

SPORT RESPECTS YOUR RIGHTS

*This project was co-ordinated by SPORTUNION Austria, the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO Youth), and the German Sports University Cologne. The DAPHNE III funding programme was launched by the European Commission with the aim of preventing and combatting violence against women and children and protecting at-risk groups. SRYR was implemented by eight partner organisations from six different countries: Austria (Austrian Athletics Federation, and SPORTUNION Austria), Germany (DJK Youth, and German Sports Youth), Italy (Italian Aerobic and Fitness Federation), the Netherlands (the Dutch Olympic Committee and Sports Federation, or NOC*NSF), Poland (Campaign Against Homophobia), and the United Kingdom (Edge Hill University).*

This description comes from the study commissioned by the European Commission on gender-based violence in sport ([Mergaert L., & al., Study on gender-based violence in sport – final report, European Commission, 2016](#)). It was updated within the framework of the European Union-Council of Europe joint project [Pro Safe Sport + “Put an end to sexual harassment and abuse against children in sport”](#), by collecting more recent information from the organisation responsible for the project.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Background

Sport Respects Your Rights (SRYR) was funded by the European Union DAPHNE III Programme from 2013 to 2015. It was coordinated by SPORTUNION Austria,¹ German Sport Youth (Deutsche Sportjugend),² the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO Youth),³ and the German Sports University Cologne. The DAPHNE III funding programme was launched by the European Commission with the aim of preventing and combatting violence against women and children and protecting at-risk groups. SRYR was implemented by eight partner organisations from six different countries: Austria (Austrian Athletics Federation, and SPORTUNION Austria), Germany (German Catholic Sport Youth DJK, and German Sports Youth), Italy (Italian Aerobic and Fitness Federation), the Netherlands (the Dutch Olympic Committee and Sports Federation, or NOC*NSF), Poland (Campaign Against Homophobia), and the United Kingdom (Edge Hill University). The SRYR project built on the network and exchange of good practice begun in the EU-funded project ‘Safer, Better, Stronger: Prevention of Sexualised Violence in Sports: Impulses for an Open, Secure and Sound Sporting Environment in Europe’ (2012-2013),⁴ which was led by Deutsche Sportjugend.

SRYR aimed to empower young people to prevent and combat gender-based violence in youth sport and contribute to the development of a culture of respect in sport. Mentoring advice was provided by the project leaders to partner organisations throughout the project. Implementation of SRYR was based on a two-tier process:

1. a bottom-up process that involved training SRYR leaders (young people and adults) as ‘multipliers’ to cascade their knowledge to others to build capacity; and
2. a top-down process that involved building cross-sector networks to support the sports sector in the fight against gender-based violence.

¹ See: <http://sportunion.at/de>

² See: <https://www.dsj.de/>

³ See: <http://www.youth-sport.net/>

⁴ See: <https://www.dsj.de/handlungsfelder/europaeisierung/eu-projekte/safer-better-stronger/>

Cascading training with young people and developing youth-led campaigns

SRYP was implemented by eight partner organisations across the six participating countries. As part of the bottom-up process of implementation, partner organisations recruited 22 local sport and/or youth organisations. Three people (two young people from these local sports organisations/youth groups, plus one (adult) member of the partner organisation) were identified as 'multipliers' and attended two five-day central SRYP training sessions in Europe held by the leaders of the transnational project. Training covered sensitisation to the topic of gender-based violence, information and statistics on the issue, approaches to facilitate peer education workshops, empowerment strategies, communication skills, and ways of developing young people's self-esteem. Local workshops were also held in each participating country where these trained multipliers taught other interested young people, known as 'youth leaders', how to develop empowering promotional campaigns. The multipliers and youth leaders then cascaded this training to other young people through SRYP workshops in their home countries.

Local partner organisations and multipliers/youth leaders developed their own campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence in and beyond sport. The topics of the campaigns had to link with the project theme of developing respect and integrity in sport. Most campaigns focused on preventing specific forms of gender-based violence but some covered other issues such as racism, eating disorders and emotional violence in sport. The adult multipliers from partner organisations were responsible for ensuring a safe environment for the workshops and campaigns, and developed a 'First Aid Plan' of procedures for dealing with complaints and concerns in case any young person needed support. Many teams invited professionals from local child protection organisations to help with this.

Building cross-sector networks

As part of top-down process of implementation, partner organisations also developed local multidisciplinary networks of relevant stakeholders. These were intended to build the SRYP network, disseminate the campaigns and develop strategies for progressing the SRYP agenda during the project, and to try and sustain it after funding ended. These networks included sport and social organisations, universities, child protection experts, human rights activists, and politicians.

OUTCOMES AND STRENGTHS

One of the major successes of the SRYP project was its reach within the participating countries and across Europe. The eight participating partner organisations recruited a total of 22 local organisations or groups. These local organisations appointed two youth multipliers and one adult multiplier so, in total, 52 participants received central SRYP training in Europe. These multipliers went on to deliver 34 workshops to a total of 514 young people aged between 16-22 years old across the six participating countries. In addition, according to the most recent figures dating from February 2015, two months before the end of the project, the youth-led campaigns to empower and sensitise young people on topics relating to developing integrity and preventing gender-based violence in sport had been disseminated to 2,061 young Europeans – well above the project target of 1,200 young people. In total, 20 network meetings were also held. As such, a large number of young people were exposed to the SRYP project.

