

WP2 ‘Gender Based Violence and Sport - Realities, Challenges and Responses’ Report

Transnational Report



I. Introduction

This report developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ SPORT project ‘Sport GVP - Preventing Gender-Based Violence in and through Sport’, offers a comprehensive examination of gender-based violence (GBV) in sports contexts at both European and national levels focusing on the five project partner countries: Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy and North Macedonia.

In the first section, based on extensive desk and field research conducted in all partner countries, the prevalence and forms of GBV across the EU will first be examined - including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence - as classified by the [Istanbul Convention](#). Then the national level responses in each partner country will be reviewed, with an assessment of legislative measures, policies and ongoing challenges related to the fight against GBV.

The following section will explore the understanding of gender and violence against people within the sport sector based on data collected through focus groups and interviews in each project partner country. The analysis will gather the views of a range of target groups: sport professionals, gender equality professionals, LGBTQ+ women and athletes, as well as coaches, trainers and staff ‘working on the ground’ in sport, revealing a wide range of perceptions of gender, from traditional binary to more inclusive and non-binary conceptions, and highlighting the need for targeted policies, training and support for these groups to promote inclusivity and reduce violence in sport.

In the second part of the report, the focus will shift to examining the phenomenon of GBV in sport and its prevalent forms and consequences, supported by national data and insights from field research conducted through focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders, including athletes, coaches, trainers and staff.

The report will illustrate how violence in sport manifests itself in different national contexts, but often shares common patterns of abuse and discrimination. It will analyse the various forms of violence observed in these countries and their impact on different groups, including women and LGBTQ+ athletes. Country case studies will highlight specific issues, such as the prevalence of gender stereotypes that discourage female participation in football in Cyprus, the role of patriarchal norms in perpetuating GBV in Greece, the exclusion of LGBTQ+ athletes in Denmark, the under-reporting of sexual harassment in North Macedonia and the widespread homophobic and gender-based violence in Italian sport. These findings will underline the urgent need for comprehensive and culturally sensitive interventions.

In addition, the report will address the challenges of preventing and combating GBV in sport, emphasising the importance of an intersectional approach. The section will in fact examine

how overlapping identities, such as being LGBTQ+, refugee or economically disadvantaged, exacerbate vulnerability to GBV and highlight the need for tailored solutions to address these complex issues.

Finally, the report will present best practices from each country, illustrating successful initiatives to prevent and address GBV in sport, from educational programmes to inclusive policies.

This comprehensive analysis will provide a better understanding of the extent and nature of GBV in sport, as well as, ongoing efforts to create safer and more inclusive environments for all athletes.

II. The phenomenon of gender-based violence

1. Existence of the phenomenon of gender-based violence and its prevailing forms at EU level

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the violence that is directed against a person because of their gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. It takes many forms, from the most common, i.e. intimate partner violence, to violence occurring in online spaces. These forms of violence often overlap, with multiple acts occurring simultaneously.

The [Istanbul Convention](#) (Council of Europe, *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*) classifies GBV into four main forms: **physical, sexual, psychological** and **economic**.

- Physical violence can cause injury, distress and health problems and, in some cases, can even lead to death. Common examples of physical violence are beating, strangulation, pushing and the use of weapons. In the EU, 31% of women have experienced at least one act of physical violence since the age of 15.
- Sexual violence includes non-consensual sexual acts, attempts to obtain a sexual act, trafficking or other actions directed against a person's sexuality without their consent. It is estimated that 5% of women in EU countries have been raped by the age of 15.
- Psychological violence includes behaviours such as control, coercion, economic violence and blackmail. In the EU, 43% of women have experienced some form of psychological violence by an intimate partner.
- Economic violence refers to any action or behaviour that inflicts economic harm on an individual. This may include damaging property, limiting access to financial resources, education or the labour market, or failing to fulfil financial obligations, such as paying alimony.

2. Existence of the phenomenon of gender-based violence at the national level

GBV is addressed through a variety of approaches in European countries, with each nation implementing legislative measures and action plans according to its cultural, legal and social context. Cyprus, Greece, Denmark, North Macedonia and Italy have developed structures to combat the issue, although there are still discrepancies in the effectiveness of these measures and the extent of protections for different groups. This section explores national-level responses to GBV in these countries, focusing on both achievements and ongoing challenges.

Cyprus

In 2023, Cyprus ranked 21st in the EU Gender Equality Index with a score of 60.7, 9.5 points below the European average. While Article 28 of the Cypriot Constitution guarantees gender equality, progress towards international standards such as CEDAW has been gradual. Cyprus does not have a comprehensive national law on gender equality, but does have sectoral laws on employment and violence. National and sectoral plans support gender equality, but lack specific targets. Gender mainstreaming is promoted, although peace and security are managed by the Technical Committee for Gender Equality.

