration did not produce a lasting institutional outcome. Law No. 5548, on the other hand, could not be implemented due to the annulment decision of the Constitutional Court.

In Türkiye, the ombudsman institution acquired constitutional and legal standing through Law No. 6328 on the Ombudsman Institution, following the constitutional amendment of 2010 (Law No. 6328, 2012). The Law defines the Ombudsman Institution as an institution affiliated with the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, possessing public legal personality and a special budget. The main purpose of the Institution is to establish an independent and effective complaint mechanism within the functioning of public services.

The Ombudsman Institution is entrusted with examining and investigating the acts, actions, attitudes and conduct of the administration within an understanding of justice based on human rights, and with making recommendations to the administration (Law No. 6328, art. 1). The Institution effectively began its activities in 2013. Its mandate, however, is limited by certain exceptions. Legislative activities, decisions related to the exercise of judicial power, and activities of the Turkish Armed Forces that are solely military in nature are excluded from the Institution's scope of examination. Administrative acts, actions, attitudes and conduct falling outside these exceptions are within the Institution's scope of review (Law No. 6328, art. 5). The Ombudsman Institution may be regarded as occupying an important position within the system of administrative control in terms of the rule of law, the principles of good administration, transparency, accountability and the culture of rights-seeking.

Natural and legal persons may apply to the Ombudsman Institution. Those who claim that their rights have been violated due to administrative acts and practices may submit an application to the Institution. In matters concerning human rights, women's rights, children's rights and the public interest, however, the condition of a rights violation is not required. As a rule, applications must be submitted after administrative remedies have been exhausted and within a six-month period. In cases where there is a risk of damage that would be difficult or impossible to remedy, this condition may be interpreted more flexibly. The Ombudsman Institution conducts an examination upon application and may issue recommendations to the

relevant administration. The Institution also has the authority to prepare annual and special reports. Its main function is to establish a non-judicial mechanism of control and application between the administration and the individual. In addition, it is expected to contribute to the elimination of administrative deficiencies and to support the strengthening of the understanding of good administration. As a result, the Ombudsman Institution has become one of the important components of the administrative control system in Türkiye, under the influence of increasing demands for public services and the process of alignment with the European Union.

The Ombudsman Institution's Guiding Role in Sports Arbitration Processes

In Turkish law, some disputes in the field of sports are addressed through special arbitration mechanisms rather than before ordinary courts. Article 59 of the Constitution provides a constitutional basis for the compulsory arbitration model with respect to the decisions of sports federations concerning the administration and discipline of sporting activities. The first prominent structure in this field is the Arbitration Board within the “Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu” (TFF). Law No. 3813 of 17 June 1992 established the autonomous structure of the Turkish Football Federation, while Law No. 5894 later reorganized this framework. Under the current legal framework, the TFF Arbitration Board functions as the highest legal body of the Federation within the limits set by the relevant legislation. The second structure is the arbitration regime within the field of the “Gençlik ve Spor Bakanlığı”. Here, the legal basis is not confined to the level of regulation. The main framework was established under Law No. 3289 on Youth and Sports Services and was further specified through secondary legislation. Under the Ministry's legislation, the Arbitration Board appears to be competent in certain disputes arising between federations, clubs, athletes, referees and technical staff. The Board's jurisdiction does not cover every sports-related dispute, but only those disputes specified in the relevant legislation (Law No. 3289).

At the international level, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) comes to the fore. CAS is an independent sports arbitration institution established on the initiative of the International Olympic Committee and became operational in 1984. According to Özsoy, CAS is perceived as the highest appeal authority in international sports disputes. Nevertheless, it would be more appropriate to characterise CAS not as a state court in the classical sense, but as an institutionalised arbitration body (Özsoy, 2008). The final and binding nature of sports arbitration decisions distinguishes the role of the Ombudsman Institution in this field from direct judicial review.