The project's focus on empowering young people was innovative and allowed young people to feel a sense of ownership for the SRYP project and its aims. This participatory focus encouraged young people to be active agents of social change within their communities, and showed decision-makers that as well as gender-based violence in sport being a topic that young people consider important, young people are also willing and capable of being involved in attempts to combat it. The young people also developed transferable skills such as project management, and developed connections with policy-makers and experts in gender-based violence in and beyond sport.

A degree of evaluation of the SRYR programme was built into the project from the beginning, although this focused on the impact of the SRYR training for young leaders and members of partner organisations rather than the effectiveness of the workshops and campaigns delivered in each country. The leaders of the transnational project included three rounds of questionnaires with participants and systematic group discussions to evaluate the project's implementation and impact on those involved in implementing it. In total, 94% of those involved in delivering SRYR said they had been sufficiently prepared by the central SRYR training, and the same number felt this training had raised their awareness of gender-based violence in sport. In total, 81% said they felt well supported by national partners during the project. Qualitative data indicated that national partners had supported youth multipliers/leaders in various ways, including managing the budget and providing emotional support. Most participants felt the youth-led workshops had helped raise awareness among participants of gender-based violence in and through sport and had prepared them for getting involved in campaigns. Youth multipliers/ leaders universally considered the youth-led campaigns a success, saying they allowed them to develop independent thinking and leadership, be creative and, ultimately, be part of something important.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of the project is that there has been no systematic independent empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of the youth-led workshops and campaigns on preventing gender-based violence or developing a culture of respect in sport. The leaders of the transnational project included three rounds of questionnaires with participants and systematic group discussions that were analysed to monitor and evaluate the project's implementation and impact on those involved in its delivery. While this is to be applauded, it was conducted by the leaders of the project, who were acting as both promoters and evaluators of it. Moreover, while statistics were gathered on the number of young people, the workshops and campaigns reached in each country, no evaluation was conducted into the effectiveness of these on empowering, educating or raising awareness of gender-based violence in and through sport. As such, the success, or otherwise, of these dimensions on preventing and raising awareness of gender-based violence in sport and developing a culture of respect in sport is unknown.

LESSONS LEARNT

The transnational nature of the project represented a significant challenge as the context for discussing gender-based violence in and beyond sport and existing structures for managing this varied in each country. The transnational project leaders had to take these differing contexts into account when delivering training to make sessions meaningful to participants. The different socio-cultural contexts of the countries involved also impacted on the topics selected for youth-led campaigns. In some countries, taboos surrounding sexual violence constituted a serious obstacle to design a campaign on gender-based violence in sport and to gain support from young people and local organisations. Consequently, the leaders of the transnational project expanded the focus by agreeing that campaigns that aimed to develop a culture of respect in sport could be included even if they did not focus specifically on gender-based violence. Being flexible and aware of the different socio-cultural contexts in partner countries, maintaining regular and open conversation with project participants, and offering continuous mentoring support for them were crucial to ensuring the project remained viable and to keeping partner organisations engaged and motivated.

Many organisations involved in the project had limited experience of a youth-led project and sometimes lacked knowledge about how best to manage this. Training members of these organisations on ways of supporting and empowering young people without taking over leadership from them was therefore essential. Partners in each country also noted that successful implementation was increased when the lead organisations had well-established links with relevant stakeholders (such as gender-based violence experts and civil society organisations) as this added credibility to the project and these stakeholders were able to promote the youth-

led workshops and campaigns within their networks. As such, selecting partner organisations that had experience of working in the field of gender-based violence (in or beyond sport) and that had strong links with relevant stakeholders was crucial for the success of the SRYR project.

The SRYR project's focus on empowering young people makes it one of the few examples of athlete/young people-centred practices relating to gender-based violence in sport. This emphasis on empowerment encouraged ownership of the SRYR project and of the prevention of the gender-based violence agenda among the young people involved, and enabled youth multipliers/leaders to inform other young people about the topic in a meaningful way. The peer-to-peer format of the workshops helped foster 'buy in' from other young people and facilitated discussion among young people, who might otherwise have been anxious that they may say something 'wrong' in front of adult 'experts'. In recognising the capacity of young people to be active agents of change, this approach also allowed the youth multipliers/leaders the freedom to develop new ideas themselves and to build their skills, knowledge and confidence in terms of understanding gender-based violence as well as project management, budgeting, marketing, and leadership.

The sensitive nature of the topic presented additional challenges. It was essential that young multipliers/leaders were supported in managing disclosures of abuse from those participating in workshops and in campaigns' activities. Disclosure procedures were also foreseen for young multipliers/leaders themselves in case they had experienced gender-based violence in or beyond sport. Developing and disseminating clear procedures for dealing with disclosures is therefore crucial. This should be overseen by a responsible adult, ideally someone with experience in this area, to ensure everyone is protected and provided with professional support.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sport Respects Your Rights webpage: <http://sport-respects-your-rights.eu/>

Sport Respects Your Rights final project report: http://sport-respects-your-rights.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SRYR_brochure.pdf

Sport Respects Your Rights UK Campaign webpage: <http://www.sportrespectsyourrightsuk.co.uk/>

Sport Respects Your Rights Poland Campaign webpage: <http://sport-respects-your-rights.eu/kampania-przeciw-homofobii/>

Sport Respects Your Rights Austria Campaign webpage: <http://sport-respects-your-rights.eu/sportunion-osterreich/>