The Gender Equality Unit (GEU) within the National Machinery for the Advancement of Women (NMWR), established in 1994, leads gender equality efforts. The Inter-Ministerial Committee coordinates policies and the Commissioner for Gender Equality, created in 2014, reports to the President. Broader consultations on gender policies are limited.

Cyprus collects gender-disaggregated data through CYSTAT, but does not have a dedicated platform for dissemination. The Violence Against Women Act of 2021 expands protections and establishes a coordinating body. The Cypriot law on sports organisations requires ethical codes and safety measures in sport. A database of persons condemned of sexual offences requires police certificates for those working with children.

Greece

Greece has implemented comprehensive policies to address GBV, including domestic violence. Law 3500/2006 addresses domestic violence, while Law 4531/2018 incorporates the Istanbul Convention to combat GBV. Law 4604/2019 promotes gender equality and GBV prevention through gender mainstreaming and budgeting, along with the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025, which promotes women's participation and addresses sexism in various sectors, including sport.

However, despite these efforts, the Greek legal framework lacks inclusiveness with regard to non-binary people and different sexualities, which affects the overall understanding and management of gender-based violence. This gap has a particular impact on responses to intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and femicide. Although Eurostat data from 2021 show that 42% of women have experienced intimate partner violence and 43% have faced sexual harassment in the workplace, the absence of a clear definition of femicide in Greek law further complicates accurate reporting. This shows how the limited inclusion of gender diversity undermines broader efforts to effectively address GBV.

Denmark

The concept of Nordic exceptionalism influences the perception of gender in Denmark, emphasising the country's progressive image and strong welfare state. However, this image can hide persistent gender inequalities. Despite high scores in gender equality indices, in 2014 Denmark recorded the highest levels of physical, sexual and psychological violence in

the EU. This contradiction, known as the Nordic paradox, highlights the gap between Danish national identity and the reality of gender-based violence.

In Denmark, GBV is understood as violence that disproportionately affects women, but also includes harm based on sex, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. Although Denmark generally scores well on LGBTQ+ issues compared to other EU countries, challenges remain, especially in schools and in reporting discrimination and physical violence.

Denmark has made significant progress in addressing GBV, ratifying the Istanbul Convention in 2014 to strengthen its efforts. Danish law includes provisions for restraining orders against cohabiting partners and temporary accommodation for survivors. In 2019 psychological violence was legally equated with physical violence and in 2020 rape was redefined as sex without consent, increasing protections for victims and abandoning the need to prove violence or threats.

North Macedonia

The Law on Prevention and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in North Macedonia aims to prevent GBV and ensure effective protection of victims. The law states that all prevention and protection measures must be implemented without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other factor. It defines 'gender' as socially constructed roles, behaviours and attributes deemed appropriate for women and men.

GBV is widespread in North Macedonia, with over 54% of women having experienced some form of violence since the age of 15. Almost 44% have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner and 14% have experienced physical or sexual violence. Violence by an intimate partner is particularly high among women living in economically disadvantaged households. In addition, 30 per cent of women have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15, with younger and more educated women in urban areas reporting greater exposure, reflecting increased awareness.

The Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, together with recent amendments to the Criminal Code, includes provisions for sexual harassment, online harassment and stalking. The Prevention of and Protection from Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or other factors. Although LGBTIQ+ people's rights are legally protected in areas such as education, employment, healthcare and housing, LGBTIQ+ people are often victims of violence and hate discrimination. Many report discrimination in the workplace, problems with social protection and difficulties with the police, reflecting society's tendency to view homosexuality unfavourably.

Italy

In Italy, 'gender' is mainly understood in terms of relations between cisgender men and women. Although the recognition of transgender and non-binary identities is increasing, this broader conception is not always reflected in legal and policy frameworks addressing GBV.

Among the main Italian laws addressing the problem of sexual violence are Law 66/1996, which reclassified sexual violence as a crime against the person; Law 154/2001, which allows the removal of abusers from the home; Law 38/2009, which introduced measures against stalking; the 'Femicide Decree' (Law 119/2013), which toughened penalties for sexual violence; and the 'Code Red' (Law 69/2019), which accelerated prosecutions in cases of domestic violence and sexual violence.