The Ombudsman Institution cannot annul the decisions of arbitration boards on the merits. However, it may make recommendations to the administration on matters such as procedure, transparency, reasoning and access to information. Therefore, the Institution's relationship with sports arbitration is established not through a re-examination of the substance of decisions, but through the improvement of administrative functioning and the strengthening of legal certainty. In its recommendation decision no. 2022/168, the Ombudsman Institution stated that the decisions of the Arbitration Board of the Ministry of Youth and Sports should be published in a publicly accessible manner, while ensuring the protection of personal data (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2022a). In a field where a compulsory arbitration regime applies, the availability of reasoned and accessible decisions is important in terms of the right to information and legal foreseeability. The Ombudsman Institution's decision no. 2023/6896, which was partially a recommendation and partially a rejection decision, also focused on the right to a reasoned decision. In that decision, it was accepted that the right to a reasoned decision is related to the right to a fair trial and should also be taken into account in sports-related disputes (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2023). These decisions indicate that the Ombudsman Institution is not an authority that directly renders binding judgments in the field of sports arbitration. However, they also suggest that the Institution may be regarded as control channel capable of contributing to the more transparent, reasoned and reviewable functioning of arbitration processes.

METHODS

Research Design

This study was designed as a qualitative case study and examines the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution concerning sport management. This study examines the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution concerning the field of sports within a qualitative research approach. The data source of the research consists of publicly available decision texts of the Ombudsman Institution. These decisions are considered not only as administrative texts through which individual applications are concluded, but also as documents suitable for evaluating which administrative acts and practices give rise to disputes in sport management. For this reason, document analysis was used in the study. Document analysis is consistent with the purpose of this research, as it is a method based on the identification, selection, classification and interpretation of written sources related to the research topic (Bowen, 2009).

A directed content analysis approach was adopted in the analysis of the decisions. The research is based on pre-determined conceptual categories such as the right to apply, documentation practices, discretionary power, reasoning, equality, transparency, administrative

procedure and the principles of good administration. At the same time, recurring dispute issues identified in the decision texts were also included in the analysis process. In this way, the study examined the areas in which the decisions were concentrated, the legal and administrative principles through which the Ombudsman Institution conducted its assessments, and the administrative problems with which sport management-related applications were associated. The question of how recommendation decisions correspond to administrative practice was also considered within the scope of the research (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The data used in the research were obtained from the official and publicly accessible Decisions Database of the Ombudsman Institution. The study is based on publicly available administrative decision texts. It does not involve direct human participation, interviews, surveys or any experimental procedure. No special categories of personal data were collected or processed within the scope of the research. For this reason, no research process requiring separate ethics committee approval was conducted. The research is based on the analysis of administrative decisions concerning sport management through document analysis. The decisions were evaluated not with reference to the personal characteristics of the applicants, but in terms of administrative acts, the reasoning of decisions, and the principles of good administration and areas of dispute related to sport management.

Data Collection Methods and Tools

The data source of the research is the official and publicly accessible Decisions Database of the Ombudsman Institution. In the initial search conducted in the database, 14,652 applications were identified. These decisions represent a broad pool in terms of application subjects, respondent administrations and types of decisions. For a study examining administrative disputes in the field of sports, it would not be appropriate to include all of these decisions directly within the scope of the research. Therefore, the dataset was narrowed down in stages in line with the research question. A criterion-based selection process was followed in constructing the dataset. First, records that could be related to sport management within the decision pool of the Ombudsman Institution were identified; these records were then examined in terms of both title and content. Decisions that were only indirectly associated with the concept of sports, but did not involve an administrative dispute concerning sport management, were excluded from the scope of the study. Thus, rather than presenting a numerical inventory of the decisions, the research focuses on the content-based analysis of administrative disputes directly related to sport management. The selection, classification and interpretation of

documents in accordance with the purpose of the research are also consistent with the basic assumptions of the document analysis approach (Bowen, 2009).

