Council of Europe and Sport

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RESOLUTION

prepared by

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

Safer and healthier sport for all children and young people

The Ministers responsible for Sport, meeting in the Principality of Monaco for their 19th Council of Europe Conference on 4 November 2026:

1. reaffirming the Council of Europe's mission to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law, including the protection of children and young people's rights in sport;

2. recalling member States' obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Lanzarote Convention and other relevant Council of Europe instruments, in particular the requirement to treat the best interests of the child as a primary consideration;

3. stressing the right of all children and young people to participate in sport in a safe and inclusive environment, as recognised in the European Sports Charter;

4. recognising the importance of integrating a youth perspective across the Council of Europe's activities in line with the Reykjavík Declaration;

5. highlighting the multiple benefits that sport can have for children and young people, including physical and mental health, social development, inclusion and education;

6. expressing concern about widespread and systemic abuse of children and young people, including psychological, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and neglect, perpetrated by peers or by those in the cycle of trust. Such abuse may be facilitated by good governance failures, power imbalance, toxic organisational cultures, impunity and inadequate, non-trauma-informed redress systems;

7. expressing concern about sport-related practices that may adversely affect children and young people's physical and mental health and well-being, or contribute to substance abuse and doping;

RECALL the need for safe, inclusive and empowering environments for all children and young people, with zero tolerance for violence, abuse and discrimination, and ACKNOWLEDGE the need for an intersectional approach that recognises how children and young people from vulnerable or marginalised groups may face heightened risks of harm or barriers to participation in sport;

WELCOME the work of EPAS on safeguarding of children and young people in sport, notably through the "Start to Talk" project and the Pool of International Experts on Safe Sport;

RECOGNISE the links between safeguarding and interrelated concerns such as doping and substance abuse, gambling and addiction, technology-facilitated violence and abuse, sexual and other forms of violence, and human trafficking and migrant smuggling;

RECALL that safer sport requires prevention, education and cultural change, independent reporting and investigation, protection of victims and whistleblowers, trauma-informed redress, continued support for victims, and effective accountability, rather than reliance solely on reactive measures following reported incidents;

REITERATE their commitment to a human rights-based approach to safeguarding, including non-discrimination, diversity, inclusion, and the meaningful participation of children, young people, and persons with lived experience of abuse and discrimination in relevant decision and policy-making;

EXPRESS their unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, and CONDEMN the Russian Federation's war of aggression, supported by Belarus, against Ukraine, and the large-scale abuses and violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Ukrainian athletes and the wider sport community, including children and young people, many of whom continue to live and train under the threat of attacks, have been displaced from their homes and communities, had to put their education or sporting careers on hold, contribute to their country's defence, or mourn the loss of family members, teammates, and coaches; [1][2][3]

COMMIT therefore to enable Ukrainians to participate in sport and while recognising the autonomy of sports organisations to determine participation in international sport in accordance with their rules and applicable law, OPPOSE to any normalisation of the state representation of the Russian Federation and Belarus in international sport, and CONSIDER that any participation of athletes from these countries should be subject to strictly neutral conditions, without State symbols or political representation, for as long as this aggression continues and further CONSIDER that the organisation of international sporting events in the Russian Federation and Belarus should be avoided for the same period and INVITE member states in accordance with applicable law to rigorously examine visa requests submitted by Russian and Belarussian athletes and sport officials as long as there is evidence that they explicitly support the war of aggression and, in that case, to refuse visa where those grounds are met, as long as the aggression continues;

EXPRESS their deep concern over the critical humanitarian situation in conflict-affected areas, including in Gaza, where many children are deprived not only of education, basic necessities and opportunities to participate safely in sports, but also of the , security conditions and psychological support required to live and grow up safely.

INVITE THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE TO:

1. support action to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law in sport, thereby contributing to safe, ethical and inclusive sport;

2. promote cross-sectoral co-operation on children's rights and youth participation in settings where children and young people are strongly represented, such as schools, youth organisations, and sports facilities;

3. encourage member States which have not yet done so to join EPAS to contribute to the development of safe, ethical and inclusive sport in Europe and beyond.

[1] Türkiye's position on the issue mentioned in this and the following paragraph should be understood as being in line with its reservations regarding the Reykjavik Declaration, adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (16-17 May 2023).
[2] The Republic of Serbia dissociates itself from this and the following paragraph.
[3] The Republic of Armenia's position on this and the following paragraph should be understood in conjunction with the explanatory statement of the Republic of Armenia concerning the Reykjavík Declaration, circulated under reference DD(2023)181 on 11 May 2023.

