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E-PAPER

# **Game Changer**

## **Leveraging Green Business to Revive Transatlantic Climate Diplomacy in the Context of the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup**

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# The Transatlantic Drift: Climate Policy at a Crossroads

For over seven decades, the United States and Europe have been in lockstep to build and uphold a post-war liberal world order, founded on shared democratic principles and a strong transatlantic commitment. Not least in the realm of climate policy, both players have formed a decisive axis for driving global ambition, with their joint leadership proving instrumental in the successful negotiation of the 2015 Paris Accord. Merely ten years later, however, the partnership has entered a new era of divergence under a more transaction-minded U.S. administration, prompting necessary strategic realignment within the bilateral framework. One of the most consequential areas where this shift has manifested is the green transition. While Europe, and Germany in particular, continues to position itself at the forefront of climate action, its stewardship faces growing pressure from domestic right-wing political movements that contribute to a weakening consensus on broader sustainable development objectives. Across the Atlantic, on the other hand, the United States has historically played a comparatively non-linear role in this regard. Despite climate and environmental policy having been a partisan issue since the 1980s, the incumbent administration's executive rollback of numerous related regulations, coupled with a renewed emphasis on fossil fuel production, has exacerbated this polarization and, in a second instance, precipitated the present geopolitical bifurcation. Yet this comes at a time when swift and coordinated mitigation efforts are critical, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach to transatlantic climate diplomacy rather than isolationism.

Therefore, identifying potential levers to reinvigorate U.S.-EU cooperation beyond the federal level is crucial to maintain the green momentum. In this context, business, understood as a constellation of market-based entities and practices, offers a tangible and resilient channel for sustaining engagement between the two players. Driven by shared commercial objectives rather than political alignment, economic networks have the potential to bridge diverging agendas, and, when centered on green industrial incentives, establish common ground for a renewed bilateral dialogue on sustainability. Thus, by re-framing climate diplomacy from an economic perspective, sub-national and corporate actors may act as the principal agents driving transatlantic relations in the years to come.

In order to translate this shift in agency into implementable progress, however, a catalyst is needed – one that captures public attention at large and offers ample opportunity for synergies in the private sector. Against this backdrop, the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup hosted in North America (United States, Canada, and Mexico) emerges not merely as a monumental sporting series, but as a significant soft power asset. More than once, it has been demonstrated that sports diplomacy [possesses the capacity to strengthen interactions across a range of settings, including economic and political spheres](#), which is

why these events can be regarded as microcosms of global governance that provide level playing fields for collective action. With an expanded field of 48 teams competing in 104 matches across the three host nations, the impending tournament will be the largest in FIFA's history and, through its ["We Are 26"](#) identity, is envisioned to be both a celebration of diversity, as well as a medium for shared narratives and transnational engagement.

In light of these dynamics, the following brief entails a set of proposals aimed at operationalizing the aforementioned potentials.





## From Pitch to Policy: The FIFA Men's World Cup as a Diplomatic Instrument

With the exception of a wartime hiatus in 1942 and 1946, the FIFA Men's World Cup has captured the world's attention every four years since its inaugural edition. And while it shares the spotlight with other mega-sporting events such as the Olympics and the Super Bowl today, its global reach remains in a league of its own. Statistics reveal that the 2022 Final in Qatar drew an average live audience of [571 million viewers](#) across the globe, with over 1.4 billion people tuning in to watch at least one minute of the game. For comparison, the 2024 record setting Super Bowl attracted an international audience of just 186 million, underscoring the World Cup's immense visibility and impact. Accordingly, its scale and implications extend well beyond the pitch, transforming the field of play into a stage where sport intersects with geopolitical and socio-economic affairs.

When examining how the World Cup can be instrumentalized for diplomatic soft-power leverage, prior research suggests that sports can serve a number of strategic objectives including – but not limited to – (1) offering accessible venues for trans- and international dialogue, (2) fostering intercultural understanding that helps bridge political divides and establish common ground, (3) shaping public perceptions and raising awareness of international relations, and (4) creating opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation in areas

such as business, development, and, increasingly, sustainability and climate advocacy. As such, the aforementioned trend epitomizes a broader evolution from a traditional, [state-centric diplomatic understanding toward a more inclusive and multidimensional approach that progressively brings non-state actors to the table as well](#). In light of prevailing political tensions, the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup thus emerges as a promising trump card for the preservation of transatlantic synergies, particularly when bilateral alignment on climate issues continues to falter at the federal level.

