



## CONFERENCE PROMOTING SAFETY, INTEGRITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN SPORT



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## Background information

### Session I

#### Safe Sports: preventing violence and abuse

Sports are increasingly confronted with the problem of violence and abuse. Hundreds of cases of sexual, physical and emotional abuse in sport have come to light in recent years. Such violence, in particular sexual abuse, is serious and widespread, particularly against women and children. More and more athletes denounce psychological and emotional abuse as being part of “sport culture.”

For the victims, the consequences can be devastating and long-lasting: injuries and impaired physical development, loss of self-esteem, poor academic and sporting performance, distorted body image, eating disorders, self-harm, depression, anxiety and substance use disorders. In extreme cases, abuse can lead to death (including suicide). Very often, victims are forced or compelled to stop practicing their sport.

The extent of the problem points to unpreparedness of sports organisations to deal with this important issue. Moreover, despite its high prevalence exposed by research, violence in sport is largely underreported. Reasons include feelings of guilt, shame and fear of reprisals and other negative outcomes.

Victims, survivors and witnesses of violence in sport are calling for urgent action to prevent violence, protect its victims and fight against the impunity of the perpetrators. They denounce

the lack of safeguarding policies, safe reporting procedures, independent investigations and trauma-informed support to victims. Sport's failure to create a safe and empowering environment for all results in many victims and witnesses fearing to report violence.

Addressing violence in sport is a human rights imperative. International human rights law requires States to effectively safeguard the human rights of individuals within their jurisdiction and sport organisations should carry out human rights due diligence and provide for, or cooperate in, their remediation through legitimate processes. Public authorities, sports organisations and other stakeholders must seek to ensure that sport becomes a safe and empowering environment for all.

Session I will gather representatives of key stakeholders (sports bodies, athletes' representatives, and policy makers) to raise awareness on the problem, better understand it, discuss how sports and public authorities are reacting to deal with it more effectively, and consider potential for mutual support and joint action.

### [Resolution 2276 \(2019\) Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport,](#)

The Assembly addresses recommendations both to public authorities of member States and to sports federations. It calls in particular the latter to:

*11.1 integrate equality and non-discrimination into their activities and promote democratic values; prevent and combat hate speech and, to this end, strengthen co-operation with supporters' clubs, civil society organisations, the media and educational institutions;*

*11.2 appoint outstanding athletes as "ambassadors for equality and non-discrimination".*

*11.3 require all players to formally commit to refraining from hate speech and manifestations of hatred and intolerance;*

*11.4 provide all players and staff members with training on how to identify, prevent and counter hate speech and intolerance;*

*11.5 promote educational programmes for sports supporters and fan clubs in order to prevent hate speech in stadiums during matches.*

General considerations:

- "Hatred and intolerance are rife in Europe today and the world of sport, which reflects society at large, is not immune to this reality. On the contrary, various forms of hatred and intolerance, including Afrophobia, antisemitism, homo- and transphobia, Islamophobia, racism, sexism and xenophobia, often find fertile ground in the world of sport, leading to verbal and physical violence. This interferes with the spirit of competition that is a natural element of sport, by polluting and perverting it."
- "Verbal abuse is widespread in the sports environment, in the form of insults and chants that may amount to hate speech and incitation to violence. Abuse may also be written, visual or allusive, with the use of symbolic objects, extremist iconography or vandalism of the opponents' symbols. These phenomena occur most often in collective ways, among supporters, but they also take place on the playing field, involving players, trainers or referees, either as perpetrators or victims of the abuse."
- "The Assembly is aware of the powerful potential that sport has to change mindsets. It is convinced that sport should be first and foremost an instrument for promoting and transmitting values such as fair play, mutual respect and tolerance, in addition to being a beneficial activity for personal development and health and a form of entertainment accessible to all. There should be no place in sport for prejudice and violence, nor for manipulation of supporters' sentiments."

## Resolution 2465 (2022) The fight for a level playing field – Ending discrimination against women in the world of sport

The world of sport, like all sectors in society, is not free from violence, sexism and gender discrimination, as it continues to be more favourable to men. Inequalities in pay, treatment, access and status between women and men are still common in both professional and non-professional sport. Women, in all their diversity, are poorly represented in decision-making sport bodies. Women have less access to sport because of gender inequalities in relation to resources, time and lack of infrastructure. Female athletes must be recognised in all their diversity so that appropriate measures to prevent and combat discrimination can be implemented. **Taking into account the intersectional dimension paves the way for a targeted response and proper policies.** The Assembly calls to promote access to sport for all women and notes that discrimination against LGBTI women has a negative impact on women in general.