Data Analysis

The construction of the dataset was carried out through a two-stage search process. In the first stage, a preliminary search was conducted using the keywords *coach*, *coaching*, *coaching certificate*, *level*, *equivalence*, *exemption*, *basic training* and *practical training*, and 229 records were identified. During the content review, it was found that a significant portion of these records was not directly related to sport management. In particular, decisions concerning different subjects, such as course exemptions in higher education, diploma equivalence and tax exemptions, were also included in the search results. The initial search was not considered sufficient to directly select the decisions concerning the field of sports. This stage was therefore regarded not as a step that constituted the final dataset, but as a preliminary screening process that helped identify the nature of the decision pool.

In the second stage, a narrower selection strategy was followed. “Education, youth and sports” was used as the criterion in the application subject field, while “Gençlik ve Spor Bakanlığı” was used as the criterion in the respondent administration field. Additional searches were then conducted using keywords such as *competition*, *consent*, *arbitration*, *coach*, *coaching certificate*, *athlete* and *federation*. The decisions obtained were examined one by one in terms of both title and content. Records that appeared in the results only because of lexical similarity, but had no direct connection with sport management, were not included in the dataset.

At the end of the screening process, eight decisions directly related to sport management were identified, and the analysis was conducted on the basis of these decisions. The decisions were first arranged in chronological order. They were then classified according to the subject of the decision, type of decision, relevant administration and dispute heading. In the analysis process, the decisions were initially grouped into categories according to their subject matter and were then analyzed thematically through similar meaning clusters. Pre-determined conceptual axes and recurring themes in the decision texts were evaluated together. The right to apply, documentation practices, discretionary power, reasoning, equality, transparency, administrative procedure and the principles of good administration were used as the main analytical headings. The analysis was based on the directed content analysis approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

RESULTS

In this study, the relationship between the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution and sport management is addressed at two levels. First, the position of the combined “education, youth and sports” category within the overall distribution of applications is examined. In Figures 1 and 2, all percentages are calculated on the basis of the respective total number of applications, while subject areas not presented separately are grouped under “Other subject areas.” Second, the eight decisions included in the research are classified according to type of decision, relevant administration, subject of dispute and theme. In this way, the study not only situates the education, youth and sports category within the Institution’s general application pool, but also identifies the administrative acts and practices around which the selected sport-related disputes are concentrated. The findings show that sport management intersects with problem areas concerning documentation practices, the right to apply, reasoning, equality, transparency and the principles of good administration.

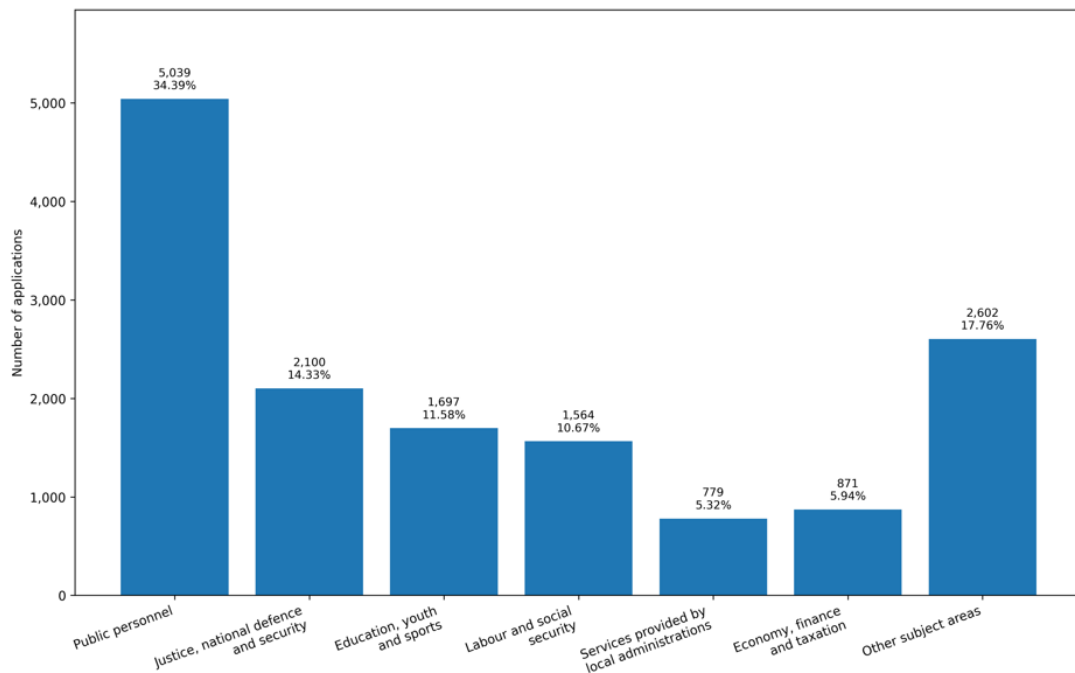


Figure 1. Distribution of Applications by Subject Area in the Ombudsman Institution Decisions Database (N = 14,652).

The figure presents the distribution of 14,652 applications across the six subject areas reported separately, while the remaining categories are grouped under “Other subject areas.” Public personnel constitutes the largest category, with 5,039 applications and a share of 34.39%. It is followed by justice, national defence and security, with 2,100 applications (14.33%). Education, youth and sports ranks third, with 1,697 applications, corresponding to 11.58% of

the total. Labour and social security accounts for 1,564 applications (10.67%), services provided by local administrations for 779 applications (5.32%), and economy, finance and taxation for 871 applications (5.94%). The remaining 2,602 applications, corresponding to 17.76% of the total, are grouped under other subject areas.

The position of the education, youth and sports heading within the overall distribution indicates that this category occupies a notable place among applications submitted to the Ombudsman Institution. However, the category does not directly represent sport-specific disputes. It also includes applications concerning education, youth services, scholarships, loans, dormitories and student affairs. Sports-related disputes must therefore be identified separately.

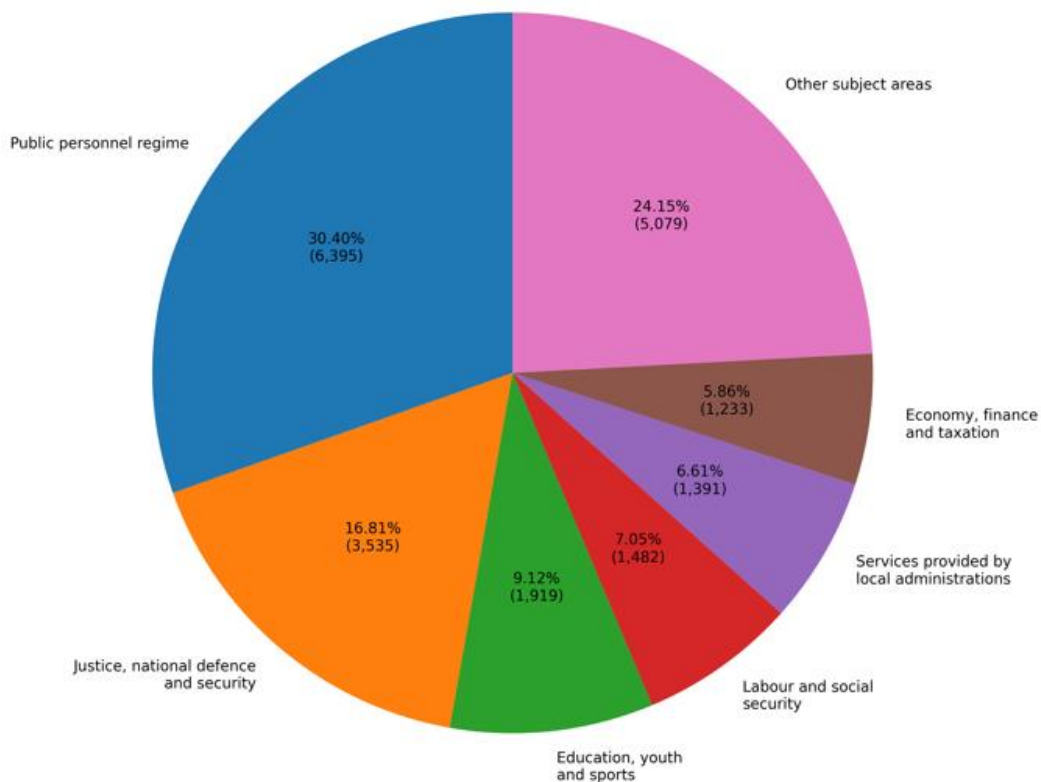


Figure 2. Distribution of Complaint Applications by Subject Area in 2025 (N = 21,034).