As an international association, FIFA de facto functions as a global governing body itself, operating within an extensive network that encompasses 211 members, surpassing even the United Nations. It is this structural scope that lends it an unparalleled convening power, which, combined with its apolitical and unifying character, allows for close multilateral cooperation. This cooperation, however, is essential to maintaining that very capacity. In this context, the World Cup serves as a highly effective vehicle not only for capturing mass attention, but also for setting new benchmarks and scaling tangible action. Following this line of argumentation, the tournament's [Sustainability and Human Rights Strategy](#) then acts as a soft power policy framework, providing a unifying language to kick off green diplomatic engagement.

The document is structured around four pillars: a social pillar, an economic pillar, a governance pillar, and an environmental pillar. The latter as the most relevant to the considerations at hand consists of seven core objectives. In addition to proposed actions for sustainable infrastructure, waste management, water conservation, air quality improvement and biodiversity protection, there is a specific commitment to climate impact mitigation. Key initiatives within this framework include the promotion of renewable energy sources in stadiums and other tournament venues, as well as the implementation of low-emission mobility measures. Despite valid criticism that FIFA's past efforts to adhere to its own strategies have often been more performative than transformative, particularly in light of the [climate footprints of previous World Cups](#), the 2026 tournament still presents a realistic opportunity for change in this regard. It is the intersection of climate initiatives and economics, at both the micro and macro levels, that has given rise to new avenues for meaningful transatlantic action. The subsequent section will examine the potential for these business-driven developments to reinvigorate U.S.-EU cooperation in a substantial and impactful manner.

# Economic Bridges for a Greener Future: The Role of Business in Reviving Transatlantic Climate Diplomacy

In the face of political actors on both sides of the Atlantic increasingly struggling to sustain green leadership, there is a growing need for new players to enter the field and address the void. In accordance with this premise, [experts regard the framing of climate action as a competitiveness issue, approaching it from an industrial policy perspective, as a promising vehicle for maintaining momentum and propelling transatlantic cooperation](#). The economic rationale behind green business is well-established, not least demonstrated by initiatives like the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), [which sought to transform the structural conditions of decarbonization by de-risking investments through the provision of long-term tax credits and defining green development as a matter of national security](#). Even as parts of these efforts face political rollback, much of its impact remains. What is less commonly explored, however, is a reversal in how this relationship is approached: Rather than asking how transatlantic diplomacy can support business cooperation, the present work suggests that green business itself can become a driver of diplomatic and thus political renewal. In times of geopolitical uncertainty, commercial collaboration in the climate and sustainability sectors can create stable, interest-based partnerships with the potential to re-anchor U.S.-EU relations from the ground up.

The 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup offers an ideal setting for the subsequent operationalization of this reorientation. As outlined in the above-cited sustainability strategy, there is a significant demand for investments into infrastructure, renewable energy sources, mobility, and overall event logistics – sectors where green progress and innovation are highly critical. The World Cup's global spotlight then amplifies public pressure for credible demonstrations of best practices. Thus, by placing business initiatives at the heart of the tournament, European and North American stakeholders can rebuild trust, establish scalable standards, and forge new channels of partnership that are not only commercially rewarding, but also socially and bilaterally meaningful.

In its core directive, this position finds validation in how the U.S. government directs its attention to the World Cup as well. With the issuance of a dedicated [executive order](#) in March 2025 and the subsequent formation of a [White House task force](#), the administration underscored its motivation in approaching the championship as a means of advancing national economic interests, giving at least some leeway for respective outside engagement. The rationale behind this agenda is reflected in impact and return projections formulated by FIFA and the WTO. Their joint [socioeconomic report](#) estimates that in the United Sta-

tes alone, the five-week tournament could result in \$11.1 billion in event-related spending, generate \$30.5 billion in gross output, contribute \$17.2 billion to GDP, and fill 185,000 full-time equivalent jobs. Translating these benefits to a community level that extends beyond the immediate stakeholders, the social return on investment is calculated at \$4.03 for every dollar allocated, signaling a broader public value creation.