Initiatives such as the National Plan against Gender-based Violence and the establishment of specialised anti-violence and anti-discrimination centres aim to combat violence while also addressing the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

Prevalent gender-based violence in Italy includes domestic violence, which affects 31.5% of women between 16 and 70 years of age, sexual violence experienced by 21% of women, and stalking, which affects 16.1% of women, mainly by ex-partners. Femicide remains a serious problem, with 103 women killed in 2022 and 120 in 2023, mostly by partners or ex-partners. Sexual violence against the LGBTQ+ community is often underestimated. A 2020 Arcigay survey found that 16% of LGBTQ+ people experienced physical violence, 24% verbal violence and 27% discrimination in the workplace. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights reported that 22% of LGBTQ+ people experienced discrimination or harassment and 33% avoided certain places for fear of violence. Between 2008 and 2023, 48 transgender people were killed in Italy, underlining the risks this community faces.

3. General understandings about gender and gender-based violence per target group

The understanding of gender and GBV differs among different groups of professionals and athletes, shaping the way these issues are addressed in the sport sector. This section explores how sport professionals, gender equality advocates, athletes and coaches from different countries perceive gender and gender-based violence, highlighting both areas of progress and remaining challenges to promoting inclusivity and preventing violence in sport. **This data was collected through focus groups and interviews conducted with the different target groups, Cyprus, Greece, Denmark, North Macedonia and Italy in the first half of 2024.**

Sport professionals

In **Cyprus**, focus group participants often equated gender with biological sex, reflecting a traditional binary view of male and female identities. However, the growing awareness of terms such as 'non-binary' is beginning to challenge this perspective. Participants had a solid understanding of GBV, recognising it as physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse, which mainly affects women and girls. Efforts to combat violence against women in Cyprus include education, legal reforms and community initiatives that promote respect and equality.

In **Greece**, participants recognised three genders - male, female and neutral - but noted that sports mainly target male and female categories, limiting inclusivity. They suggested that discussions on GBV should focus on identities other than cisgender male, recognising young people and trans women as particularly vulnerable. Participants also highlighted the role of extended families, coaches and male ultras as sources of GBV, while trans women are recognised as ones that experience severe violence.

In **Denmark**, most participants maintained a binary view of gender, focusing on male and female roles in sport. Although they were aware of other gender identities, this awareness had little impact on their work. Participants found that GBV is often misunderstood in mainstream sport and struggled to address it due to limited resources, often referring cases to LGBTQ+ organisations for support.

In **North Macedonia**, participants showed a more nuanced understanding of gender, seeing it as a social construct shaped by societal expectations. GBV was understood as a phenomenon encompassing various forms of abuse, with women and LGBTQ+ people as the main victims. Despite high awareness, participants noted a lack of effective policies and initiatives to combat sexual violence in sport.

In **Italy**, participants defined GBV as harm inflicted on the basis of gender or gender identity, which mainly affects women and the LGBTQ+ community. They identified social norms and power dynamics as the roots of GBV, leading to physical, emotional and economic abuse. Despite existing policies, participants emphasised the need for better implementation and awareness in the fight against sexual violence in sport.

Professionals in the field of gender equality

In **Cyprus**, participants reported that the concept of gender is often viewed through a binary lens, often being equated with sex. This perspective tends to reinforce traditional power dynamics and neglect the complexities of gender identity, potentially hindering effective interventions against gender-based violence. A more inclusive conception of gender, which recognises its fluidity and intersectionality, is considered essential to better address gender-based violence and promote gender equity.

In **Greece**, professionals often confuse sex with gender, viewing gender as a biological rather than a social construct. However, recent discussions have introduced a more inclusive language, including the recognition of non-binary identities. Participants identified patriarchy as the root cause of gender violence, perpetuated by men-dominated institutions and amplified by capitalism. This patriarchal influence complicates efforts to embrace gender fluidity and address GBV comprehensively.

In **Denmark**, the distinction between gender and sex is clearer and participants recognised the need for safe spaces in sport for non-binary and trans people. Despite the growing recognition of inclusive language, the traditional binary approach remains influential, particularly in conservative sporting contexts. Participants linked GBV in Denmark to broader gender and minority issues, noting that a lack of representation and inclusive language perpetuates violence, including harassment and bullying.

In **North Macedonia**, participants demonstrated a strong understanding of gender as a social construct distinct from sex, identifying forms of psychological, physical, sexual and economic violence. However, non-binary identities are not widely recognised in the region, which predominantly sees gender as binary. Participants identified women and the LGBTIQ+ community, particularly vulnerable subgroups, as the main victims of GBV, attributing violence to patriarchal attitudes and men domination.

In **Italy**, gender is understood as a social construct linked to cultural norms, often confused with sex. Participants discussed how binary thinking, reinforced from childhood, has a negative impact on non-binary identities and contributes to GBV. They emphasised that the violence stems from power dynamics shaped by social norms, with examples such as femicide and toxic masculinity. Participants highlighted the need for intersectional analysis and expressed concern about the lack of awareness and dissemination of policies to prevent sexual violence in sport.