As regards **combating gender-based discrimination and gender stereotypes**, the Assembly has called on member States to:

- invest in education on gender equality, train teachers in these issues, including in the field of sport, and incorporate a gender perspective in sports education from an early age;
- prevent and combat sexism and gender stereotypes and all forms of gender-based discrimination, in particular by adopting legislation and codes of conduct and by organising awareness-raising campaigns, including at major sporting events;
- ensure the collection, analysis and publication of data on discrimination in sport at all levels, and contribute to international initiatives to collect and share data for the purposes of research, awareness raising and the development of public policies and sports practices;
- recognise the fact that women from diverse backgrounds, LGBTI women, women with disabilities, women from a migration background or with diverse religious affiliations are subjected to multiple discrimination;
- abolish discriminatory policies against LGBTI athletes and respect the human rights of female athletes in all their diversity;

**Sports federations are called upon to act and implement measures to prevent and detect violence and support survivors.** The Assembly reiterates its firm commitment to preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence and to promoting the ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, Istanbul Convention). In particular, the Assembly has called on member States to:

- take measures to prevent violence against women and girls, including LGBTI women, in sport at all levels, including in schools and sports organisations; provide support to survivors of violence, with an independent and specialised structure;
- train sports personnel at all levels to prevent all forms of gender-based violence;
- ensure that perpetrators of violence are prosecuted and put an end to impunity in this area;
- launch awareness-raising campaigns on preventing and combating gender-based violence, including at major sporting events;
- collect, analyse and publish data on violence against women and girls in sport.

There is a pressing need in the field of sport to prevent violence and discrimination, promote gender equality, invest in sport for all, encourage participation and **put an end to the “invisibilisation” of women.** Men have an important role to play in preventing and combating discrimination against women, in all their diversity, in sport.

## Session II

### “Clean Sport”: tackling doping, match-fixing, and illegal betting

Sport corruption (here broadly intended) represents a persistent issue that threatens the integrity of sport. It encompasses multiple forms, including doping, match-fixing, illegal betting, and takes away the fairness and excitement of sport. “Dirty sport” is cheating, it engenders major public health risks and helps to enrich organised criminal groups on a transnational level. It is contrary to a values-based sport and the principles for which it stands, such as fair play, equal chances and loyal competition.

Competition manipulation aims at controlling the outcome of an event and can be used for personal, sporting or financial gain. All sports are vulnerable to competition manipulation, which can happen at local matches and tournaments, not just in high performance and professional sports. This phenomenon has a strong link to gambling in general, and illegal betting. The rapid development of online betting, and the fatal attraction it exerts on young people and many sportspersons, including triggering dangerous forms of addiction, increases the level of manipulation risks, as it offers an easy way to money-laundering and opportunities for new substantial illegal profits for the organised crime. Therefore, it seems not possible to combat manipulation effectively without countering illegal betting, and this requires new forms of multi-stakeholder cooperation at international level.

Doping in sport has grown, expanded geographically and become more visible in recent years. Cases of proven doping by high-level athletes continue to emerge. Worse still, doping is taking on huge proportions in amateur sport and sports practised by millions of young people and jeopardises the health of millions of athletes throughout the world. Ever since the earliest Olympic Games doping tests were conducted in the 60s, the challenge to keep sport clean has evolved against a backdrop of new substances and methods designed to boost athletic performance whilst violating the rules and spirit of the competition.

Testing methods and procedures are progressively adapted to unveil doping, but still some feel that those who cheat have an edge in this run. Controls concentrate on professional sport, and they are perceived as increasingly intrusive, such as genetic testing for example: what are the limits not to cross so as to preserve athletes’ fundamental rights? Moreover, amateur sport is left aside by the regular control systems.

Following increased public attention towards sport integrity, international standards have been developed and intensified policy responses have utilised primary and secondary anti-corruption strategies, including a zero-tolerance policy approach, education initiatives, such as information and value-based education, deterrence strategies, whistleblowing, sanctions, codes of conduct and integrity units. But this has not been sufficient: what could be done more to ensure that all actors involved correctly apply rules and regulations in force, thus increasing trust in the systems? How to strengthen “intelligence”, to make targeted controls more affective?

