

GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE IMPLEMENTING A POLICY ON PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SPORT

Standards and norms, areas of action and tips

Prepared by Tine Vertommen
Thomas More University College

In collaboration with:
Pro Safe Sport+
Experts and Secretariat



PRO SAFE SPORT+ Put an end to sexual harassment and abuse against children in sport (PSS+)

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

Table of contents

<u>I.</u>	<u>ANALYSIS OF STANDARDS AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SPORT</u>	3
1.	<u>Overview of the existing standards and norms</u>	3
a.	<u>The Convention of the Council of Europe on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention), 2007</u>	3
b.	<u>The recommendations on the protection of young athletes and safeguarding children's rights in sport, Expert group on good governance, European Commission, 2016</u>	4
c.	<u>The International Safeguards for Children in Sport, International Safeguarding Children in Sport Working group, 2016</u>	4
d.	<u>International Olympic Committee (IOC) Consensus statements on (sexual) harassment and abuse in sport (2007, 2016)</u>	5
2.	<u>Analysis</u>	6
<u>II.</u>	<u>OVERARCHING THEME 'POLICY'</u>	7
<u>III.</u>	<u>SPECIFIC AREAS OF ACTION</u>	9

I. Analysis of standards and normative frameworks to prevent sexual violence against children in sport

During the last decade, several international and European authorities from both within and outside the sports movement have formulated recommendations to prevent sexual violence against children in sport. This Pro Safe Sport+ (PSS+) project aims to build on these relevant normative frameworks. The objectives of this project include analyzing the existing standards to identify overlaps, unaddressed or underdeveloped aspects in order to formulate guiding principles in a user-friendly format addressing public authorities and (inter-)national sport organisations.

The PSS+ project is based on the analysis of five normative frameworks, which address (inter-)national public authorities and (inter-)national sport organisations. The content analysis focuses on guidelines and recommendations that call on these organisations to develop policies and measures that tackle sexual violence against children in sport.

1. Overview of the existing standards and norms

a. The Convention of the Council of Europe on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention), 2007

Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention)

Author: Council of Europe

Year of adoption: 2007

Target groups: Member States of the Council of Europe

Aims: The Lanzarote Convention sets forth that States in Europe and beyond shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute perpetrators. It also promotes international cooperation to achieve the same objectives.

Within the Council of Europe, the Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as the 'Lanzarote Convention', was adopted and opened for signature in 2007.¹ The Lanzarote Convention entered into force in 2010 and requires criminalisation of all kinds of sexual offences against children and sets out that all states in Europe and beyond must adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence. While it is a general framework, it makes particular reference to sport in the section on preventive measures, stating that, "*each Party shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to encourage awareness of the protection and rights of children among persons who have regular contacts with children in the education, health, social protection, judicial and law-enforcement sectors and in areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities*" (article 5). The Lanzarote Committee monitors whether the States effectively implement the Lanzarote Convention and evaluates the information provided by national authorities and other sources.

¹ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/children/lanzarote-convention>

b. The recommendations on the protection of young athletes and safeguarding children's rights in sport, Expert group on good governance, European Commission, 2016

Recommendations on the protection of young athletes and safeguarding children's rights in sport

Author: Expert Group on Good Governance, European Commission

Year of publication: 2016

Target groups: Member States of the European Union, the European Commission, large sport organisations (federations/umbrella sport federations) as well as grassroots sport clubs and associations.

Aims: to propose key actions to Member States, the European Commission and sport organisations/associations to raise awareness on the importance of the protection of minors in sport, and to propose concrete guidelines for action.

At the European Commission level, sexual violence in sport first received political attention in 2014 during the Greek EU presidency, when the fight against gender-based violence in sport was one of the main topics in the debates (Council of the European Union, 2014). In accordance with the mandate deriving from the Council Resolution on the second European Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017), the Commission and Member States identified the protection and safeguarding of minors in sport as one of the priorities in terms of sport integrity. As a follow-up, in 2016, the European Commission's expert group on the protection of minors in sport published recommendations on the protection of young athletes in which key actions for Member States, the European Commission and sport organisations/associations are formulated.²

c. The International Safeguards for Children in Sport, International Safeguarding Children in Sport Working group, 2016

International Safeguards for Children in sport

Author: International Safeguarding Children in Sport Working Group

Year of publication: 2016

Target groups: any organisation (big or small) providing sports activities to children and young people

Aims: to guide organisations towards safeguarding children and provide a holistic approach to ensuring children's safety and protection in all sports contexts internationally.

