

Strasbourg, 18 May 2026

EPAS(2026)46

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)

Youth Perspective for Safe and Healthy Sport

Preparation of the 19th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Sport

From Monday 25 May 2026 to Wednesday 27 May 2026

European Youth Centre (30 Rue Pierre de Coubertin)

Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France

Working languages: English and French

(with simultaneous interpretation)

Preparatory document for participants

Context

What is the Council of Europe?

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. Since its foundation in 1949, the organisation has created a common legal space, centred on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), across its 46 member states. This represents a death penalty-free zone for more than 700 million people.

What is EPAS?

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) provides a platform for intergovernmental sports co-operation between the public authorities of its member states. It also encourages dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and NGOs. This contributes to better governance, with the aim of making sport more ethical, more inclusive and safer.

What is Start to Talk?

Sport is great for children. It can bring joy, healthy habits, boost self-esteem and create a sense of belonging. Through sport, children adhere to key values and learn important life skills. However, abuse can also occur in sport. Violence against children and young people in sports happens far too often, affecting all countries and disciplines alike, and occurs from grassroots to elite sport. Violence and abuse can leave scars for life. Most victims suffer in silence and never get help. Impunity allows many offenders to keep preying on children.

The Council of Europe develops international treaties and other legal standards to ensure that governments and sports organisations implement the necessary measures to better protect children and young people in sport. To support the implementation of these legal standards, EPAS runs [“Start to Talk”](#), a project providing technical advice, training, and awareness tools.

Why are we meeting?

Sport can be a place of joy, friendship, confidence, health and belonging. It can help young people feel stronger, safer and more connected to others. But sport is not always safe or inclusive for everyone. Some children and young people experience:

- violence or abuse,
- bullying or discrimination,
- pressure to perform,
- mental health difficulties,
- exclusion because of background, gender, disability, migration status or identity,
- unsafe environments online or offline.

The Youth Perspective event brings together up to 50 young people from across Europe to share experiences, ideas and recommendations on how sport can become:

- safer,
- healthier,
- more inclusive,
- and more respectful of human rights (children's rights).

Your ideas will contribute to discussions preparing the 19th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Sport in Monaco on 3-4 November 2026. There are two main topics to be discussed:

Topic 1 — SAFER SPORT

Safe sport means that every child and young person can participate in sport free from violence, fear, abuse, discrimination or humiliation.

This includes physical, psychological and sexual violence, neglect, bullying, cyberbullying, racism, sexism and peer violence.

1. Prevention and Safeguarding

Safeguarding means creating systems, rules and behaviours that protect children and young people. Examples include: codes of conduct, trained safeguarding officers, safer recruitment of coaches and volunteers, clear reporting systems, child-friendly information, listening to young people's voices.

Questions to reflect

- What makes a sport environment feel safe or unsafe?
 - What behaviours from adults or teammates should never be accepted?
 - Do young people know where to ask for help in sport settings?
 - How can children and young people be involved in shaping safeguarding policies?
 - What should clubs, schools and federations do better to prevent abuse?
-

2. Awareness Raising and Education

Young people, coaches, parents and officials all need education about rights in sport, consent and respect, healthy relationships, online safety, discrimination and inclusion, mental health, recognizing harmful behaviour.

Questions to reflect

- What should every young athlete know about their rights?
 - How can awareness campaigns better reach young people?
 - What kind of training should coaches and adults receive?
 - How can social media be used positively?
 - What topics are still “taboo” in sport?
-

3. Responding to Violence

When violence or abuse happens, responses must be fast, respectful, fair and trauma-informed. Young people need: trusted adults, confidential reporting systems, emotional support, protection from retaliation, access to justice and follow-up.

Questions to reflect

- Why do many young people stay silent about abuse?
- What helps young people feel safe enough to report?
- How should clubs respond when harm happens?
- What support should victims receive?
- How can sport organisations rebuild trust after incidents?

Topic 2 — HEALTHIER SPORT

Healthy sport means protecting both physical and mental well-being, while making sure everyone feels included and respected.

1. Physical and Mental Health

Sport can improve health, confidence and resilience. But unhealthy pressure, unsafe training, discrimination, doping, body shaming or exclusion can also harm young people.

Particular attention should be given to mental health, risky or high-impact sports, substance use and doping, stress and burnout, migrant and displaced children, balancing performance and well-being.

Questions to reflect

- What pressures do young athletes face today?
 - How can sport better support mental health?
 - What are the risks of “win at all costs” culture?
 - How can coaches encourage healthy behaviours?
 - What support do migrant young people need in sport?
-

2. Safe Spaces

Sport should be a place where all young people feel welcome, protected and respected.

For migrant, refugee and displaced children especially, sport can create belonging, friendship, confidence, community connection, emotional support.

Questions to reflect

- What helps young people feel they belong in sport?
 - What barriers prevent some young people from participating?
 - How can sport clubs become safer spaces for migrants and minorities?
 - What role does language, racism or discrimination play?
 - How can adults create more supportive environments?
-

3. Inclusive Environments

Inclusive sport means that everyone can participate regardless of origin, gender, disability, religion, social background, sexual orientation, migration status, economic situation.

Inclusion also means listening to different experiences and making space for all voices.

Questions to reflect

- Who is often excluded from sport participation?
 - What changes would make sport more inclusive?
 - How can young people help create respectful team cultures?
 - What responsibilities do leaders and institutions have?
 - How can sports better protect children’s rights for everyone?
-

Your Role

This event is not only about discussing problems. It is about shaping solutions.

Your experiences, ideas and recommendations can help different stakeholders such as policymakers, sport organisations and governments create safer and healthier sport for all children and young people.

You are encouraged to speak openly, listen respectfully, share experiences, challenge stereotypes, and think creatively about change. Your contribution is very important for us and it matters. The conclusions of this very busy one day will be presented by some of you in the EPAS Governing Board - Consultative Committee annual meeting on 27 May 2026.