

Sport without fear – our concern, our response

A Parallel session by the Council of Europe at the 6th International Working Group (IWG) World Conference on Women and Sport

Saturday 14 June 3.45 – 5.15 pm, Finlandia Hall (Helsinki, Finland)

While sport provides a powerful tool to empower women, for promoting greater equality between women and men, as well as challenging gender stereotypes and the devaluation of women and girls, the sad reality is that women and girls do not always have the opportunity to practice sport in a safe environment in which their dignity is respected. Practicing sport may lead to greater exposure to particular forms of gender-based violence or sexual exploitation and abuse by peers, coaches or fans. Moreover, overtly sexualised images of women athletes may incite sexual harassment, lead to poor body image, anxiety, low self-esteem and violence against women by trivialising it and making it acceptable. It is therefore important that sport programmes and sporting activities allow women and girls to be safe and that sports clubs and associations establish efficient ways to deal with instances of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

For most children and young people, engaging in sporting activities is a positive experience which helps to build and strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem, their physical and mental health. There is however another side of the medal, which way too often is shrouded by silence: children and young people suffering from bullying, emotional humiliation, sexual harassment and sexual abuse at the hands of their coaches, peers and other adults – a sporting culture which accepts and tolerates negative behaviour as “part of the game”. It is important to respect children’s integrity and their safety and safeguard them from being victim of sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

The purpose of this parallel session is to raise awareness amongst all partners involved in sport of the international legally binding instruments for combating notably violence against women and children and their sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and the practical tools that they offer in making Sport without Fear a reality.

Panelists



► **Marja Ruutonen**, Director of Equality and Human Dignity, Council of Europe



► **Laura Bates**, Founder of Everydaysexism Project



► **George Nikolaidis**, Member of the Lanzarote Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse



► **Theoren Fleury**, a former NHL All-Star ice hockey player, Stanley Cup Champion, gold medal Olympian, and author of bestseller “Playing With Fire”

Moderator

► **Liri Kopaci-Di Michele**, Head of Equality Division, Council of Europe

SAFE FROM FEAR
SAFE FROM
VIOLENCE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

Also known as the Istanbul Convention, it marks an important step forward in international efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, and to put an end to impunity. It is the first legally-binding instrument in Europe and in terms of scope, it is the most far-reaching international treaty in this field. For the first time, it is made clear that violence against women and domestic violence can no longer be considered as a private matter but that states have an obligation to prevent violence, protect victims and punish the perpetrators. Measures contained in the Istanbul Convention provide the tools to break the cycle of gender inequality and women's continuous exposure to gender-based violence. The key to combating violence against women is not just crime control; preventing violence, protecting victims and co-ordination of measures through comprehensive and integrated policies are equally important aspects. For more information: [**www.coe.int/conventionviolence**](http://www.coe.int/conventionviolence)

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Also known as the Lanzarote Convention, it is a major step forward in the prevention of sexual offences against children, the prosecution of perpetrators and the protection of child victims. It focuses on respect for children's rights, ensuring their well-being, responding to their views, needs and concerns, and acting at all times in their best interest. The Convention includes practical preventive, protective and criminal law measures, such as screening and training persons working in contact with children, ensuring that children are made aware of the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and of how to protect themselves. Tools and guides have been developed to help adults explain to children that their body belongs to them and how they should react and where to seek help. For more information on the Lanzarote Convention: [**www.coe.int/lanzarote**](http://www.coe.int/lanzarote); for an example of a practical tool: [**www.underwearrule.org**](http://www.underwearrule.org).