

ACTIVITY REPORT 2023

Sport



United around our values

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FOREWORDS

Alexandre Husting

Chair of the EPAS Governing Board



EPAS in a nutshell: Unique

This activity report provides an overview of EPAS's multifaceted initiatives and achievements, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to promoting and defending the fundamental values of sport such as **fair play, solidarity and inclusion in and through sport**, while ensuring that the core values of the Council of Europe are always at the heart of our work. It demonstrates and confirms that EPAS is a key body on the sports policy scene: an "original" and unique intergovernmental platform that connects public authorities with sports organisations to **ensure safe, healthy and accessible sport for all**. EPAS therefore plays a fundamental role in promoting international co-operation in the field of sport.

Highlight of 2023

Of all the events organised in 2023, even if it is difficult to single one out, I would highlight the creation and implementation, under the authority of EPAS, of the **Network of Magistrates / Prosecutors Responsible for Sports** (MARS Network), aimed at strengthening international co-operation and the exchange of information in the field of the protection of the integrity and good governance of sport. The interest generated by this initiative is proof of the strong commitment of the authorities responsible for sport, as well as their trust in EPAS to support this ambitious network.

EPAS is a key body on the sports policy scene: an "original" and unique intergovernmental platform that connects public authorities with sports organisations to ensure safe, healthy and accessible sport for all.

Of course, I cannot forget other highlights of 2023, such as the **Conference on the Inclusion of Child Migrants and Refugees in and through Sport** organised under the Liechtenstein Presidency of the Committee of Ministers in Schaan, or the **roundtables and webinars** organised on a range of topics such as combating gender-based violence in sport and promoting the human rights of transgender and intersex athletes. For each of these events, EPAS demonstrated its commitment to creating a positive and values-based sport environment.

My priority for EPAS in 2024

As Chair, my ambition for 2024 is to see **new countries** join EPAS in order to create an even larger community committed to defending the values that we advocate in and through sport. I am not forgetting that in the autumn the **18th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport** will be held in Porto, Portugal. This event is eagerly awaited, and I have no doubt that the involvement of our Portuguese colleagues and friends will make it exceptional.

I could not conclude this introduction without thanking my colleagues of the Governing Board Bureau, the member Delegations and the Consultative Committee, and of course the Secretariat. All of our activities are the result of a collective effort, for which I would like to thank everyone.

Charlotte Girard Fabre

Chair of the EPAS Consultative Committee



EPAS in a nutshell: A collective

EPAS would be nothing without the collective that it represents. This collective is as diverse as it is collaborative, both in terms of its wide range of activities and its large number of initiatives. A **collective means co-operation at pan-European level and beyond to meet the challenges currently facing sport**, particularly in terms of access, inclusion and ethics. From the stakeholders in the field to the member states, it is the sum of each of the parts that constitutes a unique collective, fiercely defending the fundamental values of sport.

Highlight of 2023

2023 was a busy year for the Consultative Committee (CC), both in institutional terms and in terms of its activities. In institutional terms, following a vacancy in the chairmanship of the CC, democratic life was rich from the first half of the year, leading up to the annual plenary session in June with **record attendance** by members, and a **woman elected as Chair**, as well as a **new member** elected to the Bureau to achieve governance with equal representation.

The activities of the CC were virtually paralleled by the many commitments of the Secretariat and the Governing Board throughout 2023. At the joint meeting of the annual plenary session in June, the involvement of each organisation in presenting its work to **promote the European Sports Charter** highlighted a valuable dynamism and a breadth of action. It should be noted that there were many who **volunteered** their time in

EPAS's various fields of action, a sign of remarkable energy, requiring the Secretariat to draw up lists of substitutes.

The commitment and dedication of CC members is also reflected in their **participation in numerous events** as speakers or experts, as well as their ongoing collaboration in the Sport Division's **working groups**.

The permanent presence of at least one CC representative ensures internal unity. Whether at the Breakfast Roundtable on Women in Sport (8 March), the Webinar on Protecting and Promoting the Human Rights of Transgender and Intersex Athletes in Sport (24 April), the launch of the joint European Union - Council of Europe project "All In Plus" (10 May), the Forum on Sport and Human Rights (30 June), the Diversity Conference (28-29 November), or the support and follow-up visits to the implementation of the European Sports Charter in Portugal (24-25 May) and the Slovak Republic (5-6 October) and the meeting

of the Working Group on the European Sports Charter (29 September), the CC members were always present.

More than a single remarkable event, it is therefore the **involvement** of CC members, the resulting **synergies** and the ability to **work together** despite differences that I would like to highlight for the year 2023.

My priority for EPAS in 2024

Making EPAS more visible and better known to become a **key investment** for all member states.

From the stakeholders in the field to the member states, it is the sum of each of the parts that constitutes a unique collective, fiercely defending the fundamental values of sport.