Women and LGBTQ+ athletes

In **Cyprus**, female athletes generally have a strong understanding of gender issues and the importance of addressing GBV, but are less familiar with non-binary identities. This suggests the need for broader training within the sports community to promote inclusivity and effectively combat the violence.

In **Greece**, most respondents associated gender with biological characteristics, although some recognised that it is a social construct or a mixture of social and anatomical factors. GBV was broadly defined as violence rooted in gender, sexual orientation or stereotypes, and women and LGBTIQ+ people, particularly trans people, were considered the most affected. The causes of sexual violence were linked to political power and institutions such as, religion and education, as well as social issues such as patriarchy and lack of diversity

awareness. While some were not aware of specific prevention policies, others cited efforts such as social media campaigns and codes of conduct.

In **Denmark**, most participants embraced non-binary and fluid gender concepts, recognising the evolutionary nature of gender perceptions. However, one athlete initially held a biological view of gender, but later recognised non-binary identities. It was recognised that gender-based sexual violence can affect those outside the male/female binomial, although awareness of specific cases of gender-based sexual violence in sport was limited.

In **North Macedonia**, gender was predominantly understood in binary terms, with little recognition of non-binary identities. GBV was mainly associated with male violence against women, although participants also recognised female violence against men. The forms of GBV identified included physical, verbal and psychological abuse, with frequent reference to bullying. The causes of violence were seen as rooted in prejudice, fear of the unknown and conservative societal norms. Participants were largely unaware of policies to prevent sexual violence in sport.

In **Italy**, participants viewed gender as a social construction rather than an inherent trait, highlighting the limitations of binary labels and advocating a non-binary approach that rejects traditional gender roles. GBV was seen as the result of discrimination against those who do not fit conventional gender norms, and affects both the public and private spheres. Participants noted the lack of comprehensive policies to prevent sexual violence in sport, emphasising the need for more inclusive measures.

Coaches, trainers and staff “working on the ground” in sports

In **Cyprus**, gender is largely equated with sex and GBV is understood as discrimination or harmful behaviour based on gender. Gay, transgender, LGBTIQ+ people and women involved in sports and politics are considered particularly vulnerable. Perpetrators are often men, people with power and obsolete views. Factors such as personal problems, power dynamics and cultural resistance to change contribute to gender-based violence, which includes physical, psychological and verbal abuse, as well as sexual harassment and discrimination.

In **Greece**, some coaches consider gender as a social construct, while others link it to biology. Sexual violence is recognised as arising from gender discrimination, with women, LGBTIQ+ people and femininities being the most affected. Dominant social groups and cisgender men are seen as the main perpetrators, driven by patriarchal norms and stereotypes. The interviews revealed a lack of awareness and scarce coordinated efforts to prevent sexual violence in sport.

In **Denmark**, the people interviewed convey an understanding of gender as increasingly fluid, complex, and identity-based, moving away from traditional binary views. Some place

the focus on the self-identification level and highlight the tension between social and biological interpretations. While expressing the challenges in navigating these concepts in modern life. Overall, the perspectives on GBV in these responses highlight its multifaceted nature, encompassing not only physical harm but also psychological, emotional, and social dimensions. Many emphasise that GBV is not limited to traditional binary gender roles and can affect people across a broad spectrum of gender identities, often reflecting unequal treatment, suppression, or enforced conformity. The overall sentiment is that gender-based violence impacts a variety of marginalised groups, particularly those who challenge traditional gender norms with a special focus on trans-gender women. There is some sort of consensus on the perpetrator group of this form of violence as cis-men, however they also suggest that GBV is not just about individual actions but is also influenced by larger social and cultural forces that reinforce power dynamics and exclusion based on gender.

In **North Macedonia**, understanding of gender varied, with some distinguishing between gender and sex, while non-binary concepts were less familiar but welcome for further learning. They recognised GBV as gender-related physical, sexual, emotional and psychological violence that reinforces power imbalances and inequalities. Women and LGBTIQ+ persons were identified as particularly vulnerable. While being aware of the roots of GBV in social norms and patriarchal systems, many were unaware of sport-specific policies, but were confident in initiatives that addressed the problem.

In **Italy**, gender is understood as a social construct that shapes identities beyond traditional binaries. Gender-based violence in sport is seen both as physical harm and as structural inequality that disadvantages women and marginalised communities, especially in men-dominated sports.

III. The phenomenon of gender-based violence in sports

1. Existence of the phenomenon of gender-based violence in sports

GBV in sport manifests differently in different national contexts, yet shares common patterns of abuse and discrimination. This section explores the prevalent forms and consequences of violence against people in Cyprus, Greece, Denmark, North Macedonia and Italy, **based on national data and insights gathered from focus groups and interviews with various target groups** held in each country.

Cyprus

GBV violence in sport includes physical, psychological, verbal, sexual and financial abuse. The intense conditioning associated with male athletes often leads to negative stereotypes of women, reinforcing limiting gender stereotypes. Boys are discouraged from 'female' sports, while girls suffer discrimination in men-dominated areas. Even LGBTQ+ athletes face obstacles due to lack of support.

GBV harassment, physical assault, bullying and discrimination. This abuse undermines confidence, performance and well-being, creating a culture of silence. Interviews with female athletes revealed serious consequences, including psychological trauma and decreased participation. Coaches and staff also reported marginalisation, verbal harassment and physical and psychological violence, emphasising the need for safe and inclusive sports environments and effective policies.

Greece

GBV in sport reflects broader social problems of gender equality. The country's low level of gender equality and the entrenched patriarchal views complicate efforts to address gender-based sexual violence. Studies and the #MeToo movement have highlighted high rates of sexual harassment. Professionals have noted that gender-based sexual violence often intersects with gender expression, since non-traditional expressions experience more violence. The most common forms include verbal, psychological and physical abuse, as well as economic discrimination. Addressing gender-based sexual violence requires comprehensive measures, cultural changes and strong support systems for safer sporting environments.

Denmark

The country faces significant GBV problems in sport, including homophobia and sexual violence. The European Commission's 2016 report and research by Toftegaard Støckel (2010) show high rates of abuse among female athletes. Disparaging language and macho culture contribute to violence, with many problems remaining hidden due to a culture of silence. Verbal violence and binary gender norms further marginalised LGBTQ+ athletes. The Danish Ministry of Culture (2020) found that many LGBTQ+ people feel excluded and suffer

discrimination. Effective measures are needed to address gender-based sexual violence and ensure fair treatment.

North Macedonia

Sexual violence in sport includes sexual harassment, emotional and psychological abuse and verbal abuse. Men-dominated management roles and financial support is uneven, with women earning less and facing significant obstacles. Sexual violence is widespread, but many cases go unreported due to fear and stigma. Strategies to combat sexual violence include vigilance, awareness-raising programmes and regular investigations. Discrimination and economic inequality exacerbate the problems of LGBTQ+ female athletes. It is crucial to promote a culture of respect and fair treatment.

Italy

GBV has a significant impact on women and LGBTQ+ people, affecting their mental and physical health. Sexual harassment is frequent: 25% of female athletes reported experiencing unwanted advances. Psychological abuse, particularly in youth sports, and gender discrimination - where women earn about 30% less than men - are prevalent. These problems create a hostile environment, which requires stronger policies and fairer treatment to effectively combat gender-based violence.

2. Main challenges in terms of preventing and tackling gender-based violence in sports.

Preventing and addressing GBV in sport remains a significant challenge in several European countries. Based on **national data and feedback collected through focus groups and interviews with target groups**, this section outlines the main challenges in Cyprus, Greece, Denmark, North Macedonia and Italy and their perception including their understanding of the concept of intersectionality. For clarity, in this report, we understand intersectionality as the simultaneous forms of oppressions suffered by people in unseparate terms of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class, among others (Crenshaw 1991). Intersectionality considers the complexity of identity as a process, ever-changing and non-hierarchical (Ribeiro Corossacz 2023).

Cyprus

Field research emphasises the need for an intersectional approach, taking into account ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status and ability. LGBTQ+ athletes, in particular, experience aggravated violence because of their intersectional identities. Effective strategies to combat gender-based violence in sport must incorporate this broader perspective to address the unique challenges that different athletes face.

Greece

Sexual violence in sport is rooted in patriarchal norms and power imbalances, creating a culture of silence, especially among women and LGBTQ+ people. Traditional gender roles and male authority often prevent reporting and normalise verbal violence. Field research shows how overlapping identities, such as being LGBTQ+, a refugee or belonging to a lower economic class, intensify experiences of discrimination. Addressing GBV requires an intersectional approach with comprehensive support systems, specialised training for coaches and cross-sectoral collaboration to promote a safer and more inclusive sporting environment.

Denmark

Danish sports associations face challenges in achieving inclusivity due to entrenched cultural norms. Despite initiatives such as [DGI's 'More women and girls in associations'](#) and DIF's [policies on transgender and non-binary inclusion](#), entrenched values create barriers to true inclusivity. Field research reveals a limited understanding of intersectionality by many sports professionals, although gender equality experts recognise its importance. Athletes, once familiar with the concept, reported experiencing aggravated discrimination based on multiple identities. This underlines the need for continued efforts to address entrenched prejudices and promote inclusivity in Danish sports.

North Macedonia

A global data gap obscures the full extent of violence, exacerbated by a lack of reporting and limited research. Women have fewer opportunities in sport due to stigma, economic inequalities and normalised sexual violence, particularly in high-risk environments such as changing rooms. Field research shows a different awareness of intersectionality among sports professionals. While some are unfamiliar with the term, others recognise how intersectional identities contribute to unique experiences of GBV. Marginalised people, particularly within the LGBTIQ+ community, often experience aggravated violence. To address these issues, awareness and support for marginalised athletes must be improved.

Italy

In Italy, the response to GBV in sport is hampered by cultural norms and an inadequate governmental response. The sports system, overseen by [CONI](#), has difficulty implementing effective policies to prevent violence against minors. Traditional stereotypes perpetuate discriminatory attitudes, while fear of retaliation discourages reporting. Field research highlights the exacerbating role of intersectional identities, such as ethnicity, gender, disability and socioeconomic status, in increasing vulnerability to gender-based violence. Coaches and staff also note how religious and economic factors reinforce restrictive gender

roles. Effective prevention and intervention require better reporting mechanisms and inclusive policies to address these complex challenges.

3. Best practices regarding effective approaches, initiatives or projects in preventing and tackling gender-based violence in sports

Efforts and initiatives to prevent and address GBV in sport have been implemented in Cyprus, Greece, Denmark, North Macedonia and Italy, highlighting a range of strategies, from educational and inclusion programmes to comprehensive support systems. This section highlights some best practices and effective approaches.

Best Practice 1	
Title	<i>Preventing Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport at the International Level</i>
Country/Region	<i>Europe</i>
Duration	<i>2012 – present</i>
Objective	<i>To raise awareness about sexual harassment and abuse in sport through an educational website and interactive videos</i>
Target group	<i>Sports organisations; athletes; young athletes (16-22 years old)</i>
Description & Impact	<i>In 2012, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) launched a multilingual educational website designed to prevent sexual harassment and abuse in sport. The site, available in six languages, offers practical advice, video testimonials and resources tailored for sports organisations and athletes. The site was introduced during the Youth Olympic Games, providing direct support to young athletes.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>This practice demonstrates how scientific knowledge can be turned into a valuable tool for sports organisations, coaches and athletes. The IOC created a network of experts to translate the results into practical information. To increase impact, the IOC has linked other initiatives such as the Consensus Declaration and Youth Olympic Games sessions. However, the lack of an evaluation system and the inability to compel action are key weaknesses. A monitoring system and user feedback could improve the effectiveness of the site.</i>
Transferability	<i>An assessment of the practice's potential to be adapted or replicated in other settings.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>Information on the resources required to implement the practice, such as funding, staff, or technical expertise, as well as any support available to organizations or individuals seeking to replicate or adapt the practice.</i>

Source	http://www.olympic.org/sha http://sha.olympic.org/ http://www.olympic.org/assets/importednews/documents/en_report_1125.pdf
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Best Practice 2	
Title	NATIONAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY
Country/Region	Cyprus
Duration	2014
Objective	Protect children from sexual abuse and sexual exploitation
Target group	Children
Description & Impact	The 2014 national legislation on preventing and combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography led to the creation of a national strategy to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. This strategy represents the first comprehensive, child-centred approach to prevention and support, with detailed roles and procedures for government institutions. Established by an Ad Hoc Committee on 13 July 2015 and approved by the Council of Ministers on 16 March 2016, the strategy emphasises the importance of safeguarding children in sport, outlining the responsibilities of the Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO) in the regulation of organised sport.
Lessons learnt	n/a
Transferability	n/a
Resources/Support	n/a
Source	https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events-files/gbv-sport_online-discussion_background_note.pdf

Best Practice 3	
Title	“WOMEN IN SOCIETY AND SPORT” CONFERENCE
Country/Region	Cyprus
Duration	March 2013

Objective	<i>Raising awareness of sexual abuse and harassment in sport</i>
Target group	<i>Women & Sport Committee of the Cyprus Sport Organisation, general public and associated stakeholders</i>
Description & Impact	<i>The conference, organized by the Cypriot National Olympic Academy and the Women & Sport Committee of the Cyprus Sport Organisation, presented research and insights on sexual abuse in sport. This event led to the drafting and approval of a Code on sexual harassment and abuse, the signing of recommendations to the European Commission, and the proposal of educational workshops and awareness campaigns.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>n/a</i>
Transferability	<i>n/a</i>
Resources/Support	<i>n/a</i>
Source	https://www.instagram.com/atheniancentaursrfc/ https://www.facebook.com/atheniancentaursrfc/