The 8 safeguards are:

1. Developing a policy
2. Procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns
3. Advice and support
4. Minimizing risks to children
5. Guidelines for behavior
6. Recruiting, training and communicating
7. Working with partners
8. Monitoring and evaluating

² <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=25000&no=1>

For each of them, criteria for success are indicated

A partnership of organisations working together for the Beyond Sport Summit in London in 2012 drafted a set of standards, now called 'Safeguards'.³ After an extensive piloting phase of 2 years within the international working group, the finalized version of the Safeguards was launched in 2014 and lay the foundations for a holistic approach to ensuring children's safety and protection in all sport contexts internationally.

d. International Olympic Committee (IOC) Consensus statements on (sexual) harassment and abuse in sport (2007, 2016)

IOC Consensus Statements:

- [Sexual harassment and abuse in sport \(2007\)](#)
- [Harassment and abuse \(non-accidental violence\) in sport \(2016\)](#)

Author: International Olympic Committee

Year of publication: 2007 and 2016

Target groups: sport organisations at all levels, athletes, sport medicine and allied health practitioners, sport science researchers

Aims: This Consensus Statement extends the 2007 IOC Consensus Statement on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport, presenting additional evidence of several other types of harassment and abuse—psychological, physical and neglect. The Statement presents the evidence-base and recommendations for the implementation of a prevention policy. Structural and cultural remedies, as well as practical recommendations, are suggested for sport organisations, athletes, sports medicine and allied disciplines, sport scientists and researchers.

In 2007, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) released a consensus statement on the topic of sexual harassment and abuse in sport.⁴ This document defines the problems, identifies the risk factors and provides guidelines for prevention and a resolution with the aim to improve the health and protection of athletes through the promotion of effective preventive policies and to increase the awareness of these problems among members of the athletes' entourage. Following this statement, the IOC released a website containing educational modules to raise the awareness in athletes, coaches and sport federation members about the issue. Recently, the IOC has renewed its engagement with the topic by releasing an update and elaboration of the Consensus to all types of 'non-accidental harm' against athletes, urging sport federations to take all necessary actions to protect and safeguard athletes in sport.⁵ The most recent Consensus Statement, released in 2016, on harassment and abuse (non-accidental violence) in sport extends the 2007 IOC Consensus Statement on sexual harassment and abuse and presents additional evidence of several other types of non-sexual harassment and abuse (psychological, physical and neglect). The Statement encourages stakeholders in the field of sport to consider promoting safe sport and embed this topic in the broader international imperative for good governance in sport. A systematic multi-agency approach, led by major international and national sport organisations, is considered most effective.

³ <https://www.unicef.org.uk/sport-for-development/safeguarding-in-sport/>

⁴ <https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/THE%20IOC/OFFICIAL%20SHA%20Statement.pdf>

⁵ <http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/50/17/1019.long>

2. Analysis

There has been a significant increase in political attention and policies aiming at acknowledging the problem of sexual violence in sport, as well as stimulating sport organisations to take action. The recommendations, found in international normative frameworks, mainly focus on preventive and protective measures to prevent sexual violence against children in sport. There appears to be an international consensus that, despite the well-recognized positive aspects, children's participation in sport can be negatively influenced by sexual violence. The studied documents, issued by leading international authorities, provide a sufficiently well-established policy framework to legitimise driven policy initiatives at national and international level.

The recommendations in these normative frameworks are often vaguely formulated and lack concrete advice. Some types of sexual violence (e.g. peer to peer violence) and related problems (e.g. bystander behavior) are not referred to in detail. Also, attention to vulnerable subgroups (young elite athletes, LGBT athletes, ethnic minorities and disabled athletes) could be increased. Furthermore, most of the documents focus on sexual violence only, while research suggests that sexual violence is highly correlated with other types of violence, such as psychological abuse, excessive pressure or physical aggression. The IOC Consensus Statement does extend its first focus on sexual harassment and abuse in 2016 to all types of non-accidental violence in the newest statement of 2016.