Accordingly, the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup becomes a viable lever to revive the transatlantic climate dialogue through the implementation of a private sector driven agenda.





## Three P's Action Proposals: Prior – Present – Post

To translate the global traction of the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup into meaningful and lasting action and leverage it as a platform for climate diplomacy, timing is essential. Thus, the following section identifies three key implementation phases – pre-, mid-, and post-World Cup – aligning each set of proposals accordingly. This approach serves as a strategic roadmap, allowing for focused execution at each stage as well as clearer tracking and accountability, ensuring that the tournament becomes not just a momentary showcase of climate action, but a launchpad for a lasting green legacy.

### **I. Prior to the opener on June 11, 2026**

The pre-tournament phase is of critical importance for the success of the endeavor at large. Therefore, the following series of action steps should be taken to lay the necessary groundwork for impactful operationalization.

#### **A. Establish a Transatlantic Green Business Network (TGBN) for FIFA 2026**

In order to maximize the tournament's potential in the context of climate diplomacy, establishing a Transatlantic Green Business Network would provide a forum for direct collaboration and exchange among enterprises specializing in sustainability. By encouraging

and facilitating these synergies, this setting would empower both the United States and the European Union to strengthen economic ties while concurrently advancing climate objectives. Furthermore, the creation of a dedicated network has the potential to facilitate the formalization of business-driven diplomacy efforts, thereby providing resilient structures and frameworks that persist beyond periods of political uncertainty. It is important to note, however, that such an initiative should not rely solely on FIFA for delivery. While FIFA as an umbrella organization can provide visibility and coordination in the initial stages, long-term engagement must be rooted in local and decentralized ownership. In this context, taking a closer look at the broader World Cup bidding and selection processes that precede the tournament offers valuable insight into how the Transatlantic Green Business Network could be sustainably initiated.

As a [condition for a successful appointment](#), national member associations are required to closely synchronize with authorities at federal, state, and municipal level to develop a comprehensive implementation strategy. Accordingly, as part of the tripartite [“United 26”](#) bid, the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) has already been in close dialogue with key stakeholders in the 11 host cities to address infrastructure planning and community engagement. This existing ecosystem serves as a practical foundation upon which the network could be built, starting with the identification of high-impact areas and the subsequent inclusion of diverse actors across the value chain. A concrete example of such a structure is the ENR (Engineering News-Record) Infrastructure Forum, an established annual platform that convenes public and private sector leaders to advance large-scale infrastructure initiatives across the United States. Notably, the 2025 edition of the forum is set to take place in three World Cup host cities – [New York/New Jersey](#), [Seattle](#), and [Los Angeles](#) – with the tournament’s delivery already featured on the agenda. By further embedding climate and sustainability objectives, along with a dedicated transatlantic focus, into the core mandate of the proposed TGBN, the network would not only complement but elevate existing infrastructure discussions, ultimately turning the World Cup into a launchpad for a re-defined U.S.-EU green business alliance.

From there, the next step is to coordinate a joint procurement framework that would establish mechanisms for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic to work in tandem to supply sustainable goods and services that meet the needs of host venues. When administered through the TGBN, such a system wields the ability to standardize green sourcing and production practices (e.g., for reusable stadium cups, electric shuttle fleets, or smart and low-emission technologies) and integrate mitigation-aligned criteria into future procurement processes. This approach would not only increase transparency, uniformity, and regulatory compliance, but also serve as a tangible entry point for transatlantic business cooperation. In parallel, the network should co-develop a comprehensive set of guidelines, best practices, and case studies of accomplished synergies to support effective implementation and thereby create a viable blueprint for the 2030 FIFA Men’s World Cup and other future global sporting events.