According to the 2025 data, 21,034 complaint applications were submitted to the Ombudsman Institution. Public personnel regime constitutes the largest subject area, with 6,395 applications and a share of 30.40%. It is followed by justice, national defence and security, with 3,535 applications (16.81%). Education, youth and sports ranks third, with 1,919 applications, corresponding to 9.12% of the total. Labour and social security accounts for 1,482 applications (7.05%), services provided by local administrations for 1,391 applications (6.61%), and

economy, finance and taxation for 1,233 applications (5.86%). The remaining 5,079 applications, corresponding to 24.15% of the total, are grouped under “Other subject areas.” (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2026).

Within the combined education, youth and sports category, 272 complaints concerned the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This figure corresponds to 1.29% of all complaint applications submitted in 2025. Although the education, youth and sports category occupies a notable place in the Institution’s overall agenda, it does not directly correspond to sport-specific disputes. Applications directly concerning sport must therefore be identified through a separate filtering process.

Of the recommendation decisions for which responses were received, administrations reported compliance in 617 cases, corresponding to 59.38%. For the remaining 422 decisions, corresponding to 40.62%, administrations provided reasons for non-compliance. Although the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution are not legally binding, these figures suggest that they may have some influence on administrative practice. Recommendation decisions concerning sport management should also be considered within this framework. The main issue is not merely whether a decision has been issued, but the extent to which it has been implemented in administrative practice.

Decisions Included in the Analysis and Their Descriptive Characteristics

The decisions included within the scope of the research consist of eight decisions of the Ombudsman Institution that represent administrative disputes directly related to sport management. The decisions were classified according to decision number, year, type of decision and main thematic category. In this way, not only the subject of each decision, but also the administrative problem area in sport management to which it relates, was included in the assessment.

Table 1. Decisions Included in the Analysis and Their Thematic Classification

Decision No. / Year	Type of Decision	Main Theme
2025/2462/2025	Recommendation Decision	Coaching certificates and qualification procedures
2024/12255 /2025	Recommendation Decision	Athlete transfer and club-related procedures
2024/7634 /2024	Recommendation Decision	School sports and competition processes
2023/19861/2024	Rejection Decision	Coaching certificates and qualification procedures
2023/6896 /2023	Partial Recommendation and Partial Rejection Decision	Arbitration, refereeing and reasoned decision-making

Decision No. / Year	Type of Decision	Main Theme
2022/6620 /2022	Rejection Decision	Coaching certificates and qualification procedures
2022/168 /2022	Recommendation Decision	Arbitration, refereeing and reasoned decision-making
2019/12765 /2020	Rejection Decision	School sports and competition processes

The decisions presented in Table 1 show that disputes concerning sport management are not limited to a single type of administrative act. Although coaching certificates, certificate equivalence, exemptions, athlete transfers, school sports, the publication of arbitration decisions and competition processes appear to represent different issues, the common ground of these decisions is administrative functioning. The right to apply, documentation practices, the exercise of discretionary power, reasoning, transparency and the principle of equal access are recurring problem areas in most of the decisions. Of the eight decisions included in the analysis, four were recommendation decisions, three were rejection decisions, and one was a partial recommendation and partial rejection decision. The decision years ranged from 2020 to 2025. This distribution shows that the Ombudsman Institution does not conclude every file concerning sport management applications in the same manner. In some files, corrective recommendations were addressed to the administration, while in other applications the existing administrative act was found to comply with law and the relevant legislation.

In terms of subject matter, the decisions are grouped under four main themes. These are coaching certificates, education and qualification procedures; athlete transfers and club-related procedures; school sports and competition processes; and issues concerning arbitration, refereeing and reasoned decisions. These themes suggest that disputes concerning sport management are not limited to a single type of administrative act. The applications arise from different administrative practices, such as documentation procedures, the right to apply, exemptions, consent procedures, competition organization, equal access, publication of decisions and reasoning. Each theme is discussed below together with the relevant decision numbers and common areas of administrative concern.

Theme 1. Coaching Certificate, Training and Qualification Procedures

Three decisions fall under the heading of coaching certificate, training and qualification procedures: 2025/2462, 2023/19861 and 2022/6620. The decisions show that entry into coaching status is not limited solely to professional knowledge or sporting experience. Elements such as the right to apply, exemption from basic training, certificate equivalence, type of training and institutional status are at the center of disputes in this area.

Decision no. 2025/2462 concerns the request of graduates of the Open Education Faculty Undergraduate Programme in Exercise and Sports Sciences to be allowed to apply for a third-level coaching certificate (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2025b). The Ombudsman Institution accepted that open education is part of higher education and that no distinction based solely on the type of education can be made between graduates of formal education and open education within the same programme. For this reason, the application was found justified, and a recommendation was made to the relevant federation. The decision is important in that it indicates that the administration may not rely on a restrictive interpretation that is not explicitly provided for in the legislation.

Decision no. 2023/19861 concerns a request for exemption from the senior coach basic training program. The applicant argued that he should benefit from the exemption provision on the grounds of his education in the field of sports sciences, his coaching certificate and the courses he taught at a university (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2024b). The Ombudsman Institution considered that the relevant provision could apply only to those serving as academic staff at universities. Since the applicant did not hold this status, the application was rejected. The decision shows that actual expertise or professional experience in coaching education is not regarded as sufficient on its own; rather, the institutional status defined in the legislation is accepted as decisive.

Decision no. 2022/6620 concerns a request for the recognition of equivalence between a 2nd Dan certificate obtained in the field of Ju Jitsu and a coaching certificate (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2022b). The Ombudsman Institution concluded that the document submitted was not a coaching certificate, but a certificate indicating the athlete's level. It was also assessed that the certificate was not issued on the basis of an institution recognized by the relevant international structure. On these grounds, the application was rejected. The decision shows that, in requests for certificate equivalence, the applicant's claim of personal achievement is not sufficient on its own; rather, the type of certificate, its legal validity and its institutional recognition are considered together. In the decision, the administration's failure to indicate the available application procedures and time limits was also recorded as a deficiency in terms of the principles of good administration.

When the three decisions are considered together, it is seen that disputes in the field of coaching are concentrated around the right to apply, type of education, exemption requirements and procedures for certificate recognition. The fact that two decisions resulted in rejection and one in recommendation shows that the Ombudsman Institution does not reach the same

conclusion in every file. In some applications, the Institution takes as its basis the status and certificate requirements set by the legislation; in others, it finds the administration's restrictive interpretation problematic in terms of the principle of equality. For this reason, coaching certificate and qualification procedures may be regarded as one of the areas in sport management where the limits of administrative interpretation intersect with the right to apply.

Theme 2. Athlete Transfer and Club Procedures

The theme of athlete transfer and club procedures is examined through decision no. 2024/12255. The decision concerns an application submitted after the required consent document was not issued for a young athlete in the volleyball branch to leave the current club and transfer to another club (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2025c). The dispute is not merely a matter of a procedure between clubs. The young athlete's ability to continue sporting activities was effectively restricted due to the club's refusal to grant consent. The Ombudsman Institution evaluated the application from this perspective and focused on the consequences of the administrative process for the applicant in the context of athlete transfer.

The decision shows that the chain of procedures involving clubs, provincial directorates and federations in sport management may directly affect athlete mobility. The consent document cannot be regarded merely as a procedural document that needs to be completed. Especially for youth academy athletes, it may become a factor that determines the possibility of continuing sporting activities. The file, which resulted in a recommendation decision, suggests that disputes concerning athlete transfer may sometimes arise not from the absence of a document, but from the practical consequences of the consent system. For this reason, the decision is important for evaluating the relationship between athlete mobility, club procedures and the guarantee of administrative application.