Best Practice 4

Title	<i>PANIONIOS G.S. SMYRNIIS AND THE DIOTIMA CENTRE ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SPORTS</i>
Country/Region	<i>Greece</i>
Duration	<i>2022</i>
Objective	<i>Promoting a culture in Greek sport that eliminates sexism and gender discrimination through education and innovative practices.</i>
Target group	<i>Children and teenagers, their parents, coaches and Panionios staff.</i>
Description & Impact	<i>The collaboration between the Panionios Athletic Association and the Diotima Centre included seminars and workshops for coaches, athletes, parents and staff to address and prevent GBV. The initiative reached over 30 participants and aimed to establish ongoing training and a dedicated group within Panionios for ongoing protection against GBV and harassment.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>n/a</i>
Transferability	<i>Panionios G.S. Smyrniis, with 132 years of activity in Greek sport, intends to make these trainings permanent and create a group within the association to protect athletes from sexual harassment and gender-based violence.</i>

Resources/Support	<i>Panionios G.S. Smyrnis, with the support of DIOTIMA, aims to raise awareness on gender, gender inequalities, intimacy, gender-based violence, sexual harassment and related legal protections. DIOTIMA, active since 1989, works to defend gender rights and fight discrimination against women, promoting equality in all areas.</i>
Source	https://www.gazzetta.gr/football/2117740/panionios-katapolema-tin-emfyli-bi-a-kai-sexismo-ston-athlitisimo

Best Practice 5	
Title	<i>Gwomen - Gazzetta</i>
Country/Region	<i>Greece</i>
Duration	<i>2022 - ongoing</i>
Objective	<i>Promoting women in sports, advancing gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in the sports sector</i>
Target group	<i>Women in sports, athletes, coaches, sports reporters, and sports enthusiasts</i>
Description & Impact	<i>This initiative involves organising conferences, conducting interviews with female athletes and coaches, and publishing news and sports articles focusing on women in sport. The results include increased visibility and recognition of women in sport, increased awareness of gender equality and the empowerment of female athletes and professionals. It also promotes dialogue on issues such as sexual harassment, GBV and motherhood in sport.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>n/a</i>
Transferability	<i>This initiative can be adapted and implemented in other countries and regions to promote gender equality and inclusion in sports because it breaks the common stereotype that “only men read sports news”.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>Gazzetta's platform and social media, partnerships with sports organisations, funding support, and collaboration with women athletes and professionals in sports.</i>
Source	https://www.gazzetta.gr/qwomen https://www.instagram.com/gazzettawomen/?hl=el

Best Practice 6	
Title	<i>Athenian Centaurs RFC</i>
Country/Region	<i>Greece</i>

Duration	<i>Ongoing</i>
Objective	<i>Promoting inclusion and diversity in sport, with a focus on LGBTQI+ people.</i>
Target group	<i>LGBTQI+ athletes, sports enthusiasts and the general public.</i>
Description & Impact	<i>The Athenian Centaurs RFC, Greece's first queer rugby team, promotes an inclusive environment by welcoming all gender identities and sexual orientations. This approach has attracted local and international attention, breaking stereotypes and encouraging the participation of LGBTQI+ people in sport, thus promoting a more inclusive sports culture.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>n/a</i>
Transferability	<i>The model of inclusion practised by the Athenian Centaurs RFC can be replicated by other sports teams and organisations on both national and international levels. By adopting similar strategies and values, organisations can promote diversity and inclusivity within their respective sports communities.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>n/a</i>
Source	https://www.instagram.com/atheniancentaursrfc/ https://www.facebook.com/atheniancentaursrfc/

Best Practice 7	
Title	<i>DIF get2sport</i>
Country/Region	<i>Denmark</i>
Duration	<i>2005 - present</i>
Objective	<i>To support sports associations in vulnerable residential areas by relieving the burden of volunteers and increasing the participation of girls, especially those from ethnic minorities, in organised sports</i>
Target group	<i>Children and young people in vulnerable residential areas with a big focus on girls and women belonging to ethnic minorities</i>
Description & Impact	<i>DIF get2sport adapts its efforts to local conditions, helping sports associations by hiring paid staff, addressing practical challenges, promoting the involvement of municipalities and facilitating national knowledge-sharing networks. The initiative works with 25 municipalities, 53 residential areas and 75 sports associations throughout Denmark. With funding of DKK 19 million from the Nordea Foundation (2023-2025), it aims to promote girls' participation through parental awareness, micro football schools and social activities. Guldsmeden Hotels also supports the initiative with resources for training and event funding.</i>