To further cement the network as a catalyst for transatlantic green coalitions, public messaging efforts must be both well-coordinated and highly visible. In order to raise aware-

ness for green market solutions, low-stakes interactions between businesses and consumers should be encouraged to showcase the role commercial entities can play in delivering palpable responses to everyday problems. By incorporating these touchpoints into the broader narrative, the initiative can play a part in normalizing green products and services as both accessible and market-ready, transforming climate consciousness from an abstract ideal into a relatable consumer-facing reality. In this context, the TGBN could introduce a “Green Partner of FIFA 2026” label as part of a strategic marketing campaign, to be displayed at venues, on vendor materials, or World Cup merchandise. Additionally, the label could feature a QR-Code linking fans to interactive content that showcases the contributions and sustainability efforts of participating network partners. Digital social media outreach under the #WeAreGreen26 – in reference to the official FIFA hashtag #WeAre26 – could spotlight joint storytelling, thereby amplify the visibility of the TGBN’s work beyond the confines of the stadiums.

Lastly, when considering strategies to ensure that the network evolves into a long-standing transatlantic engagement model that bridges political divides and transcends the five-week tournament phase, it is imperative to identify methods to link it to educational and labor programs. As such, involving and empowering students through targeted school, university, and extracurricular activities constitutes a strategic yet feasible investment in the next generation of green economy leaders. TGBN partners, for instance, could connect with local institutions to host sustainability-focused workshops or co-create practical solutions with STEM-oriented youths. Moreover, establishing clear pathways from education to employment, through the provision of internships, apprenticeships, and bilateral exchanges, will prove to be a fruitful pursuit, ultimately resulting in the cultivation of a workforce that is adept at operating in a transatlantic setting. For businesses, this not only secures access to a pipeline of skilled, future-oriented talent but also strengthens their credibility as active contributors to a just and inclusive green transition.

#### B. Introduce green innovation hubs in host cities

As highlighted by the IMF, [green innovation is instrumental in both stimulating economic growth and driving the zero-emission transformation](#). To harness this dual benefit in the context of the 2026 FIFA Men’s World Cup, the implementation of bilaterally-led green innovation hubs in the 11 U.S. host cities (Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area, and Seattle) would provide essential support for SMEs developing sustainable solutions. Secondly, this approach would facilitate transatlantic cooperation at the level of entrepreneurship, thereby promoting shared grassroots development and building bridges between young professionals. Although a number of the following mechanisms have been addressed in the broader context of the TGBN before, this section places a more explicit focus on innovation and thus constitutes an extension of the previous proposal.

The kick-off phase of the implementation process entails the activation of local capacity, which is achieved by establishing close relations with key institutions such as municipalities, economic development agencies, or universities. This collaborative effort is intended

to ensure a holistic integration of the venture hubs within existing community structures, which is not only vital for earning social legitimacy and trust but also strengthens access to essential funding sources. By then layering in a joint mentorship forum that provides a platform for diverse perspectives and shared expertise, these start-up hubs further have the potential to function as engines for collaborative innovation, allowing entrepreneurs from both sides of the Atlantic to co-develop solutions that are not only locally grounded but bilaterally scalable. The innovations supported by this proposal are not limited in scope and may target a wide range of World Cup infrastructure needs – including transport, energy supply, waste management, logistics, and more – thereby contributing broadly to a greener and more sustainable tournament experience. Beyond these considerations, however, the initiative must present compelling incentives to attract high-potential talent and ideas. In this regard, targeted seed-grants combined with the high-profile setting of the 2026 World Cup serve as powerful pull factors to draw in grassroots changemakers. The tournament itself constitutes a rare, public-facing opportunity to pilot new products and solutions, while the fertile conditions created by the proposed start-up hubs can simultaneously help reduce entry barriers for EU-based actors to access U.S. markets and vice versa.

As a final action step, it is crucial to re-emphasize the importance of embedding green innovation activities within the fabric of local communities. In this context, a “Green Champion” contest could be launched through the host-city hubs, inviting civil society to submit proposals for state-of-the-art concepts and ideas in exchange for World Cup-related prizes. This approach introduces a bottom-up dynamic that amplifies voices from diverse backgrounds, while building a pathway for individuals to actively highlight what projects are most relevant to them in this regard. Ultimately, it is this connectivity that underpins transatlantic climate diplomacy by linking people, ideas, and businesses across borders through practical, progress-driven cooperation.