Theme 3. School Sports and Competition Processes

Decisions no. 2024/7634 and 2019/12765 are examined together under the theme of school sports and competition processes. Both decisions are important in that they show that sporting activities do not consist solely of competition results. Competition organization, the recording of results, access to facilities, participation conditions and administrative coordination are the main problem areas that come to the fore under this theme.

Decision no. 2024/7634 concerns a swimming competition organized within the scope of school sports. The application was based on the allegation that the competition results had been incorrectly entered into the system and that, as a result, the ranking for participation in the next-level competition had changed (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu, 2024c). In its examination, the

Ombudsman Institution found that some of the documents on which the result was based had not been preserved and that the procedures had not been conducted with sufficient transparency. The application was accepted, and a recommendation was made to the administration to ensure the preservation of result records and the proper conduct of data entry procedures. The decision shows that disputes in school sports are not limited solely to sporting results; they should also be evaluated in terms of documentation practices, the reliability of records and administrative procedure.

Decision no. 2019/12765 concerns a request for equal access to a shooting range and the annulment of the results of competitions in which the applicant could not participate. In the file, the termination of the applicant's duty as provincial representative, the provisions of the protocol concerning the use of the shooting range, the participation requirements for school sports competitions, and the relationship between the federation and the provincial directorate were discussed together. The application resulted in a rejection decision. Nevertheless, the decision shows that disputes in the field of sports do not arise solely from disciplinary or licensing procedures. Facility use, participation in competitions, equal access and administrative coordination are also areas that may become the subject of applications in sport management.

Theme 4. Arbitration, Refereeing and Issues Concerning Reasoned Decisions

Decisions no. 2022/168 and 2023/6896 are examined under the theme of arbitration, refereeing and issues concerning reasoned decisions. Both decisions show that, in sport management, a dispute does not arise solely from the decision rendered. The procedure through which the decision was taken, the grounds on which it was based, and whether it is accessible to the persons concerned may also become matters of application.

Decision no. 2022/168 concerns a request for the publication of the decisions of the Arbitration Board of the Ministry of Youth and Sports while ensuring the protection of personal data. The Ombudsman Institution considered the availability of reasoned and accessible decisions to be important in terms of legal foreseeability and access to information in a field where compulsory arbitration is prescribed. It therefore recommended that the decisions be published with due regard for the protection of personal data. The decision shows that, in sports arbitration, the mere resolution of the dispute is not sufficient; decisions must also be accessible, reasoned and presented within a framework of institutional openness.

Decision no. 2023/6896 concerns the process of nomination as an international referee candidate in the sitting volleyball branch and the allegation that the decision of the Arbitration

Board did not contain sufficient reasoning. The applicant argued that, although he possessed the required qualifications, he had not been nominated and that it had not been explained according to which criteria the selected candidates had been determined. The Ombudsman Institution did not find the request for re-selection as a referee candidate justified. However, it considered the application justified with respect to the lack of reasoning in the Arbitration Board's decision. For this reason, the decision resulted in a partial recommendation and partial rejection. The file shows that, in sport management, disputes may arise not only from the outcome of a decision, but also from the transparency of the decision-making process and the adequacy of its reasoning.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The examination of the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution specifically in relation to sport management shows that sports-related disputes cannot be explained solely through competition rules, licensing procedures or technical regulations. The decisions analyzed reveal that many applications in the field of sports are directly related to administrative acts, the right to apply, documentation practices, reasoning, equality and the principles of good administration. For this reason, sport management should be addressed not merely as an intra-sectoral field of regulation, but also within the procedural and control logic of public administration.

The subject distribution of the decisions suggests that similar administrative problems recur under different headings in sport management. Coaching certificates, exemption procedures, certificate equivalence, athlete transfers, school sports, arbitration decisions and referee candidacy appear to be separate issues. However, when the files are read together, it becomes clear that the common point of the applications is administrative functioning. Applicants often object not only to the outcome of the administrative act, but also to the grounds on which it was established, the documents by which it was supported and the procedure through which it was carried out.