While most frameworks offer some concrete instruments that could be developed for the prevention of sexual violence in sport, such as a code of conduct, no suggestions for related disciplinary sanctions are made. Furthermore, while some of the documents specifically target sport federations, athletes, and even sport medicine practitioners, coaches are not directly addressed. However, having a unique position and often a role model function, coaches are important actors in the protection and safeguarding of athletes. Equally, these frameworks barely propose measures to prosecute and sanction perpetrators of sexual violence in sport, as well as to provide services to support victims, perpetrators and their environment.

The guidelines and recommendations that were found in these five documents can roughly be classified into one overarching theme and four areas of action. For each topic, we present a general guiding principle, along with some concrete guidelines and tips for action, in collaboration with the PSS+ partners and experts.

II. OVERARCHING THEME 'POLICY'

Developing and implementing a child protection strategy

The relevant frameworks recommend the development of specific policies on the prevention of sexual violence in sport. The [Recommendations on the protection of young athletes and safeguarding children's rights in sport](#) encourages national public authorities to develop measures and promote strategies to protect children in sport from sexual violence in sport. All documents urge sport organisations to have a policy in place to safeguard athletes. However, the exact requirements of such policies are not included. The recommendations are vaguely formulated and lack a detailed description of the desired actions related to specific areas (see below). Furthermore, key indicators of successful policies are not mentioned.

The [International Safeguards for Children in Sport](#), a policy guiding document aiming at guiding organisations towards safeguarding, provides a holistic approach to ensuring children's safety and protection in all sports contexts. The International Safeguards define some key steps:

1. Preparing for the journey: raising awareness of the need to safeguard children
2. Preparing to implement: reflecting on where you are now and prioritising your next steps
3. Developing your safeguard
4. Implementing your safeguard
5. Embedding your safeguard

Tips from PSS+ partners and experts when starting with policy development and implementation

1. The child protection strategy / policy should be accompanied by an action plan, and the board of sport organisations should endorse the policy and provide appropriate financing and support for the action, and be responsible to oversee the implementation process.
2. Developing a policy requires the skills and expertise of a variety of sport, health, education and law-enforcement professionals. Establish a partnership and clarify the role of each stakeholder.
3. Hold all stakeholders accountable for (parts of) the prevention strategy.
4. Install a monitoring and evaluation system, and link funding to the installation and implementation of safeguarding.
5. Use easy to understand, clear language.
6. Ensure that the voices of children and young athletes are taken into account at all stages of the policy and action plan development, and implementation.
7. Prescribe a set of minimum standards for each sport organisations and provide sport organisations with sufficient support at every stage of the policy implementation.
8. Develop a communication strategy to ensure an appropriate dissemination of the policy and action plan. The strategy should be implemented / entrenched at all levels

Building partnership: a key factor for success

Working in partnership to influence and promote the adoption and implementation of measures is considered to be very useful in the prevention of sexual violence against child athletes. Different types of partnerships are found in the standards: partnerships between sport organisations and national agencies in victim support; partnerships between sport organisations and national agencies in children's rights; partnerships with expert groups from in- and outside sport.

Involving children, parents, the media, the private sector and funding agencies in a holistic policy strategy will improve the uptake at different levels and promote the adoption and implementation.

In practice, building partnerships might be challenging. It requires thorough preparation, constant monitoring and each partner's role and responsibility should be clear.

Engage with research(ers)!

National governing bodies and sport organisations are encouraged to promote and support scientific research. More research is needed to strengthen the evidence base and to raise awareness on the topic. The European Commission Expert Group on Good Governance recommends commissioning a study on the feasibility of criminal record requests as well as national studies on the prevalence of sexual violence, for example by including some questions on the topic in the Eurobarometer. Identifying the gaps in current knowledge enables national authorities to commission or promote relevant research in their country.