C. Develop a green sports club partnership program

Football has always brought people together, and few events embody that spirit better than the FIFA Men's World Cup. In the face of the global climate crisis, we need to extend that same sense of unity and shared purpose to sustainable stewardship. Therefore, a transatlantic green club exchange program presents a viable, community-driven strategy. In Europe, several clubs have already demonstrated how this can work in practice. Recognized by the United Nations as the world's first carbon neutral football club, [Forest Green Rovers](#) (UK) has implemented a series of comprehensive sustainability measures, including the use of an organic pitch and solar panels, a fully vegan match-day menu and plans for a timber-based Eco Park stadium. At a first division level, [VfL Wolfsburg](#), a German Bundesliga club, has committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2025, already operating on 100% renewable energy and actively engaging fans in sustainable transport and plastic reduction efforts. These examples offer practical models for the potential replication in the context of a green sports club partnership program. By fostering club-to-club exchanges, football could not only be used as a means to strengthen transatlantic civic relations and leave a network that extends well beyond the 2026 tournament, but also to embed climate awareness at the heart of local communities.

To continue the conversation initiated by the TGBN from a more bottom-up perspective, one entry point is to engage directly at the club level. Much like the sister city model, which fosters international cooperation between municipalities, this approach could be adopted to the sports context by building transatlantic partnerships between football clubs across all divisions. Each of the 11 U.S. host cities is home to an MLS team, offering a strong foundation for collaboration that can be expanded through complementary initiati-

ves in amateur leagues. This strategy holds significant promise, as UEFA – FIFA’s largest [continental confederation](#) by number of full members – provides a broad and diverse pool of potential partner clubs, presenting a unique opportunity to foster exchange.

Subsequent to this initial step, the proposal unfolds along two complementary tracks: On the one hand, the second pillar of the program circles back to the economic dimension by piloting sustainable infrastructure as a means to strengthen transatlantic business ties, while the third and fourth prioritize community and youth involvement to ground the project in active public participation. Regarding the former, a partnership between American and European football clubs presents a timely opportunity to transform club assets and operations into bilateral testbeds for green innovation. A case study from Italian Serie A club [Udinese Calcio, which engaged in a joint effort with a local multi-service energy provider to install over 2,400 solar panels on its stadium roof](#), serves as just one example of UEFA clubs taking substantial steps toward climate and environmentally-conscious facility management that could set a precedent for joint ventures in the context of the 2026 FIFA Men’s World Cup. The pairing of U.S. clubs with experienced European counterparts has the potential to lead to the co-development of similar initiatives. Against this backdrop, the proposed TGBN could play a pivotal role by streamlining the exchange of expertise, facilitating connections between clubs and green SMEs, and thus helping translate these partnerships into a scalable business case for sustainability-driven transatlantic cooperation.

Ultimately, it is the people who are at the heart of football and should therefore be the ones this program caters to. Hence, in order to effectively operationalize the objectives of the proposal at hand, engaging fans and local communities represents an essential tool to advance public diplomacy, which has been a cornerstone of the transatlantic partnership for decades. To bring people together in the spirit of sustainability and shared values, outreach and integration could take the form of friendly matches that not only promote intercultural exchange but also serve as showcases for successful green business synergies. These events could, among other things, highlight the previously mentioned infrastructure adaptations, transforming abstract climate goals into tangible, relatable, and unifying experiences. During the World Cup, clubs might also host both virtual and in-person watch parties to deepen connections between their fan bases.

Lastly, to ensure the future viability of this approach, it is crucial that clubs harness the potential of youth training programs to cultivate climate literacy in the next generation. The global excitement surrounding the 2026 World Cup presents a significant opportunity for football to function as a trusted messenger, facilitating the promotion of climate awareness and responsibility through youth academies. From a business perspective, investing in education has been demonstrated to yield significant returns in the form of [human and social capital development, both of which drive long-term economic growth](#).

## **II. During the World Cup: June 11, 2026 – July 19, 2026**

The mid-phase offers an ideal opportunity for civil engagement, visibility, and real-time demonstration of transatlantic climate cooperation. For SMEs particularly, the tournament

further holds the potential to facilitate entry to new markets and customer segments, by providing a platform to display deliverables in a highly public-facing setting. Accordingly, the following action proposals are designed to activate, showcase, and scale green business and community initiatives in the global floodlight.



A. Launch an interactive green business showcase at tournament venues

In order to transform green business into a public-facing tool of transatlantic climate cooperation, it must be rendered visible, accessible, and relatable to the broader public. Community engagement, again, is essential in this context, given that consumer demand plays a contributing role in propelling sustainable markets toward future viability. Therefore, the operation of interactive, fun, and educational exhibits and demonstrations has the potential to transform passive spectators into active participants in the green transition.

Evidently, this initiative should be brought to life at the [FIFA Fan Festivals](#), the official public World Cup venues organized in each host city that feature live performances, music, and food, thereby making them an ideal platform for this proposal. Integrating climate and sustainability-related programming into this existing framework, presents a unique opportunity for transatlantic enterprises to showcase their joint ventures in an interactive manner. A first step in this regard could be the creation of thematic zones within the festivals themselves. Organizing these spaces in a more structured form, allocating designated hubs to themes such as clean energy, low-emission mobility, or the circular economy, allows attendees to engage more deeply with each of the green challenges and solutions presented. Moreover, thematic curation allows businesses and other stakeholders to align their contributions more coherently, which in turn enables them to strategically target key



audiences. These aforementioned zones could then be integrated into an initiative spearheaded by the New Jersey Division of Business Action Center (NJDBAC), which developed an [online map](#) that highlights local businesses, restaurants, hotels, museums, and other places, and which could serve as an adaptable model for other World Cup host cities.

In a secondary instance, and maybe most importantly, however, one has to develop ideas how to establish a fun, immersive, and hands-on environment in which fans from around the world can interact with the displayed market solutions that emanate from the TGBN. As such, targeting feelings of excitement and curiosity not only helps ground green transatlantic cooperation, driven by economic stimuli, in people's minds through emotional connection, it also fosters a sense of shared ownership around it. Accordingly, TGBN partners could set up experience stations that allow on-site participants to test EU-U.S. manufactured technologies, sustainable materials, or explore virtual reality simulations of the climate-adapted, smart stadiums of the future. As described earlier, this approach has the potential to demystify the green transition by appealing to the economic rationale underpinning it, thereby decoupling it from political or ideological polarization.

The third pillar of this proposal aims to provide further contextualization of these showcases within the broader narrative of transatlantic people-to-people relations. One potential strategy for achieving this objective is to humanize the practices unfolding within the TGBN, sharing the real-life stories of those involved. Short video portraits, "A Day in the Life" features, and interviews with workers, board members, and other contributors on both sides of the Atlantic – presented through interactive screens, audio installations, and dedicated online platforms – could serve as compelling formats to bring these voices to life. Matching faces to the otherwise abstract structures of green business synergies reinforces the notion that this initiative is grounded in real people.

To further mobilize visitors, gamification, defined as the use of game-like elements to address real-world problems, [offers a dynamic way to inspire active public participation, particularly among younger demographics](#). To translate this potential into concrete action, TGBN stakeholders could either integrate with the official FIFA app or develop a standalone application that allows fans to earn "green credits" – either by interacting with participating companies in the network (e.g., website visits, joining loyalty programs, participation in brand activities, following social media channels, etc.), or by completing climate-conscious challenges (e.g., using public transportation to reach venues, completing in-app quizzes and mini-games, posting social media content with the #WeAreGreen26, etc.). These credits could then be redeemed for merchandise or prize draw entries sponsored by TGBN-affiliated businesses. Evidently, this approach is particularly promising, as [previous research has shown that gamification can promote long-term behavioral change](#), thus making it an actionable tool for overcoming one of the highest barriers in the green transition.

### **III. After the finale on July 19, 2026**

Finally, the post-tournament phase is highly critical to ensuring that the partnerships and projects established during the World Cup evolve into lasting structures that will constitu-



te its legacy well beyond 2026. The following action steps aim to strengthen the transatlantic climate dialogue, scale innovative and successful green business models, and further anchor sustainability as a shared priority at all societal levels.