Sophie Kwasny

Executive Secretary of EPAS and
Head of the Sport Division of the Council of Europe



EPAS in a nutshell: A driving force

EPAS is a driving force for **change**, for **raising awareness**, for **deeper understanding** and for **progress**. Whether it is promoting our values, advancing policies or furthering co-operation, EPAS never stops moving forward, with the European Sports Charter as its cornerstone. EPAS owes its dynamism and its avant-garde nature to its member states and the organisations that make up its Consultative Committee, so it is thanks to them that this driving force for action endures and continues to develop sport.

*EPAS is a driving force
for change, for raising
awareness, for deeper
understanding
and for progress.*

Highlight 2023

This report illustrates the richness and diversity of EPAS's activities in 2023. The achievements are as numerous as the themes of its work are varied. This year's highlights include the overhaul of the mechanism for support and follow-up to the implementation of the European Sports Charter, which has led to the adoption of a **new approach and methodology** designed to provide EPAS member states with valuable support in the development of their national policies and practices.

My priority for EPAS in 2024

The Secretariat's priority for 2024 will be to continue to make the **European Sports Charter** a cornerstone of sports policies and practices for all stakeholders in the world of sport: public authorities, the sports movement, civil society, athletes and/or the private sector. It will be highlighted at the 18th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport, which will be held in Porto from 8 to 10 October 2024 and is sure to be another landmark ministerial event.

MEMBER STATES

List of member states

 Albania	 France	 Montenegro
 Andorra	 Georgia	 Morocco
 Armenia	 Greece	 Netherlands
 Austria	 Hungary	 Norway
 Azerbaijan	 Iceland	 Poland
 Belarus*	 Israel	 Portugal
 Belgium	 Italy	 San Marino
 Bosnia and Herzegovina	 Latvia	 Serbia
 Bulgaria	 Liechtenstein	 Slovak Republic
 Canada	 Lithuania	 Slovenia
 Cyprus	 Luxembourg	 Switzerland
 Croatia	 North Macedonia	 Türkiye
 Estonia	 Malta	 Ukraine
 Finland	 Monaco	

*Suspended by decision of the Committee of Ministers of 17 March 2022 (CM/Del/Dec(2022)1429/2.5).

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HIGHLIGHTS

Sport integrity

Second meeting of the MARS Network – Paris, France, 18-19 September

The Network of Magistrates / Prosecutors Responsible for Sports (**MARS Network**), set up under EPAS, held its second meeting on 18 and 19 September in Paris, France.

The meeting started on 18 September with a conference, hosted by the French Ministry of Justice, which aimed to raise awareness about the latest trends in threats and challenges to sport integrity with a focus on the manipulation of sports competitions, anti-doping, and “safety, security and service” at major sports events, and the related actions needed in investigations and prosecutions.

MARS NETWORK BUREAU

Chair

Jean-Yves Lourguilloux (France), Deputy Public Prosecutor, Judicial Court of Marseille

Vice-Chair

Ann Lukowiak (Belgium), Federal Magistrate, Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office

Bureau members

Konstantinos Spyropoulos (Greece), Prosecutor, First Instance Court of Athens

Mikolaj Tyburczy (Poland), Prosecutor, National Prosecutor's Office

Bjørn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, **Éric Dupond-Moretti**, French Minister of Justice, and **Amélie Oudéa-Castéra**, French Minister of



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Sports and Olympic and Paralympic Games addressed the Conference and were welcomed, along with the participants, in the Court of Appeal of Paris by **Marie-Suzanne Le Quéau**, Paris General Prosecutor. The speakers addressed the strengthening of judicial efforts in the fight against doping, the implementation of an integrated approach linking “safety, security and service”, and the exploration of possible links between match-fixing and sports betting.

The restricted session of the Network, hosted by the French Ministry of Sports and Olympic and Paralympic Games, focused on establishing the governance of the Network and sharing expertise and best practice.

TRIBUTE TO ERIC BISSCHOP

The Sport Division is deeply saddened by the passing of Eric Bisschop, Deputy Federal Prosecutor of Belgium and a key driving force behind the creation of the MARS Network.

A remarkable man of action, a charismatic leader and a true source of inspiration, he will be missed for his knowledge, his pragmatism and his anecdotes.

The Council of Europe is grateful to Eric Bisschop for his relentless and intense efforts in the fight against the manipulation of sports competitions and will build on his legacy to pursue his vision.



Declaration by the Committee of Ministers – Strasbourg, France, 27 September

In a Declaration adopted on 27 September, the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers invited member states and sports organisations to “*promote transparency, accountability, democracy and ethical behaviour in sport, including the establishment of robust governance systems, conflict-of-interest policies, whistle-blower protection mechanisms, effective investigation and prosecution of corruption, manipulation of competitions, violence and other infringements of human rights and the rule of law in the sport context.*”

This Declaration is the result of serious concerns stemming from the “*constantly evolving threats to sport integrity*” and a strong will to “*effectively combat the various threats [...] and ensure fair and clean competitions at all levels.*”

In this respect, the Committee of Ministers supports the establishment under EPAS of the **MARS Network**. Through exchanges of information and intelligence and sharing of best practice among magistrates and prosecutors responsible for sports, the Network aims to strengthen international co-operation in the field of sport justice, thus contributing to a more efficient fight against cross-border crime linked to sports.