Session II will gather representatives of key stakeholders to raise awareness on the problem, better understand it, discuss how sports and public authorities are reacting to deal with these issues more effectively, and consider potential for mutual support and joint action to create more robust and trustworthy anti-corruption and anti-doping systems.

#### **PACE adopted texts:**

[Resolution 2276 \(2019\) Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport,](#)  
[Resolution 2465 \(2022\) The fight for a level playing field – Ending discrimination against women in the world of sport\)](#)

[Resolution 2131 \(2016\) Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and social inclusion](#)  
[Resolution 2080 \(2015\) - Rethinking the anti-doping strategy](#)  
[Resolution 2199 \(2018\) and Recommendation 2120 \(2018\) – Towards a framework of modern sports governance and Reply from Committee of Ministers: Doc. 14602](#)  
[Resolution 2200 \(2018\) – Good football governance](#)  
[Resolution 2336 \(2020\) and Recommendation 2178 \(2020\) – Time to act: Europe’s political response to fighting the manipulation of sports competitions \(Doc. 15116\). Reply from the Committee of Ministers: Doc. 15411.](#)  
[Resolution 2420 \(2022\) and Recommendation 2221 \(2022\) – Football governance and ethics: business and values, Reply from the Committee of Ministers: Doc. 15596](#)

## Session III: Equality and inclusion in sport

### [Resolution 2465 \(2022\) The fight for a level playing field – Ending discrimination against women in the world of sport](#)

The world of sport, like all sectors in society, is not free from violence, sexism and gender discrimination, as it continues to be more favourable to men. Inequalities in pay, treatment, access and status between women and men are still common in both professional and non-professional sport. Women, in all their diversity, are poorly represented in decision-making sport bodies. Women have less access to sport because of gender inequalities in relation to resources, time and lack of infrastructure. Female athletes must be recognised in all their diversity so that appropriate measures to prevent and combat discrimination can be implemented. **Taking into account the intersectional dimension paves the way for a targeted response and proper policies.** The Assembly calls to promote access to sport for all women and notes that discrimination against LGBTI women has a negative impact on women in general.

As regards **combating gender-based discrimination and gender stereotypes**, the Assembly has called on member States to:

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- launch awareness-raising campaigns on preventing and combating gender-based violence, including at major sporting events;
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There is a pressing need in the field of sport to prevent violence and discrimination, promote gender equality, invest in sport for all, encourage participation and **put an end to the “invisibilisation” of women**. Men have an important role to play in preventing and combating discrimination against women, in all their diversity, in sport.

The Assembly adopted on 21 June 2023 Resolution 2503 (2023) “Social inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons through sport”,<sup>1</sup> based on the report<sup>2</sup> on the same topic of Ms Nigar Arpadarai (Azerbaijan, EC/DA).

In its resolution, the Assembly “notes that sport can be a fantastic catalyst for empowerment and physical and psychological well-being. Sport can heal and bring the best out of people; it contributes to reinforcing self-esteem. Sport can help in developing a positive and fresh outlook on life, bringing communities together, as well as helping to build them. Practising sport can build mutual respect and encourage team spirit.”

Generating important positive values, sport “has many advantages and can play an instrumental role in the integration of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons in their host country or society. Sport can also provide a sense of safety to persons on the move who faced numerous challenges during their migration journey.”

People on the move indeed have suffered from trauma in their country of origin, during the process of migration and when settling in the host country. Such trauma has a long-term impact on their mental health, and in the host countries, they often face an anti-social behaviour, racism, discrimination and hate speech.

Sport can be an effective social policy tool which reduces antisocial behaviour and increases community cohesion. Indeed, in sport, individual, social or cultural backgrounds do not matter. In sport, nobody asks athletes – and nobody should ask them – about their religion, the colour of their skin or hair, their native language, their political orientation or other factors which seem to divide our societies much too often.

Sport is based on rules – the rules of the game – as well as on fairness and fair play. Sport encourages us to show initiative, become active and engage with others in a positive, rule-based and athletic manner. In this sense, the Council of Europe is a natural partner, promoting greater European unity based on the rule of law and human rights. Under the European Convention on Human Rights, the protection against discrimination is a human right.

And this is precisely the values that our Assembly defends and promotes:

➔ **welcoming the universality of sport;**

➔ **giving the chance to everyone**, especially migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, who have great potentialities and are benefits for all parties involved.