A. Sustain and expand the green business architecture

Building on the both the TGBN as well as the above-proposed green innovations hubs, the post-World Cup phase should focus on formalizing and sustaining these forums. This again requires integrating these initiatives into existing transatlantic governance structures, securing continued financing, and aligning them with future socioeconomic priorities. By not treating the achievements made during the 2026 World Cup as a one-time milestone, but instead following up on those commitments, the transatlantic community can transform short-term momentum into an enduring framework for climate cooperation grounded in business-led innovation and shared strategic goals.

In more concrete terms, the initial action step is to further formalize the TGBN's governance structures. For the network to extend beyond the 2026 tournament and mature into a self-sustaining platform for U.S.-EU green business cooperation, the establishment of a permanent coordinating body, operating on a FIFA-independent footing, is essential. Therefore, to ensure functionality and long-term resilience, it is imperative that this structure be supported by clear mandates and operational guidelines that prevent ambiguity and avoid operational gridlock. Securing public funding (e.g., [EU Innovation Fund](#)) in this context will be equally important to ensure the network can remain active, responsive, and equipped to support the ongoing work it was designed to initiate.

To safeguard the translation of the previously proposed initiatives into lasting, quantifiable outcomes that outlive the five-week tournament period, a comprehensive impact report is needed to assess the results of green business efforts linked to the 2026 World Cup. This inquiry must be both data-driven and holistic, examining key dimensions including, but not limited to, emissions reduction, job creation, procurement and supply chain practices, and public engagement. When done effectively, such a report not only functions as a gauge of transparency and accountability, but also holds the potential to evolve into a blueprint for the future alignment of commercial activity and economic objectives with sustainability strategies in global sporting events. Regarding the 2026 initiative as a replicable model for the next tripartite [Men's World Cup hosted by Spain, Portugal, and Morocco in 2030](#), as well as for the [2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil](#), suggests that recurring touchpoints are crucial to ensure that partnerships remain anchored in a evolving and shared timeline. Between tournaments, virtual roundtables or thematic task forces could help maintain momentum and strengthen the connections made. At each World Cup, a dedicated green transatlantic business forum could then provide a space for check-ins regarding the current state of affairs, the renewal of bilateral U.S.-EU commitments, and the initiation of new joint efforts.

Finally, in order to ultimately elevate the renewed level of convergence to a political dimension, the approach to transatlantic green business interaction piloted in the context of the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup must first be adapted for application in other strategic

industries. Only when similar models of structured exchange and mutual investment can be implemented cross-sectorally will a foundation be laid to fully leverage their potential for diplomatic alignment and system change. A more specific roadmap for the institutionalization and long-term integration of such an initiative should be the subject of future research.



## Outlook: A Green Playbook for the Road to 2030 and Beyond

The 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup presents a timely and viable opportunity to leverage green business as a vehicle for bottom-up transatlantic diplomacy. This momentum must now be underpinned by a clear strategic direction, whether through the proposals outlined in this brief or similar efforts, to ensure that climate action emerges as a lasting pillar of the tournament's legacy.

Sports in the United States have repeatedly served as catalysts for social progress. [Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in Major League Baseball in 1947](#) is but one example. Historically, these cases have demonstrated that athletic arenas provide a uniquely powerful space to address polarizing issues and mobilize public buy-in in ways that politics often cannot. Adding to this the commercial vitality of an increasingly influential soccer industry, as epitomized by the [rapid expansion of Major League Soccer \(MLS\)](#), the U.S. as a host is well-positioned to lead this next chapter of change. Thus, the institutionalization of climate-conscious practices and green business cooperation during the 2026 tournament appears particularly promising, holding strong potential to sustainably rewrite the playbook for international sporting events. With the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup set to return to Europe, the groundwork laid in 2026 further bears significant implications for the trajectory of transatlantic relations at large. By advancing a shared, private-sector driven

agenda that proves bilateral climate leadership is not merely symbolic but economically profitable and societally resonant, the tri-national tournament may help rekindle transatlantic relations regardless of geopolitical headwinds.



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