Up to date, most implemented prevention practices lack thorough assessment and evaluation. By ensuring collaboration between research, practice and policy, implemented practices can be scientifically monitored, evaluated, and, if needed, adapted based on the results of this process.

II. SPECIFIC AREAS OF ACTION

Guiding principles and tips when starting to work on preventing sexual violence against children in sport are presented here in 5 areas of action:

- ➔ awareness raising activities
- ➔ educational programs
- ➔ codes of conduct and codes of ethics
- ➔ risk assessment
- ➔ support and case management

Launching awareness raising initiatives

The standards recommend (inter-)national sport organisations and public authorities to encourage awareness on the topic of sexual violence against children in sport among the public, sport staff, athletes, and parents. It is recommended to develop awareness raising campaigns and inform athletes about their rights. Awareness raising initiatives should include information on the existence and complexity of sexual violence in sport, basic information on facts and figures, as well as risk factors and impact.

Why?

Breaking the taboo, sharing the knowledge, discussing the topic, building the understanding, changing the attitude, and prompting action on sexual violence against children in sport.

Tips from PSS+ partners and experts when starting with awareness raising initiatives

1. Clarify who the target audience is and tailor the awareness raising materials to it.
2. Stay away from messages that put responsibility on the child or stereotypes, and avoid using negative, judgmental or scaremongering messages. The wording should be carefully chosen.
3. Use short and easy to understand messages that can be spread using social media.⁶
4. Use daily life situations / cases that can be easily understandable and recognisable.
5. Encourage openness and provide direction on how to disclose.
6. Communicate about concrete actions that sport stakeholders can take (e.g. information on support services, helplines, etc.).
7. Publicise initiatives.
8. Discuss your ideas and actions within your organisation: raising awareness is a collective responsibility!
9. Consult with relevant stakeholders to make sure initiatives are in line with demographics (e.g. athletes, children, coaches) and involve children and young

⁶ For example: Violence concerns us all / all is responsible / all can help to stop it, No violence is justified (play by the rules), It is not the victim's fault, Keep sport safe / preserve sport values, Sport can help to protect children.

athletes in the development of awareness raising initiatives.

10. Develop training and educational programs, dedicated to coaches, sport leaders, PE teachers, volunteers, children, high performance athletes, parents, etc. Awareness raising campaigns should be in tandem with training and educational programs.

Developing educational programs

Educating stakeholders on the existence, risk factors, characteristics and impact is a key action in primary prevention of sexual violence in sport. The normative standards emphasize the need for special education or training programs on the topic of sexual violence against children for sport leaders and PE teachers, for child athletes (adapted to their evolving capacity) and all other stakeholders in sport. Training should be regularly organised and developed in collaboration with academics. No detailed information on the format, the content, the frequency, the fact whether they should/should not be compulsory (for whom?) is available.

Tips from PSS+ partners and experts when starting with educational programs

1. An educational program on sexual violence needs to be included in the general educational program for coaches, sport leaders, sport managers, PE teachers, etc.
2. Educational programs should include information on the definition and examples of sexual violence, on the relevant legal framework, on prevention and protection, on reporting and referral systems.
3. Confront your audience with the voices of survivors in sport.
4. Use experts in relevant fields, e.g. psychologists, child protection experts, etc.
5. Target sport leaders, sport managers and coaches (at federation and club level), students in sport sciences, athletes, volunteers, PE teachers, welfare officers and parents (especially for promising young athletes).
6. Clarify who your target group is, and prepare tailored educational materials. Trainings need to be arranged and tailored to specific roles and responsibilities (e.g. trainings on investigations for welfare officer).
7. Use an interactive, results-oriented approach, and if targeting children, make sure to use a child-friendly format (e.g. open discussion).
8. Use new media (webinars, online tutorials, social media and apps) but also consider that including face-to-face information is crucial, acknowledging the fact that the topic of sexual violence is sensitive.
9. Install an accreditation system for sport organisations to stimulate the participation of staff.
10. Built-in support for people who may be affected by training / education.
11. Train the trainers who are responsible for the educational programs for coaches, sport leaders, managers, etc.