INVITE MEMBER STATES to:

1. integrate children's rights into national sport policy through interministerial co-ordination and co-operation with the sport movement and civil society. Policies should cover, among others, education, awareness raising, accountability, prevention, reporting, response and redress mechanisms, victim and whistleblower protection and support, and monitoring;

2. require sports organisations within their jurisdiction, from grassroots to professional level, to adopt, implement and regularly review evidence-informed, trauma-informed and child-centred safeguarding policies and procedures;

3. mainstream safeguarding, including the prevention of violence against children and gender-based violence against girls, in the education curricula of sports leaders, administrators, child safeguarding officers, coaches, officials, volunteers, youth representatives and other persons working with children and young people;

4. ensure that clear safeguarding responsibilities are assigned at all appropriate levels, from the relevant public authorities to the sports system, and require sports organisations and clubs to appoint trained child safeguarding officers;

5. establish safer recruitment frameworks, including criminal records check for sports staff and volunteers working with children, in accordance with Council of Europe standards and national law;

6. provide trauma-informed and child-friendly reporting systems for violence against children in sport, in line with Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)8, together with effective referral to specialist support services, including for gender-based violence against girls;

7. ensure accessible and affordable sport facilities and activities for children and young people, and support the inclusion and rehabilitation of displaced children and young people, including those from Ukraine;

8. co-operate with the sports movement and civil society on safeguarding campaigns and child-friendly initiatives for children and young people, parents, caregivers and the general public;

9. encourage the exchange of knowledge and good practices on, *inter alia*, safeguarding from sexual and other violence, non-discrimination, anti-doping and substance abuse, mental health, injury and concussion prevention, overtraining and body image concerns;

10. support research and the dissemination of findings on the prevalence, consequences, and risk factors of violence and abuse, and on the effectiveness of safeguarding measures, including in relation to sexual violence, gender-based violence against girls, and technology-facilitated violence. Data should be appropriately disaggregated, while respecting privacy and data protection requirements;

11. facilitate the voluntary, meaningful, safe, accessible and age-appropriate participation of children and young people, as well as those with lived experience of abuse or discrimination, in decision and policies affecting them;

12. provide financial support, including voluntary contributions, for the effective and sustainable implementation of the EPAS “Start to Talk” project.

INVITE THE SPORTS MOVEMENT to:

1. adopt and effectively implement child-safeguarding policies and procedures protecting children and young people from abuse, violence and discrimination;

2. establish accessible, confidential, child-centred, trauma-informed and multi-lingual reporting, protection and support routes, including independent and anonymous options where appropriate. This should provide independent case-management and clear referral pathways to competent authorities;

3. appoint child safeguarding officers with clearly defined responsibilities, and provide them, together with relevant staff and volunteers, with appropriate training and support;

4. inform children, parents and caregivers about safeguarding measures and provide awareness and education activities to prevent violence, including sexual violence;

5. implement safer recruitment procedures in accordance with Council of Europe standards and national law;

6. facilitate the safe, voluntary, accessible and appropriately supported participation of children, young people and persons with lived experience of abuse or discrimination in relevant decision and policy-making;

7. promote mental health awareness and include mental health protocols in child safeguarding systems;

8. establish mentoring programmes through which experienced clubs, coaches and safeguarding practitioners support organisations in developing safe sport practices and policies;

9. publish, where resources permit, annual reports on safeguarding and human rights compliance, including anonymised and aggregated data on complaints and disciplinary measures, in accordance with data protection regulations;

10. ensure appropriate follow-up after reporting, including referral of affected children and families to psychological, therapeutic or specialist support and to competent public authorities, and co-operate fully with public authorities and law-enforcement agencies in accordance with national law;

11. connect safeguarding officers with relevant public authorities and sports organisations, and promote children’s and young people’s health through safe and inclusive participation in sport and reduced sedentary behaviour.

INVITE EPAS, including its Governing Board, Consultative Committee, the Network of Magistrates and Prosecutors Responsible for Sport (the “MARS Network”), and the Pool of International Experts on Safe Sport to:

1. support member States and sports organisations in developing and implementing comprehensive child safeguarding policies and procedures, notably through the “Start to Talk” project and the Pool of International Experts on Safe Sport;

2. promote research, and international dialogue and co-operation on existing and emerging issues, including technology-facilitated violence and abuse, addictive behaviours, mental health and well-being, and risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence for child safeguarding;

3. co-operate with the Council of Europe committees and bodies addressing human trafficking and migrant smuggling, technology-facilitated violence and abuse, illicit drugs, abuse of doping substances, , falsified medicinal products, discrimination and hate speech to share information and follow up on this work;

4. consider involving the MARS Network to enable co-operation and exchange of views with national prosecution authorities;

5. develop a Committee of Ministers' recommendation to guide national strategies for preventing abuse and protecting children and young people in sport, drawing on relevant Council of Europe standards;

6. develop practical tools and promote good practice examples, to reduce sedentary behaviour and support safe and inclusive participation in sport and physical activity;

7. maintain co-operation and co-ordination with international and European organisations, and civil society and grassroots sport organisations, including through the EPAS Consultative Committee, to safeguard children's rights and welfare in sport;

8. present a report to the Committee of Ministers in 2027, assessing progress on the implementation of the measures listed in this Resolution.

INVITE THE SAINT-DENIS COMMITTEE to:

1. continue its remarkable substantive work, carried out over the ten years since the Saint-Denis Convention opened for signature, to ensure safer, more secure and more welcoming football matches and other sports events for all, and follow-up the findings and recommendations of the recent European-wide survey and report on the costs of policing such events in consultation with law-enforcement agencies and sports authorities.

EXPRESS their appreciation to the Monegasque authorities for the excellent organisation of the 19th Conference and for their kind hospitality;