The resolution underlines the benefits of sport as a tool for the social inclusion of migrants, being an effective trauma healer and a means of empowerment. Sporting activities have a positive impact on physical wellbeing and often play a role of icebreaker for migrants, participating in the linkage with the host community. It also raises the difficult inclusion of specific categories of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, namely women, children and LGBTQ+ community members.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/32985>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/31825>.

Moreover, the necessity to refer to male peers are factors often explains the scarce participation of women in sport.

Ms Arpadarai's report analyses the barriers challenging the success of inclusive programmes for migrants, having observed structural and socio-personal barriers. The structural barriers are the lack of access and the financial constraints preventing from a proper social inclusion of migrants, such as costs of participation and of sport uniforms. There are also legal obstacles, such as the requirement of residence permits. Obstacles to social inclusion of migrants through sport can also be highlighted in cultural, interpersonal and personal elements, due to traditions or customs.

There are nonetheless existing policies and good practices among States' policies, but also local initiatives and the international co-operation, taking example of France, or Germany. The local initiatives indicated in the report also show the enthusiasm of local and regional authorities to promote social inclusion of migrants.

At international level, the Council of Europe has been particularly active in promoting sport as a means of inclusion and peace.

In addition to the relevant Committee of Ministers' recommendations, the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport played a crucial role, by monitoring the application of the European Sports Charter of the Council of Europe.

UNHCR has also done a lot for social inclusion through sport, especially in partnership with the International Olympic Committee, as well as the European Union, with its 2007 White Paper on Sport.

Despite such social inclusion policies and good practices existing at international level as well as in host communities at local, regional and national levels, support programmes are needed in several areas.

Resolution 2503 (2023) therefore makes several recommendations:

- States and actors involved in sport-based activities should have due regard to the values and principles laid down in the European Sports Charter.
- In this spirit, States are invited to accede to the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport for a better implementation of the European Sports Charter and for benefitting from a more effective international co-operation.
- States are moreover invited to adopt or ensure the application of legislation prohibiting any form of discrimination in sports due to nationality, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language or disabilities.
- Specific attention should be drawn to groups particularly exposed among migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons for whom structural and cultural barriers are harsher, namely migrant women, children, LGBTQ+ community members or disabled migrants.
- Specific targeted actions should be developed to their intention for promoting their social inclusion in the receiving societies.
- Long-term and sustainable projects should be privileged over short-term programmes, and by investing in cross-sectoral initiatives.
- Finally, States and sport structures should ensure public awareness on the benefits of sport as a tool for the promotion of social inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons and develop further the exchange of knowledge and experience.

## Session III

### Inclusion of persons with disabilities

- Sports can be a powerful tool for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. At the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games, the organisers called on everyone to change their vision of disability and expressed the hope that the games would have transformative power.
- Sports can help in preventing and combating negative stereotypes against persons with disabilities. By putting persons with disabilities in the spotlight, for their abilities rather than for their “dis”-abilities, they can have a considerable positive impact. In 2024, the Paralympics games attracted more spectators than ever, and a larger media coverage in the host country than usual with coverage comparable to the media coverage of the Olympic games. This has allowed a better understanding of the diversity of disabilities, of the crucial importance of ensuring accessibility to all and of the urgency of full inclusion.
- The discussion panel on equality and inclusion in sports will provide an opportunity to discuss the impact of the Paralympic games. By ensuring high visibility of the paralympic athletes, sports federations and public, authorities can contribute to the fight against prejudice, negative stereotyping and violence against persons with disabilities. They can also decide to invest in inclusive sports, accessible to children with disabilities, and share information on para sports at school from a young age. Sport can undeniably contribute to changing the narrative and to deconstructing stereotypes about persons with disabilities.
- However, there is also a risk when putting the emphasis only on the extraordinary character of a performance by a para-athlete. Persons with disabilities should not be expected to beat world records in order to receive attention and recognition.
- Investments are still lacking to make the full inclusion of persons with disabilities a reality. Disability is the most common ground of discrimination in several Council of Europe member States and there have been delays in ensuring full accessibility, in contradiction with the commitments under the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Concrete actions are expected with regard to investments for the full
- inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. Political will is essential to make a difference and put the inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities at the top of the agenda. Full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society and the guarantee of equal rights will benefit all.

[Resolution 2131 \(2016\) Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and social inclusion](#)