To this end, the Committee of Ministers praises the role of EPAS in “*facilitating dialogue and co-operation in the field at national and international levels between the*

sports movement, public authorities, and all other key stakeholders” and calls upon more countries to “*engage in this unique collaborative forum and join EPAS.*”

ARTICLE 8 OF THE EUROPEAN SPORTS CHARTER ON INTEGRITY

[...] The pursuit of sport integrity should commit all stakeholders and:

- protect all people, particularly the young, from violence, harassment and abuse, ensure the safety and security of individuals and foster respect for and protection of internationally recognised human rights, including social rights;
- support fair play, which is much more than playing within the rules. Fair play incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and a sense of fellowship. It includes issues concerned with cheating, the use of unfair strategies while respecting the rules, manipulation of sports competitions and doping;
- inspire a governance of sport that is compliant with the principles of transparency, integrity, democracy, development and solidarity, which should be secured by checks and balances and control mechanisms. [...]

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Inclusion of child migrants and refugees in and through sport

Diversity Conference – Schaan, Liechtenstein, 28-29 November

EPAS held its biennial Diversity Conference, organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport of the Principality of Liechtenstein within the framework of the Liechtenstein Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, on 29 November.

The aim of the EPAS Diversity Conference is to focus on a key topical issue, bringing together national and international experts, policy makers and those working for NGOs and grassroots sport, to assess the current state of play and propose a drive for change. This year's subject area was the inclusion of child migrants and refugees in and through sport, which is highly relevant given the current geopolitical context.

The Conference was opened by **Dominique Hasler**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport of the Principality

of Liechtenstein, **Marja Ruotanen**, Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity at the Council of Europe, and **Alexandre Husting**, Chair of the EPAS Governing Board.

Three speakers – **Khalida Popal**, **Cyrille Tchatchet** and **Gerald Mballe** – shared their journeys from being young refugees to seeing how sport went on to play a major role in their lives, and specifically in terms of their inclusion within their host countries. Khalida Popal is the founder and director of Girl Power Organization and the Programme and Event Director of the Afghanistan Women's National Football Team, Cyrille Tchatchet is an Olympic athlete and Gerald Mballe is an Advisor for Special Olympics Europe Eurasia.

Panels involving a host of key experts looked into the current state of play and considered the way forward, and in particular how the Council of Europe can play a meaningful role.

The Conference was preceded by the screening of the film "We dare to dream" as well as thematic roundtables, confirming the importance for EPAS to continue its actions on this subject, which remains crucially topical.



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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN SPORTS CHARTER

Support and follow-up visits to Portugal and the Slovak Republic

The **European Sports Charter** is the Council of Europe standard which lays down the basic principles for national sports policies, allowing governments to support and provide opportunities for the practice of sport for all under well-defined conditions.

As part of the EPAS mandate, support and follow-up visits to the implementation of the Charter are carried out each year in its member states by an EPAS team.

The **findings, recommendations and good practices** identified during each visit are compiled in a report that EPAS sends to the local authorities. The adopted reports are made available to the public on the [EPAS website](#).

Support and follow-up visit to Portugal – Lisbon, 24-25 May

The EPAS team met with the key stakeholders involved in the implementation of values-based sport in Portugal, including **João Paulo Correia**, Secretary of State for Youth and Sport, and **Vitor Pataco**, President of the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), as well as representatives from the sports movement including the Olympic and Paralympic Committees, non-organised sport, athletes, the media and others.

The team consisted of **Solène Charuau** (France), member of the EPAS Governing Board Bureau, **Alexandre Husting** (Luxembourg), Chair of the EPAS Governing Board, **Janez Sodržnik** (TAFISA), member of the EPAS Consultative Committee Bureau, and two members of the EPAS Secretariat.



© Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth

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Support and follow-up visit to the Slovak Republic – Bratislava, 5-6 October

The EPAS team met with a Slovakian delegation including the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport **Daniel Bútorá** and the Director General for Sport **Peter Dedík**, as well as representatives from the

sports movement including the Olympic and Paralympic Committees, non-organised sport, athletes, the media and others.

The team consisted of **Alexandre Husting** (Luxembourg), Chair of the EPAS Governing Board, **Benthe Tanghe** (Netherlands), member of the EPAS Governing Board Bureau, **James Ogilvie** (UEFA), member of the EPAS Consultative Committee, and one member of the Secretariat.



© Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport

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1ST PILLAR

ETHICAL SPORT

International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport (IPACS)

IPACS's next steps discussed at its annual Steering Committee meeting

The Council of Europe, represented by the EPAS Secretariat, hosted and participated in the IPACS Steering Committee meeting held on 5 May in Paris, France.

The International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport (IPACS) is an informal network bringing together intergovernmental organisations, international sports organisations and governments, combining the efforts of the various stakeholders in the fight against corruption in the governance of sport. It came about based on the knowledge that corruption in sport is a complicated and trans-border phenomenon, requiring urgent concerted effort at international level between governments, intergovernmental organisations and sports organisations.



The Steering Committee agreed to:

- **move forward** with developing the IPACS strategy and have a dedicated working group review the draft document presented at the meeting;
- **consolidate** and further strengthen the prevention workstream;
- **develop** the information-sharing mechanisms through the UNODC networks;
- **empower** the IPACS partners to work with key stakeholders at national level and more strongly involve anti-corruption agencies; and
- **customise** and better distribute IPACS's educational and informative anti-corruption tools, e.g. also for athletes.

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During the previous annual IPACS meeting, held in November 2022, the three IPACS task forces had presented the outcomes of their respective work on reducing the risk of corruption in procurement, integrity and major sport events and good governance. From now on, the three task forces will be merged into one, which will be responsible for the implementation and promotion of the existing tools and for enhancing co-operation between law enforcement, criminal justice authorities and sports organisations.

Irena Guidikova, Head of the Children's Rights and Sport Values Department, and **Sophie Kwasny**, Executive Secretary of EPAS, contributed to the exchanges on the new draft strategy for IPACS, to that end proposing the development of national roadmaps for sport integrity as a new IPACS activity.



New IPACS Task Force on the Promotion of Good Governance

The Council of Europe, represented by the EPAS Secretariat, participated in the 6th Annual General Conference of IPACS, held on 12 September at the headquarters of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna, Austria.

During the previous meeting of the IPACS Steering Committee, it was decided that the three IPACS Task Forces on Reducing the Risk of Corruption in Procurement, on

Integrity and Major Sport Events and on Good Governance should be merged into a single **“Task Force on the Promotion of Good Governance to Prevent Corruption in Sport”**, with a mandate to actively raise awareness of, disseminate and promote the prevention tools developed by its predecessors. These include the IPACS good practice examples for managing conflicts of interest in sports organisations, the Guidelines on procurement of major international sports-events-related infrastructure and services, and the IPACS Sport Governance Benchmark and Guidelines. Additionally, the new Task Force will promote IPACS's work in the area of prevention and good governance.

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Forum on Sport and Human Rights on data protection

– Strasbourg, France, 30 June

As the world of sport and its practice become increasingly digital, the importance of the right to data protection becomes even more evident. The often sensitive nature of the data processed and the complexity of the global ecosystem in which sport stakeholders operate, including private and public bodies, law-enforcement authorities, sports organisations, etc., make the protection of personal data and the harmonisation of measures a pressing need.

For this reason, data protection in sport was the theme of the annual Forum on Sport and Human Rights. Organised by EPAS in collaboration with the **Data Protection Unit** of the Council of Europe, the event took place on 30 June in hybrid format.

The Forum was structured around four panels focusing on:

- performance analysis and predictive technologies,
- international exchanges of information,
- personal data in anti-doping, and
- facial recognition and crowd control.

It brought together data protection authorities and specialists, governmental representatives, participants from the sports world, NGOs, academics, journalists, athletes and other experts who presented the situation in their areas of competence, discussed recurrent challenges and shared ideas and solutions to improve data protection in sport.

The rights to privacy and data protection are set forth in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as in the Council of Europe Convention for the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data (Convention 108).



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2ND PILLAR

INCLUSIVE SPORT

Breakfast Roundtable on gender-based violence in sport – *Strasbourg, France, 8 March*

On the occasion of International Women's Day, EPAS organised a Breakfast Roundtable on Women in Sport which focused on combating gender-based violence in sport. The event took place on 8 March in hybrid format.

During the first part of the event, international experts and guests presented initiatives in place to combat gender-based violence in sport and shared their lived experience in this area. An informal coffee table discussion followed to address the steps that could be taken to tackle



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this issue. The relevance and strength of the mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the **Istanbul Convention**, was at the centre of the exchanges.

Between 2018 and 2019, EPAS implemented a joint European Union - Council of Europe project on gender equality in sport called **“All In: Towards gender balance in sport”**, which produced a best practice toolkit and set up, amongst other outcomes, an online library containing various types of resources (awareness-raising activities, educational tools, legislation, policies, standards and

guidelines, research and study reports). From March 2023 to March 2025, the Council of Europe’s Sport Division will advance on this crucial work through the joint EU - CoE project **“All In Plus: Promoting greater gender equality in sport”**, which will have a specific focus on issues linked to representation of women in sport but will also raise awareness about gender-based violence in sport and how to tackle it, drawing upon the Istanbul Convention. The Sport Division will work closely with experts from a range of institutional, academic and grassroots backgrounds to ensure that the next round of the project has a profound impact on gender equality in the sports sector.

Webinar on the Human Rights of Transgender and Intersex Athletes in Sport – Paris, France, 24 April

In most sporting competitions, athletes are split into sex-specific categories (male or female). These physiological criteria *de facto* exclude intersex people, who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary notions of female or male bodies, deny the gender dimension and also exclude transgender people, whose gender identity does not align with what has culturally been associated with their sex assigned at birth.

Against this backdrop, EPAS held a Webinar on Protecting and Promoting the Human Rights of Transgender and Intersex Athletes in Sport on 24 April in hybrid format. Speakers included representatives from Council of Europe bodies such as EPAS/the Sport Division and the **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit**, as well as EPAS **Consultative Committee** member organisations, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Global Observatory on Gender Equality in Sport, sports clubs, academics, athletes, and other experts.

The webinar was structured around two panels: the first panel took stock of both the progress and the obstacles encountered over the past years since the 2021 **Diversity Conference** on the same subject. The second panel focused on educational tools – each panellist sharing their experience working with tools developed to protect and promote the human rights of transgender and intersex athletes.

The webinar was followed by a technical meeting, where the foundations were laid for preparing an educational toolkit aimed at reducing misinformation and serving as a useful resource for sports management students and trainers and the wider sports community.

24
APRIL/AVRIL
2023
9.30 –
12.30 CET

WEBINAR
ON PROTECTING AND PROMOTING
THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF TRANSGENDER
AND INTERSEX ATHLETES IN SPORT

WEBINAIRE
SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION
DES DROITS HUMAINS
DES SPORTIFS-VES TRANSGENRES
ET INTERSEXES DANS LE SPORT

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3RD PILLAR

SAFE SPORT

Pool of International Experts

Annual meeting of the Pool:
focus on safer recruitment
in sport – Strasbourg, France,
5 December

The **Pool of International Experts on Safe Sport** held its second annual meeting on 5 December in hybrid format. Organised by EPAS in the framework of the “**Start to Talk**” project, the meeting included a roundtable entitled “Safer recruitment in sport: human rights-compliant screening of criminal and disciplinary records”.



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The morning session, restricted to Pool members, was dedicated to sharing updates on the work of each member and discussing 2023 deliverables and the working programme for 2024. A decision was reached to focus – at the 2024 annual meeting – on trauma-informed practice. **Joyce Cook**, Senior Advisor to the President’s Office at FIFA, presented the independent trauma-informed approach implemented by FIFA. **Gloria Viseras**, Senior Project Manager at the IOC’s Safe Sport Unit, presented the IOC’s Safeguarding Regional Hub Model.

The afternoon roundtable allowed for an exchange of opinions and know-how between professionals from different sectors and addressed emerging human rights challenges (right to be presumed innocent, right to data protection, etc.) in the national and international sharing

of criminal and disciplinary backgrounds of employees and volunteers in regular contact with children in sport. Guest speakers included **Sébastien Boueilh**, General Director of the French association *Colosse aux pieds d’argile*, **Iris Janssen**, policy officer at the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, and **Caroline Nogueras-Flavigny**, French journalist and producer of investigative reports and documentaries. Three members of the Pool also participated in the exchange: **George Nikolaidis**, Psychiatrist and Research Director of the Department of Mental Health and Social Welfare at the Greek Institute of Child Health, **Håvard B. Øvregård**, Senior Adviser at the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF), and **Ieuan Watkins**, Safeguarding Consultant at Sport Safeguarding Limited in Wales, United Kingdom.

“Start to Talk” project

First child consultation in Bulgaria – Sofia, 30 May

Child safeguarding in sport is one of the priorities of EPAS, implemented in particular in the framework of the “Start to Talk” project.

EPAS organised its first child consultation session in collaboration with the Child Council of the Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection. The event took place on 30 May and brought together young people (between 15 and 17 years of age) to gather their ideas on how to implement more efficient child safeguarding policies in sport in Bulgaria. The consultation was facilitated by **Petya Dimitrova**, a child protection expert. Dr **Melanie Lang**, a child participation expert, was involved in the process with an advisory role.

“Start to Talk” assists national authorities responsible for sport in the production of country-specific roadmaps for the effective development and implementation of child safeguarding in sport policies, including concrete steps to set up Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) roles in sport.

The “Start to Talk” project is currently supporting the Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sports in the development of a roadmap for the implementation of child safeguarding policies in sport. This document includes concrete steps to set up CSO roles.

Involving children and young people in decision-making is a fundamental step towards achieving children’s legal



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rights, as well as democratising sport and creating a safe sport environment. Sport has not always had a strong track record in listening to children, but the Council of Europe wants to change this through initiatives such as this one.

Child safeguarding in sport in Bulgaria: second roundtable – Sofia, 19 September

EPAS and the Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sports co-organised the second national roundtable in the framework of the “Start to Talk” project. The event was held on 19 September in Sofia with the aim of presenting the draft roadmap for the effective implementation of the child safeguarding in sport policy and of CSO roles at national level, and to discuss the next steps.

The meeting was opened by **Daniela Dasheva**, Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, and **Francine Hetherington Raveney**, Deputy Executive Secretary of EPAS, who respectively gave an update on the Ministry and the Council of Europe’s efforts to create safer sport environments.

Elena Casero, Senior Project Officer at EPAS, presented the “Start to Talk” project and the journey towards the development of the roadmap. The draft roadmap was presented to the project’s Steering Committee and observer organisations by the working group made up of four national and international experts: **Bruno Avelar** and **Miguel Nery** (Qantara Sports), **Petya Koseva** (Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sports) and **Petya Dimitrova** (independent consultant).

Maria Belichovska, Senior Expert at the Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection, and Elena Casero reported on the child consultation session that took place on 30 May, aimed at gathering young people’s ideas on how to implement more efficient child safeguarding policies in sport in Bulgaria. **Melanie Lang** was the child participation expert for the project.

Irena Guidikova, Head of the Children’s Rights and Sport Values Department of the Council of Europe, closed the event by emphasising the importance of the collaborative approach of the project, which has enabled participation of the relevant stakeholders in the protection of children in sport in Bulgaria.



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STATUTORY MATTERS

The three statutory bodies of EPAS

Governing Board

Annual plenary meeting of EPAS – Strasbourg, France, 8 and 9 June

The EPAS Governing Board and Consultative Committee held their annual joint plenary meeting on 8 and 9 June in Strasbourg, France. The EPAS programme of activities was discussed, as well as ongoing projects and recent events.

After addressing the statutory issues on the agenda and various administrative matters, the annual meeting focused on sport integrity. **Bjørn Berge**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, opened a roundtable on the topic and welcomed the preparation by EPAS of a draft Declaration on Sport Integrity for consideration by the Committee of Ministers. He concluded by stating that all stakeholders should play their role in upholding integrity in every aspect of sport.

The Governing Board also adopted the mandate of the Network of Magistrates / Prosecutors Responsible for Sports (**MARS Network**), acknowledged by all stakeholders as an instrumental step in the protection of sport integrity.

During its in camera plenary meeting, the Governing Board elected its new Bureau. **Alexandre Husting** (Luxembourg) and **Andrea Carletti** (Italy) were re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. **Solène Charuau** (France) was re-elected as representative of Region 1; **Benthe Tanghe** (Netherlands) was elected as representative of Region 2; **Andrew Decelis** (Malta) was re-elected as representative of Region 3; and **Ioanna Paraskevopoulou** (Cyprus) was re-elected both as representative of Region 4 and as Gender Equality Rapporteur. **Diana De Aguiar Santos** (Portugal) is the Bureau member representing the Host State of the 2024 Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport.

GOVERNING BOARD BUREAU

Alexandre Husting (Luxembourg), Chair

Andrea Carletti (Italy), Vice-Chair

Solène Charuau (France), Region 1

Benthe Tanghe (Netherlands), Region 2

Andrew Decelis (Malta), Region 3

Ioanna Paraskevopoulou (Cyprus), Region 4

Diana De Aguiar Santos (Portugal), Host State of the 2024 Conference of Ministers

Charlotte Girard Fabre (International Federation of Sport Officials – IFSO), Chair of the Consultative Committee

Mogens Kirkeby (International Sport and Culture Association – ISCA), Vice-Chair of the Consultative Committee



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Consultative Committee

The EPAS Governing Board and Consultative Committee held their annual joint plenary meeting on 8 and 9 June in Strasbourg, France.

The Consultative Committee also held its plenary meeting in camera, during which it elected **Charlotte Girard Fabre** (IFSO) as Chair and **Andrej Pisl** (EUSA) as a Bureau member to fill the seat left vacant by Charlotte Girard Fabre following her election as Chair.

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE BUREAU

Charlotte Girard Fabre (International Federation of Sport Officials – IFSO), Chair

Mogens Kirkeby (International Sport and Culture Association – ISCA), Vice-Chair

Pauline Johanet (Peace and Sport)

Andrej Pisl (European University Sports Association – EUSA)

Janez Sodržnik (Association for International Sport for All – TAFISA)

Baiba Veisa (European Fair Play Movement – EFPM)

Statutory Committee

Sport integrity at the centre of the extended meeting – Strasbourg, France, 4 December

The annual meeting of the EPAS Statutory Committee, held on 4 December in Strasbourg, addressed programming and budgetary issues falling within the competence of the Statutory Committee. The meeting was followed by an extended session open to representatives from non-EPAS member states. The session highlighted the work of EPAS, in particular in the area of sport integrity, a priority as defined by the European Sports Charter.

The session was opened by H.E. **Gabriel Revel**, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe and Chair of the Statutory Committee, and **Jeroen Schokkenbroek**, Director of Anti-Discrimination at the Council of Europe.

The vital role of sportspeople and professionals in ensuring sport integrity was presented and debated by two leading professionals in the field: **André Villas-Boas**, a professional football manager and coach from Portugal, with extensive international experience having managed teams including

Chelsea and Marseille, focused on the importance of good governance in football and also highlighted the work of Portugal in the area of sport governance; **Mariam Bolkvadze**, a professional tennis player from Georgia, spoke about the current state of play pertaining to gender equality in tennis.

Specific tools to promote sport integrity were at the centre of the second panel. The International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport (IPACS), which counts the Council of Europe among its founders, was presented by **Pâquerette Girard Zappelli**, Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer at the IOC. The Network of Magistrates / Prosecutors Responsible for Sports (MARS Network) was presented by its Chair, **Jean-Yves Lourgouilloux**, Deputy Public Prosecutor at the Judicial Court of Marseille.

The Statutory Committee is made up of representatives to the Committee of Ministers of the member states of the Council of Europe which are members of EPAS, and of representatives specifically designated by states which are not Council of Europe members but which participate in EPAS. Each year, it adopts the budget on expenditure relating to the implementation of the programme of activities.



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Budget

The EPAS budget for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023 amounted to € 1 192 600.

The breakdown of the **member states' compulsory contributions** to this 2023 budget can be seen in the corresponding table below.

MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE	% contribution	Amount payable in €
ALBANIA	0.7371	8 790.65
ANDORRA	0.7371	8 790.65
ARMENIA	0.7371	8 790.65
AUSTRIA	3.2189	38 388.61
AZERBAIJAN	0.7371	8 790.65
BELGIUM	3.8829	46 307.47
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	0.7371	8 790.65
BULGARIA	0.7371	8 790.65
CROATIA	0.7371	8 790.65
CYPRUS	0.7371	8 790.65
ESTONIA	0.7371	8 790.65
FINLAND	1.9710	23 506.15
FRANCE	15.5811	185 820.20
GEORGIA	0.7371	8 790.65
GREECE	1.6839	20 082.20
HUNGARY	1.3616	16 238.45
ICELAND	0.7371	8 790.65
ITALY	15.5811	185 820.20
LATVIA	0.7371	8 790.65
LIECHTENSTEIN	0.7371	8 790.65
LITHUANIA	0.7371	8 790.65
LUXEMBOURG	0.7371	8 790.65
MALTA	0.7371	8 790.65
MONACO	0.7371	8 790.65
MONTENEGRO	0.7371	8 790.65
NETHERLANDS	6.5601	78 235.76
NORTH MACEDONIA	0.7371	8 790.65
NORWAY	2.8096	33 507.29
POLAND	5.1321	61 205.43
PORTUGAL	1.8864	22 497.21
SAN MARINO	0.7371	8 790.65
SERBIA	0.7371	8 790.65
SLOVAK REPUBLIC	0.8712	10 389.94
SLOVENIA	0.7371	8 790.65
SWITZERLAND	5.0850	60 643.72
TÜRKIYE	7.6480	91 210.05
UKRAINE	2.3917	28 523.42
NON-MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE		
BELARUS	0.7371	8 790.65
CANADA	5.3208	63 455.87
ISRAEL	1.2228	14 583.12
MOROCCO	0.8385	9 999.96
TOTAL	100.0000	1 192 600.00

EXTERNAL ACTION

Participation in events

PACE parliamentary hearing on violence in sport and safeguarding

A hearing on violence in sport and safeguarding was held at the UK Parliament, on 1 June, as part of the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The hearing focused on abuse in sport and the importance of ensuring the protection of athletes. Athletes who have experienced abuse or are working to prevent such situations, as well as officials from FIFA and the IOC, contributed to these discussions.

The hearing, organised by PACE's **Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media**, examined measures to prevent sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in

sport, including the potential establishment of a global "Safe Sport Entity". **Alexandre Husting**, Chair of the EPAS Governing Board, took part in the panel entitled "Addressing violence in sport: responses at national and international level". He highlighted the call in the European Sports Charter urging all stakeholders to protect people, especially young people, from violence, harassment, and abuse in sport.

The hearing is part of a report on "Protecting human rights in and through sport: obligations and shared responsibilities", currently being prepared by the Committee for future debate in the Assembly.

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Ensuring respect for Human Rights in the organisation of major international sport events

The Council of Europe reaffirmed the need to uphold human rights in major international sports events during a policy debate hosted by the Swedish Presidency of the

Council of the European Union on 15 May in Brussels, Belgium. Transparency, good governance, and respect for human rights were emphasised as vital in the planning, delivery and legacy of these events.

Sophie Kwasny, Executive Secretary of EPAS and Head of the Sport Division contributed to the debate, highlighting the Council of Europe's initiatives to promote human rights in and through sport. Beyond the necessary development of standards, she underlined co-operation between all

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concerned stakeholders as being essential to making human rights and good governance a reality in sport. Examples of such effective co-operation include the work of EPAS, the International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport (IPACS) and the national platforms against the manipulation of sports competitions promoted by the Macolin Convention.

Ongoing initiatives such as the “Start to Talk” project and the joint EU - CoE projects “All In Plus: Promoting greater gender equality in sport” and “Combating Hate Speech in Sport” are key examples of actions taken to provide a sports environment free from discrimination, hate speech, abuse, and violence.



European Week of Sport in Valencia

From 21 to 23 September, the Sport Division attended a range of conferences and events organised by the **Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union** in the framework of the European Week of Sport.

The meeting of the Directors-General for Sport provided an opportunity to showcase the Council of Europe’s work in combating hate speech in sport, and in particular the joint EU - CoE project on the topic, its impact in Spain through the partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Sport (CSD) and the campaign #SportISRespect.

