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Gouvernement Princier
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start to talk

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport
epas
Accord partiel élargi sur le sport



Strasbourg, 11 March 2025

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Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)

Safe sport as a space for human rights education

Event on the sidelines of the 58th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

**Wednesday 12 March 2025
2.00pm – 3.00pm CET**

**Room XXII
Palais des Nations, Geneva**

Working language: English

Concept note and programme

Context

Sport is great for children. It brings joy and develops healthy habits. It boosts self-esteem and creates a sense of belonging. Through sport, either recreational, organised or as part of elite competition, children abide by key values and learn important life skills.

Sport can also provide for an empowering space for human rights education: “As the United Nations Human Rights Council has noted, sport has a tremendous potential ‘as a universal language that contributes to education people on the values of respect, dignity, diversity, equality, tolerance and fairness as a means to combat all forms of discrimination and to promote social inclusion for all’¹. The UNICEF Children’s Rights in Sport Principles offer a framework for educating about rights and ensuring the healthy development of all children.

The Council of Europe has been promoting² sport as a space for children and young people to increase awareness of their human rights, to feel empowered to exercise them, and to respect the rights of others. This is notably linked to the substantial amount of time that children spend in sport environments throughout their childhood, their willingness to participate and the potential for such environments to be inclusive and accessible³.

However, this is only possible if children themselves are able to enjoy and experience their rights in sporting settings. Children must be protected from abuse and violence. They must also be protected from excessive coaching and training practices that may threaten their physical or emotional integrity. It is therefore of paramount importance that governments and sports organisations combine their efforts to implement appropriate safeguarding and protection structures⁴.

Children’s rights have always been a priority for the [Council of Europe’s Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport \(EPAS\)](#). The [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#), also known as “the Lanzarote Convention”, requires criminalisation of all kinds of sexual offences against children. It sets out that states in Europe and beyond shall adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute perpetrators. The [European Sports Charter](#) aims at the implementation of human rights in the field of sport, where sport should be values-based, accessible to all, and free from all forms of violence and discrimination, with enhanced protection of the integrity of children and groups in situation of vulnerability.

Through its flagship project [“Start to Talk”](#), EPAS supports national authorities responsible for sport and sports organisations in improving their child safeguarding practices and sports governance. The project also promotes the participation of children and young people in policy-making processes as a way to empower children and the youth to exercise their own rights and to improve the effectiveness of public policies.

On 12 March 2025, EPAS will organise an event on “Safe sport as a space for human rights education”, on the sidelines of the 58th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. This event is co-organised with the Permanent Mission of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to the United Nations in Geneva, the Permanent Representation of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of the Principality of Monaco to the United Nations in Geneva.

¹ Jonathan Todres & Ursula Kilkelly (09 Jan 2025): Sport as a space for human rights education and children’s rights, Human Rights Education Review, DOI: 10.1080/25355406.2024.2426870.

² [EPAS Consultative Committee \(CC\) to host a webinar on physical education and school sport on 21 February - Sport](#)

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

The event is co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva of Albania, Bulgaria, Colombia, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Liechtenstein and Portugal, as well as UNICEF.

Objectives

The objective of this event is to provide a better understanding of how safe and right-respecting sports environments can act as powerful vehicles for children's human rights enjoyment and promotion. Experts on children's rights, education and sport will discuss international frameworks for human rights education in sport as well as how to ensure a safe space for children in sport, free from abuse and violence.

Participation

This event is open to on-site participation to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva, NGOs, representatives from United Nations agencies and other international organisations.

The event is open to the public for online participation.

Registration

To follow the event online, please complete and submit the [registration form](#) by Monday 11 March.

Date and Place. Practical arrangements

The event will be held on 12 March 2025 from 2.00pm to 3.00pm in Room XXII of the Palais des Nations in Geneva and online.

Coffee and pastries will be offered.

Working languages

The working language will be English.

Draft programme

Moderated by *Presilia Mpanu-Mpanu*, Social & Environmental Sustainability Expert, UEFA

2.00pm-2.05pm Opening words

Mama Fatima Singhateh, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children

2.05pm-2.55pm Safe sport as a space for human rights education

Jonathan Todres, Distinguished University Professor at Georgia State University – Human rights education through sport (online)

Claudia Villa-Hughes, Head of Safeguarding, Centre for Sport and Human Rights – Sporting Chance Principles

Elena Casero, Programme Manager, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, (EPAS) – Implementing child safeguarding for fully rights-respecting sports environments

Kirsty Burrows, Associate Director Health, Medicine and Science, International Olympic Committee

Questions and Answers – exchange of views between the speakers and the audience

2.55pm-3.00pm Closing words

H.E. M. Anne Goedert, Ambassador at large for Human Rights of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg