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## **Combating Hate Speech in Sport**

### **Educational Toolkit**



### **Training Module One for Athletes**



## Empowering session for athletes

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### Why should we combat hate speech in sport?

Hate speech is an attack on those who are often already vulnerable, and it sows the seeds for tension, further inequality and often violence. The Council of Europe is raising awareness about hate speech and the risks it poses for democracy and human rights, works to reduce the levels of acceptance of hate speech and to develop consensus on European policy instruments for combating hate speech.

"Hate speech is defined by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe<sup>1</sup> as all types of expression that incite, promote, spread or justify violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status such as 'race', colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation."

Hate speech undermines the principles of sport and destroys the spirit of the game. All sport stakeholders share responsibility in preventing hate speech and providing a safe space for all involved in sport. Sport is a key tool to promote social and personal values such as team spirit, discipline, perseverance and fair play, plus participating in sport can also develop other social skills which can be transferred to other fields of life. Moreover, all athletes should have a basic understanding of hate speech, its potential impact on the integrity of sport, and be equipped with skills to react and to counter it.

This specific workshop outline is prepared for athletes - to recognise and take action when encountering hate speech in different sport contexts, together with a collection of exercises applicable in sport communities (leisure clubs and sport camps) for children and youth and hints for action during national sport events such as SALTO Inclusion, CoE Youth, ETS +

### Objectives

This workshop outline is designed for young athletes and provides the outline of the sessions having these three main objectives:

- raising awareness
- providing education
- encouraging active reflection on how to recognise and act when hate speech is encountered while practicing sport

*Please keep in mind these three points for the session outline:*

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<sup>1</sup>Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech [Recommendation on Combating Hate Speech - Combating Hate Speech \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-text/?text=cm-rec-2022-16)

1. It is important to understand that the session outline is an inspiration to professional educators, and depending on context the activities have to be **adapted** to the actual group of participants,
2. We advise that this session outline is to be facilitated by practitioners with the necessary experiences and educational expertise in sport, with a **good knowledge** and **relevant attitude** towards non-discrimination,
3. This session outline is **open for feedback** and comments from those practitioners who were inspired by it, have implemented the sessions or parts of it. Constructive comments concerning adaptations, variations and further ideas are accepted after the end of the project.

## The Sessions

The aim of the sessions is to address issues of hate speech and discrimination in sport among athletes based on the principles of the European Sports Charter in the framework of the Sport IS Respect campaign to combating hate speech in sport.

**Time required:** 2 x 90 minutes, with a break in between

**Number of participants:** 10-25

**Profile of participants:** athletes of sport on any level, age can be between 16-30 (adjustments in language and method may be necessary)

**Facilitators:** 1-2 facilitators are needed, depending on the size of the group

**Setting:** It is important to put the chairs of all participants and facilitator(s) into a circle without tables, to create an equal chance for everybody to fully participate. if the situation allows, comfortably sit on the floor in a circle.

**Materials needed:** A projector and screen will enable to show the videos and power point presentation. A soft ball, a ball specific to your sport, a whistle, a flipchart, markers, scissors, bibs of two different colours.

## Specific learning objectives

- To educate young athletes on the differences between hate speech and hurtful speech.
- To foster an understanding of human rights and the responsibilities of athletes as societal role models.
- To engage participants in interactive activities that promote team cohesion and respect.

## Approach:

- **Interactive and Physical Activities:** In order to maintain the active participation and engagement of athletes of any age between 16-30 it is important to use education through sport exercises and ensure physical involvement (learning by doing) and the spirit of sport.

- **Informal Setting:** Creating a less formal atmosphere to minimise the perceived distance between the facilitator and the participants, and to seize the perception of risk of failure.
- **Extended Debriefs:** Debriefing shall be prolonged to ensure comprehension and reflection on the learning outcomes as well as for the appreciation of the athletes.

### Step by step session flow

TIME	Learning objective	Description
<b>Session 1 – How do I recognise hate speech in sport</b>		
10'	<p>Understanding and recognising hate speech in sport.</p> <p>Being able to argue against hate speech.</p> <p>Being able to understand the potential impact of hate speech on individuals, on sport and on society.</p>	<p><b>BRAINSTORMING: What is hate speech?</b></p> <p><b>INSTRUCTIONS:</b> Ask participants to quickly express what they think hate speech is in their sport.</p> <p><b>WATCH:</b> this short video  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/TNTsports/videos/hope-united-what-is-hate-speech/149149943901492/">https://www.facebook.com/TNTsports/videos/hope-united-what-is-hate-speech/149149943901492/</a><sup>2</sup>            This video is an example of the Hope United NGO activities to raise awareness among the general public on hate speech in the UK</p> <p><b>INSTRUCTIONS:</b> ask participants if they experienced hate speech in sport, and if so what? Have they been targeted, or have they witnessed it?</p> <p><b>EXPLAIN:</b> It is hate speech that is intended to insult, offend, or intimidate a person because of some trait (such as race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, national identity, or disability). Personal characteristics that we are born with, and chosen religions beliefs.</p> <p><b>READ:</b> the Council of Europe definition – on the ppt presentation <a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/hate-speech">https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/hate-speech</a></p> <p><b>EXPLAIN:</b> Hate speech is a human right violation because it is a denial of the values of tolerance, inclusion, diversity and the very essence of human rights norms and principles. It may expose those targeted to discrimination, abuse and violence, but also social and economic exclusion. When left unchecked, expressions of hatred can even harm societies, peace and development, as it lays the ground for conflict,</p>

<sup>2</sup> Please select a relevant video to your sport/ country. The Hope United | What is hate speech – is an example

		tension and human rights violations, including atrocity crimes.
10'		<p><b>BRAINSTORMING: What is the difference between hate speech and offensive language?</b></p> <p>INSTRUCTIONS: Ask participants this question, at the end of this part ask them to share how they feel when they hear fans cursing, and how they feel when they are targeted by hate speech?</p> <p>List some softer examples of offensive speech: <i>you are a loser, a fumbler, you cannot play, go back to Ligue 3, idiot, dud</i> etc.</p> <p>EXPLAIN: Speech that is simply offensive, by using slur words – but poses no risk to others and their identity is not degraded – is generally NOT considered a human rights violation, this is not hate speech. This kind of behaviour degrades the speaker more than the targeted person(s). Swearing, cursing and calling people that are not targeting their identity and birth characteristics are not considered human rights violations.</p>
20'		<p><b>EXERCISE 1 - Is hate speech free speech?</b></p> <p>INSTRUCTIONS: Ask athletes participants to stand on one side of the room if they think hate speech is part of free speech (as illustrating the freedom of opinion and expression), and on the other side of the room if they think that hate speech cannot be part of free speech. Give them an object to represent the microphone and ask them to present and argument in favour of their opinion. The microphone should ping-pong between the two sides, alternating one speaker from one side, then one speaker from the other side.</p> <p>EXPLAIN: We are free to express ourselves, even to the extent that our opinion may offend, shock or disturb others. But not everything is acceptable as free speech. The moment people start publicly inciting to violence, hostility or discrimination against a group of persons, then this is not free speech, IT IS hate speech. Freedom of expression cannot be applied to protect the violation of another person's human rights - as soon as the speech act questions the human rights of others (to life, to dignity, to identity, to believe etc.)</p>
50'		<p><b>EXERCISE 2 - Bad to worst!</b></p> <p>INSTRUCTIONS: Create groups of 3-5 athletes participants and give each group the same set of papers with the 12 hate speech in sport examples (<i>see Annex 1</i></p>

		<p>– <i>do cut them beforehand</i>). Ask them to rank the examples from least dangerous to the most severe, ask them to agree in their group and give them 15-20 minutes.</p> <p>Then ask each group to designate 1-2 spokespersons, share their ranking with the entire group, and explain their arguments for their order. If you have little time, you can also ask the groups to share with the group the least dangerous and the most severe hate speech in sport examples with their reasoning.</p> <p>Then ask the entire group to discuss these three questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the potential or actual impact of hate speech on the athletes, referees, coaches?</li> <li>2. What is the impact of hate speech on their sport?</li> <li>3. What is the impact of hate speech on society (national, European, global)?</li> </ol> <p>EXPLAIN: In order to understand the actual risk of hate speech, we have to see the context - <i>Who said it? What was their intention? In what situation was it said? Who actually heard it? What could be the consequences?</i> You can also do this little analysis on one of the hate speech examples of the exercise, or on an example coming from a participant.</p> <p>If you have sport facilities, instead of this above exercise, you can use one of the two Education THROUGH Sport (ETS) exercises described in <i>Annex 2</i></p>
<b>Session 2 – What can an athlete do?</b>		
10'	<p>Reflecting on the role and responsibility of athletes regarding hate speech in sport</p> <p>Looking at possible ways and personal strategies to prevent hate speech and to defend victims of hate speech in their sport community</p>	<p>EXPLAIN: Prevention and counter action can only be effective if the entire sport community - including all different actors and stakeholders - do their own share.</p> <p>BRAINSTORMING: <b>What should athletes do and why?</b></p> <p>INSTRUCTIONS: Ask this question to participants, and collect the different ideas on a flipchart. When the flipchart is full, ask the group to underline the difficult ones, the ones that they think are hard to do, and ask them why.</p>
65'		<p><b>PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1: Actors in hate speech</b></p> <p>Part 1: Group work – 10 minutes</p>

		<p><b>INSTRUCTIONS:</b> Place participants in groups of 5-6, ask them to share their hate speech in sport incident (as witness or as victim), and choose one situation for their group. They should ideally choose a situation in which 2-3 persons are athletes.</p> <p>Part 2: Groups presentation and selection of an example – 10 minutes</p> <p>Ask each group to present their incident to the entire group, ask the whole group if all of these are examples of hate speech, and ask which situation they would like to put under a magnifying lens now. Come to a decision with one incident, please state that all hate speech incidents are worth looking into, and later - if they have time - they can also look at the other incidents too, but due to time you can only look into one example together. Make sure that you choose a hate speech incident*!</p> <p>*A hate incident is any incident based on someone's prejudice towards them by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status such as "race", colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation."</p> <p>Part 3: Scene preparation – 10 minutes Ask the group of the selected incident to prepare a 3 minute scene of the incident, give them 10 minutes to rehearse outside, while the others can either reflect on and discuss other incidents (all together or in their small groups). You might give the others a 10 minute break if needed.</p> <p>You must help the selected group to ensure that there is a hate speech offender), a hate speech victim (offended), one ally to the victim, one ally to the offender, and 1-2 neutral observers who do not intervene but very much present with clear roles. The person whose incident is chosen cannot be the offended person, especially if he/she/they was the victim.</p> <p>Part 4: Scene performance – 10 minutes Ask the group to set the scene and rehearse it 2-3 times. Then they perform it in front of the whole group, they can play it twice if the audience wants.</p> <p>Part 5: Discussion – 25 minutes</p>
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		<p>The questions to be asked from the audience:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What happens? What is the plot?</li> <li>2. Who is the offended? (explain the word offended)</li> <li>3. Who is the offender?</li> <li>4. Who is the ally (supporter) of each?</li> <li>5. Who are the others?</li> </ol> <p>When all answers are correct, you can turn to the performers and ask each</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. How they feel in this role, and what is their purpose in this situation?</li> </ol> <p>Then you can ask the audience how they could change the situation so that the offended person is protected, safeguarded? Anyone from the audience can replace any of the performers except for the offender, and replay the scene with the change they visioned.</p> <p>After each replay you shall ask the same 6 questions above, and you can replay the scene with another change from the audience as many times as much time you have. Make sure that the process is dynamic.</p>
10'		<p><b>BRAINSTORMING: What can I do, and what am I ready to do?</b></p> <p>INSTRUCTIONS: Ask participants to think of the performance and reflect on their own reality. Let some of them share their personal responses and let them discuss how they can support each other.</p> <p>You can also watch these videos to see some examples<sup>3</sup>:</p> <p><a href="https://youtu.be/cLe2p5KWRQ?si=4tinHbxf_tuygdfp">https://youtu.be/cLe2p5KWRQ?si=4tinHbxf_tuygdfp</a>  <a href="https://youtu.be/eJYhp4bqJQA?si=6xwDjyGaGl4bSC1D">https://youtu.be/eJYhp4bqJQA?si=6xwDjyGaGl4bSC1D</a></p> <p><b>EXPLAIN:</b> Hate speech requires a collective for preventing and combating it. All of us are responsible for creating a safe sport space, in which each individual is appreciated, respected and protected, so all athletes have chances to enjoy the game, to champion their potentials and to develop as athletes and as human beings.</p>
5'		<p>A quick round at the end could allow everyone to share their feelings and conclusions about the workshop.</p>

<sup>3</sup> You are invited to select relevant examples for your country/ sport

**ANNEX 1**

*Please feel free to adapt these examples to your own cultural reality*

<p>1. Said loudly by one male player in the dressing room.</p> <p><b>“This team is for real men, not for queers.”</b></p>	<p>2. A big transparent hold by two sports fans during a football match.</p> <p><b>“Monkeys back to Africa! Europe for the White!”</b></p>
<p>3. A sport radio commentator in a live sportscast of a basketball match.</p> <p><b>“Any idea for a Jewish investor for this club? They need a lot of money to be good.”</b></p>	<p>4. An athlete tweeted on Twitter during the Olympics.</p> <p><b>“With so many Africans in Greece... the West Nile mosquitoes will at least eat homemade food!”</b></p>
<p>5. An online news portal editorial complaining about the bad result of a female handball team.</p> <p><b>“Sport or the kitchen? These girls cannot decide.”</b></p>	<p>6. A sports minister in a speech delivered in a sport conference.</p> <p><b>“Sport is our national pride. Our national sport heroes must be our people and not refugees.”</b></p>
<p>7. A Physical Education teacher in a primary school during a Physical Education session. Shouting at a less successful boy.</p> <p><b>“Do not do it like a girl. Try to be a real man, my little son.”</b></p>	<p>8. Sports fans shouting at one of the opposition team players during a football match.</p> <p><b>“Come out from the closet you faggot. We all know who you are.”</b></p>

<p>9. The dean of an University for Sports and Physical Education during a meeting of teachers.</p> <p><b>“We should not promote homosexuality in our University. Healthy means normal.”</b></p>	<p>10. Among female professional handball team players after being informed the team will get less funds.</p> <p><b>“We all know why we get less money. There are too many gipsies in our team. That’s why.”</b></p>
<p>11. A facebook post of a sports celebrity with a million followers.</p> <p><b>“What if the muslim girls want to play in burqas? We will write their names on it? Hehe...”</b></p>	<p>12. A well known sport journalist writes in the national sport magazine.</p> <p><b>“Sport is about competition and winning. Being rude is part of it. It is a man’s world and will always be.”</b></p>

## ANNEX 2

You can choose from these two Education THROUGH Sport (ETS) exercises below, or if you have time, you can play both with the athletes participants. It is important that the participants implement a real ETS activity so that they have their own experience. In case you have no time to play any of the two, or you do not have the proper space to play sport / do physical activity safely with the group, you can also create some groups of 3 participants and give them the printout of the descriptions of the two exercises and ask them to discuss how and in what situation could they use it in their own sport community.

### Exercise 1 - Where do you stand in sport?

It is an exercise to practise arguing and advocating on the topic of hate speech in sport, combined with the well-known DodgeBall game. You will need a medium sized soft ball.

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide the room / space in two parts, with a visible line between the two sides, and put up two signs (on A4 or A3 sheets) one on each side of the room: 'Agree' and 'Disagree'.
2. Tell participants that this is a competition between the two sides of the room. Explain that you are going to read a series of statements with which participants may agree to a greater or lesser extent.
3. Ask participants to position themselves on one side of the line or the other. Positions closer or further from the middle line indicate the level of agreement and disagreement.
4. Read out the statements, one by one. Leave some time for participants to position themselves after each statement.
5. Ask participants to explain why they have chosen their position. Give the ball to the person who wants to express their opinion, and inform them that they can only talk if they have the ball in their hand. Explain that participants are allowed to change their position during the discussion. Try to leave time for everyone to discuss.
6. Ask participants if they want to reconsider their position after discussion. For those who have done so, ask them why they have changed their minds.
7. Then invite the two groups to play a DodgeBall between the two sides of the room. Participants cannot cross the middle line.
8. After a few minutes, read out the next statement. When you have gone through all statements, bring the group back together for a debriefing.

#### Statements:

1. Hate speech is only speech so it cannot be harmful.
2. We should not interfere with the conflicts between other athletes / students.
3. Sport is about competition and not about social problems.
4. Hate speech is part of sport, it is not serious.
5. When you witness that someone is offended you should report it immediately.

In the end you can have a closing discussion with the group about how easy it was to decide, and what they learned during this activity.

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## Exercise 2 - Play for your right to sport!