Irena Guidikova, Head of the Children’s Rights and Sport Values Department, took part in the conference on “Safe

environments in sport”. She gave a presentation of the EPAS “Start to Talk” project, and of the Council of Europe’s child protection standards, including the Lanzarote Convention.

Francine Hetherington Raveney, EPAS Deputy Executive Secretary, moderated a roundtable entitled “The Rubiales case: The start of a new era?” during a side event organised by Sport and Citizenship, in partnership with EU Athletes and Dona I Cinema. The roundtable focused on combating gender-based violence in sport and in particular the joint EU - CoE project “All In Plus” as well as other relevant work carried out by the Council of Europe. Speakers included professional athletes, sports commentators, academics and documentary directors who have been involved in raising awareness about gender inequalities in sport and combating gender-based violence.

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Co-operation with the European Union

Launch of “All In Plus: Promoting greater gender equality in sport”

Gender equality is a fundamental principle and essential aim for both the CoE and the EU. The CoE and the EU are pursuing their co-operation in the field of gender equality in sport in the framework of the joint project “All In Plus” (March 2023 - February 2025). The EU High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport indeed highlighted the success of the joint EU - CoE project “All In: towards gender balance in sport” (March 2018 - October 2019) and stressed the need to develop and implement it further (“Towards more gender equality in sport: recommendations and action plan from the High-Level Group on Gender Equality in sport” (2022)).

The overarching goal of “All In Plus” is to highlight the benefits of greater gender equality in sport. The key objectives are to ensure that the relative invisibility of women in sport and the ongoing lack of awareness about gender imbalance in sport and related issues are brought clearly to the forefront.

The project is structured around three pillars:

- **Data collection and analysis** in six key areas (leadership, coaching and officiating, participation, media/communication, gender-based violence in sport, gender equality policies and programmes);
- Creation of an online **resource centre** containing best practice examples;

- **Media sensitisation:** working with and through the **media** to ensure greater awareness about gender inequalities in sport.

“All In Plus” was launched on 10 May during an event that brought together representatives of public institutions and the sports movement, as well as academics, journalists, athletes and other experts. A high-level opening was followed by four thematic panels, during which the speakers presented the situation in their areas of competence, discussed recurrent challenges and shared ideas and solutions to improve gender equality in sport.

Francine Hetherington Raveney, Deputy Executive Secretary of EPAS, presented the quantitative research methodology used in the new project as well as in its predecessor (2018 - 2019), the results of the latter and the new features introduced with “All In Plus”. The documentary “A land shaped by women” was screened, followed by a Q&A session with film director and snowboarding world champion **Anne-Flore Marxer**.



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“All In Plus” informative session: promoting greater gender equality in sport through the media

Media and sports journalism have the power to present and represent the prism through which we digest sports content. This is a huge responsibility and given the billion-dollar industry that sport constitutes, power, money and influence abound. The joint EU - CoE project “All In Plus” has a key focus on media sensitisation because stereotypical portrayals of women in sport, under-representation of women’s sports in the media, and the silencing of the voices of women working in sports media can all lead to a diminishing of the achievements of women in sport and beyond.

As part of “All In Plus”, the Council of Europe is bringing together sports media professionals from 27 countries for

two informative sessions. The first session took place on 2 November in hybrid format – at Olympic House, the IOC’s Headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, and online. The next edition will take place in 2024, allowing those media professionals participating to review how their media practice has changed in the intervening period and been informed by the session.

In addition to the collaboration with the **IOC**, who not only hosted the session, but shared know-how and provided many speakers, the European Broadcasting Union (**EBU**) also partnered with the Council of Europe for this event, thereby ensuring that journalists and sports media professionals were able to have access to a wide range of resources to inform the way they work going forwards. Topics touched on in this first session include: unconscious bias training, information on storytelling techniques, safe reporting, and portrayal guidelines.

Francine Hetherington Raveney, Deputy Executive Secretary of EPAS, opened the session with **Glen Killane**, Executive Director of Eurovision Sport at the EBU.

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Communication and visibility

Social networks

The Sport Division’s X (formerly Twitter) account **@CoE_Sports**, which encompasses the activities of the Sport Division and therefore of EPAS, was constantly updated throughout the year. By the end of 2023, the account had gained 490 new followers and had 2 165 followers in total. It generated 365 400 impressions in 2023 (an increase of 113% compared to 2022).

The Council of Europe’s X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn accounts have also helped to increase EPAS’s visibility by sharing or creating content highlighting its events, projects and initiatives.

Website

Throughout 2023, the Sport Division’s website **www.coe.int/sport** was constantly updated with news items on EPAS activities in particular. The site recorded 105 019 total visits over the year (an increase of 40.8% compared to 2022).



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

The annual activity report provides an overview of the highlights of the year in question. In this activity report, you will find the main events and activities organised or co-organised by EPAS in 2023, including meetings, conferences and other activities which contribute to the development of sport for all and the implementation of the values and principles of sport set out in the European Sports Charter.



www.coe.int/sport

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

www.coe.int

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