Introducing a code of conduct and a code of ethics

One of the most popular instruments to protect children's safety in sport is the code of conduct for all people involved in sport. Indeed, many of the available normative frameworks mention this instrument as a suitable tool in the prevention of sexual violence in sport. Promoting ethical guidelines, a code of conduct, ethical leadership or an acceptable standard of behavior is recommended in all documents. However, more detailed information on the content of these codes and the attached penalties are not provided. Furthermore, sport organisations are not given advice on whom should sign the codes, when such codes should be signed, what sanctions may be applied and how they should be applied.

What?

A clearly written description of acceptable and non-acceptable behavior of sport leaders, athletes, officials, board members, parents and other stakeholders in sport organisations, and related disciplinary sanctions.

Tips from PSS+ partners and experts for codes of conduct and codes of ethics

1. Develop a set of codes of conduct / ethics tailored to the different roles in your organisation (coaches, athletes, officials, parents, club safeguarding officers, etc.) and ensure they (the relevant stakeholders) have a role to play in the development of this.
2. Cover all relevant behavior on and offline, and relationships in positions of trust.
3. Involve children and young people in the development of any code and refer to child protection aspects and children's rights.
4. Codes of conduct and codes of ethics must be agreed and signed for. Signing the code of conduct / ethics should be a condition of recruitment and a condition for parents before their child can enroll.
5. Clearly indicate the consequences for breaches of codes and the sanctions that apply.
6. Include minimum procedures that are meaningful, applicable and simple. Make a link with complaints, disciplinary and grievance procedures.
7. Create a code that is 'alive'. At the beginning of each season (every year), update the code and everyone must sign and endorse it.

Minimizing risk

One of the protection instruments often suggested for professionals working with children is the criminal history check. By banning previously convicted sexual offenders, sport lowers the chances of new offences, committed by these people, against children in sport. However, this is obviously not a solution for incidents of sexual violence in sport, knowing that most sexual crimes against children are committed by first time offenders (without previous convictions, so with a clear criminal history). A detrimental effect of a criminal history check as the only instrument in a child protection policy is the false feeling of safety. Still, the instrument is popular in many countries and often required for professional positions where there is interaction with children. A risk assessment consists of more than a criminal history check. Analyzing the static and dynamic risk factors in your organisation to minimise the risk to children is a more thorough process than a simple criminal record check when hiring new sport leaders. Staff screening criteria, contact with previous employer, infrastructure safety checks and an organisation self-audit are some of the complementary actions.

Tips from PSS+ partners and experts when starting with risk assessment procedures

1. Identify risk situations in the organisation and establish mechanisms to reduce risks including emergency procedures (e.g. competition with overnight stay: avoid host families and coaches should not be alone with athletes). Use a checklist format and develop guidelines when a risk situation cannot be avoided.
2. Engage all stakeholders in the process of reducing risks, including parents.
3. Develop a code of conduct for your organisation (see area of action "Introducing a code of conduct and a code of ethics").
4. Consider additional vulnerabilities of young athletes (e. g. disabilities, etc.).
5. Raise awareness and share information on how to report concerns about a situation.
6. Consider checking the criminal history of youth sport leaders, as a valuable but not the only element in a screening procedure. Adequate provisions in national legislation should be in place. Other means of internal procedures are essential and advised (e.g. license to practice, having a specific license, conditions of employment, contact with previous employers, qualification, competences, etc.).

Providing support and case management

The Lanzarote Convention recommends the installation of support systems for victims of sexual violence. Working in close collaboration with victim services outside sport is a crucial requirement for providing victims in sport with the required support. Often, the disclosure of child sexual abuse cases in sport act as a catalyst for change and an impetus for future collaborations between victim support agencies, national sport agencies and sport organisations.

Tips from PSS+ partners and experts when starting with support services and case management

1. Put children's rights at the centre of your organisation.
2. Refer to the *International Safeguards for Children in Sport*.
3. Identify what resources and expertise are available and who to ask for help.
4. Make sure to have a written and transparent case management system in place in your organisation.
5. Develop guidelines clearly stating roles, procedures and responsibilities in the case of a suspected abuse.
6. Have a reference person (a "welfare officer") in your organisation and provide appropriate training to this person.
7. Use the "3 R" approach: Report, Respond & Record.