It is the well-known "Take a step forward" exercise, adapted to hate speech in sport and combined with basketball (you can also play it with other collective ball sports: handball, football, rugby, volleyball etc.). You will need a relevant ball, a whistle, a flipchart with the statements on separate pages (big letters!), bibs to differentiate the two teams and a relevant sport field.

1. Create two teams of equal numbers of players (maximum 12 each). Give each player a role card, using the same set of cards for both teams (see role cards in *Annex 3*), and ask them to imagine the person described on their card. Spend 5 minutes trying to find out the life of this person. Ask the players to keep this role in their mind, but not to play/act their character, only react to the statements (see *Annex 3*). Let them play for 5 minutes without counting points.
2. Explain the rules of the game if needed, and then have them play for two rounds, each round lasting 10 or 15 minutes. Explain that in every 2 minutes during play, one statement (*see Annex 3*) will be shown and described to all players during the game.
3. All players should decide how that situation would affect their role. If any player feels that the situation described is fully applicable to the role from their card, they can continue to play on without any restrictions.
4. At the same time, if any player feels that the situation described is not applicable at all to the role on their card, they then stop moving for 1 minute (they can count to 60). During this minute, they can continue to pass the ball but they cannot move from the spot. The two teams can play together for 20 or 30 minutes in total (2 times at 10 or 15 minutes) with a short break in between. This creates room for about 8-10 situations to be displayed.

Run a short 'de-role' exercise before debriefing. For example, you can ask the players to say goodbye to the imaginary role that they played in their own way, perhaps waving to them as they leave or stepping out of their shoes etc. Ask the group to move into a circle, sitting or standing comfortably (on the floor or on a tatami). Ask the following questions one by one, and let the players talk and react to each other. Keep the discussion trusting, open, and respectful.

Debriefing questions:

1. How did you feel during the game? Explain to the participants that they can reveal their role whenever they wish.
2. How many times did you stop, and why?
3. Who had the same roles? Did you stop for the same statements? If not, why?
4. What do you think of your role's level of access to sport?
5. What could you do to improve the inclusivity of your team?
6. Who has the most difficulties in joining sport? How could you help them?
7. Do you think everybody has the right to participate in sport?
8. What is the reality?

You can find many other adaptable ETS exercises in the resources listed in [Annex 4](#).

### ANNEX 3

Role cards for the exercise *Play for your right to sport!*

*Cut out the role cards in two seats, depending on the size of your group. Write each statement on different flip chart papers with big readable capital letters. You can adapt / change the role cards and the statements to your own cultural context.*

Role cards		Situations
You are a Roma boy	You are a disabled girl	<p>You are happy and willing to join a sport club</p> <p>You find it easy to change in the dressing room</p> <p>You can make friends easily in the team</p> <p>You can play and be yourself freely</p> <p>You are never targeted by hate speech</p> <p>You speak up for your teammates if they are targeted by hate speech</p> <p>You are never bullied in your team</p> <p>You get a lot of support for your sport achievements from your family</p> <p>You can speak about your private life at ease</p> <p>You feel like an equal member of the group</p> <p>You can find a sport club easily for yourself</p>
You are a boy from a refugee family	You are a lesbian girl	
You are who you are	You are a transgender girl	
You are a sport talented girl from a Muslim family	You are a religious Christian boy	
You are a boy with african origin	You are boy from a very poor family	
You are a bisexual boy who is talented in sport	You are a local girl with Asian origin	

## **ANNEX 4**

Further reading and resources:

### **Revised European Sports Charter (2021, Council of Europe)**

<https://edoc.coe.int/en/sport-for-all/11299-revised-european-sports-charter.html>

### **BOOKMARKS, manual for combating hate speech for young people**

<https://rm.coe.int/bookmarksen2020-web2/16809e5789>

Especially these exercises:

Bookmarks, Play it again (p.92)

Bookmarks, Roots and branches (p.108)

Bookmarks, Saying it worse (p.112)

### **COMPASS, manual for human rights education for young people**

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>

### **Outsport Toolkit, manual for LGBTIQI inclusive sport communities**

<https://www.throughsport.eu/resources/>

### **Sport for Active citizenship manual**

<https://www.throughsport.eu/resources/>

### **Educational Workshop on the European Sports Charter**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12Xrmu1kD13KugWTkXVBkDhE9GbJJgOhV/edit?usp=sharing&oid=104006976100672428861&rtpof=true&sd=true>