The role of the Ombudsman Institution in the field of sports may be regarded not as that of an authority that directly imposes sanctions, but rather as an application mechanism, that reviews administrative functioning in terms of the principles of good administration. In some files, the Institution makes corrective recommendations to the administration, while in others it rejects the application. Even in rejection decisions, it is important that procedural deficiencies, such as the administration's failure to indicate the available application procedures and time

limits, are recorded separately. This approach shows that the Ombudsman Institution is concerned not only with whether an application is accepted or rejected, but also with how the administrative process is conducted.

Coaching certificates and qualification procedures constitute one of the areas that open the limits of administrative interpretation to discussion. In decision no. 2025/2462, the right of open education graduates to apply was evaluated in terms of the principle of equality, and the administration's restrictive interpretation was not found appropriate. By contrast, in decisions no. 2023/19861 and no. 2022/6620, the applications were rejected. In the former, it was accepted that the applicant did not hold the academic staff status required by the legislation for exemption; in the latter, it was concluded that the document submitted was not sufficient for coaching equivalence. The fact that different outcomes were reached under the same theme suggests that the Ombudsman Institution evaluates applications concerning sport management not merely on the basis of rights claims, but through the relationship between legislation, status, the validity of documents and the principle of equality.

Files concerning athlete transfer, school sports and arbitration decisions more clearly reveal the practical effects of administrative acts on applicants. In decision no. 2024/12255, the transfer process dependent on club consent was addressed in terms of the young athlete's ability to continue sporting activities. In the school sports decision no. 2024/7634, the failure to preserve result records and the failure to conduct data entry procedures in accordance with due procedure were criticized. In decision no. 2022/168, the publication of arbitration decisions with due protection of personal data was requested, while in decision no. 2023/6896 the application was found partially justified in terms of the right to a reasoned decision. These decisions show that transparency, reasoning and record keeping in sport management are not abstract principles; rather, they are directly related to the right to apply and legal certainty.

The types of decisions also help to clarify the function of the Ombudsman Institution in the field of sports. Of the eight decisions examined, four are recommendation decisions, three are rejection decisions, and one is a partial recommendation and partial rejection decision. Recommendation decisions point to areas in which the administration needs to reconsider the manner in which it establishes administrative acts. Rejection decisions, on the other hand, show that the Ombudsman Institution does not conclude every application in favor of the applicant, but takes into account the limits set by the legislation. This distribution suggests that the Institution assumes both a control role and, to a limited extent, a guiding role in sport management.

The general compliance rate of the administration with the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution for 2025, which stands at 59.38%, shows that the Institution's decisions may find a practical response in administrative practice despite not being binding. This rate is not measured separately for the field of sports. Nevertheless, the decisions examined reveal that the Ombudsman Institution functions as a control channel that may prompt the administration to reconsider its practices in sport management, particularly in terms of procedure, reasoning, documentation practices and accessibility.

The effect of recommendation decisions should not be regarded as limited solely to the individual application concerned. These decisions also bring to the agenda the need for more transparent, reasoned and reviewable practices in similar administrative procedures. The scope of the study is limited to eight decisions. Therefore, the findings obtained should not be regarded as a quantitative generalization representing the entire decision-making practice of the Ombudsman Institution in the field of sports. The contribution of the research lies in opening the public administration dimension of sport management to discussion through a limited number of decisions. The decisions show that, in addition to technical regulations in the field of sports, administrative procedure, discretionary power, equality, reasoning, transparency and the principles of good administration are also determinative.

In conclusion, the decisions of the Ombudsman Institution make it possible to evaluate the administrative acts and practices of the administration in sport management not only in terms of compliance with legislation, but with regard to the principles of good administration. For a more predictable, reviewable and equitable administrative structure in the field of sports, the mere existence of legislation is not sufficient. Rules must be supported by an implementation practice that is clear, egalitarian, reasoned and reviewable. The decisions of the Ombudsman Institution provide a source through which this need can be traced through concrete files, and they open to evaluation the dimension of sport management that intersects with public administration.

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