Lessons learnt	<i>The commitment to create inclusive coaching environments free of gender norms and cultural biases, together with the close collaboration with families, has fostered critical reflection and contributed to reducing male over-representation and gender-based violence in sport. The long-term nature of the project has led former female members to become coaches, strengthening the consistency of the initiative, fostering interpersonal bonds and promoting female empowerment.</i>
Transferability	<i>Since get2sport is designed to function according to each sport's associations particular strengths and weaknesses, taking into account its members' cultural background and socio-economical conditions, it can easily be transferred to various similar contexts within the country or abroad.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>After almost two decades, the project has developed throughout Denmark, with the support of volunteers and significant funding from foundations such as Nordea and Guldsmeden Hotels. To start such a project, it is crucial to secure national and European funding and to build a network with local NGOs and sports associations. This would enable collaborations focusing on integration, inclusion and the prevention of gender-based violence.</i>
Source	https://www.dif.dk/nyheder/2024/03/dif-get2sport-er-finalist-til-stor-eu-ligestillingspris

Best Practice 8	
Title	#Gamechanger – Let's create a more inclusive culture together
Country/Region	Denmark
Duration	Ongoing since 2020
Objective	<i>Promoting inclusion and respect for all gender identities and sexual orientations within Danish sports associations</i>
Target group	<i>Sports associations and clubs committed to promoting an inclusive and respectful culture</i>
Description & Impact	<i>#Gamechanger encourages sports associations to adopt inclusive practices. The initiative involves a four-step process to become a #Gamechanger association, including public engagement, elimination of discriminatory language and community involvement. The programme has been well received, with considerable support from Danish sports organisations and celebrities, and has led to visible changes, such as specially designed #Gamechanger balls used by professional handball teams.</i>
Lessons learnt	n/a

Transferability	<i>Since #Gamechanger is a very well and extensively developed project providing several guidelines and tools for sports associations on ground, it would be easily applicable to other settings.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>The webpage blivgamechanger.dk offers tools and guidelines for management, boards, and coaches to build an inclusive, LGBTQI+ friendly culture structurally, strategically, and practically. It includes models for assessing current culture and provides access to project consultants for further support.</i>
Source	https://www.blivgamechanger.dk/

Best Practice 9	
Title	<i>Conference on Gender-Based Violence in Sport</i>
Country/Region	<i>Skopje, North Macedonia</i>
Duration	<i>28 November 2017</i>
Objective	<i>To raise awareness and initiate a dialogue on GBV against women in sport in Macedonia, promoting the development of preventive measures and support systems.</i>
Target group	<i>Female athletes; coaches; sports federations and policy makers.</i>
Description & Impact	<i>Organised by TAKT, in cooperation with the National Network against Violence against Women and Family Violence and the Agency for Youth and Sport, with the support of the US Embassy in Macedonia, this conference brought the topic of gender-based violence in sport to the forefront of public discourse. Presentations, personal testimonies of female athletes and panel discussions were organised and amplified by significant media coverage.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>Collaboration is key: The success of the event highlighted the importance of partnerships between government agencies, NGOs and embassies in addressing social issues. The role of the media: The media were instrumental in raising awareness of gender-based violence in sport, widening the scope and stimulating public discussion. Power of personal testimonies: Athletes' personal stories effectively engaged public opinion and politicians, highlighting the urgent need for action and policy change.</i>
Transferability	<i>The practice of hosting a conference to discuss specific social issues in sports can be replicated in other settings or countries. Adjustments may be needed based on cultural, social, and legal differences in other environments.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>Implementing a similar practice would require funding for event logistics, expert and speaker fees, and promotional activities. Partnerships with local NGOs,</i>

	<i>government bodies, and international organizations can also provide necessary support and credibility.</i>
Source	<u>TAKT - Together Advancing Common Trust</u> <u>Конференција на тема „Родово-базирано насилство во спорт“! Ве очекуваме! U.S. Embassy Macedonia</u> <u>Facebook</u>

Best Practice 10	
Title	<i>Sexual harassment of women engaged in recreational sports</i>
Country/Region	<i>Skopje North Macedonia</i>
Duration	<i>5 December 2019</i>
Objective	<i>Raise awareness about sexual harassment of women in recreational sports and demand practical safety improvements</i>
Target group	<i>Women involved in recreational sports, local authorities, administrators of public spaces and the general public</i>
Description & Impact	<i>Held during the 16 Days of Activism, the panel discussion featured four female athletes who recounted their experiences of harassment. It highlighted safety issues, leading to greater public awareness and possibly influencing policy recommendations to improve safety measures in public spaces.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>The panel discussion revealed fundamental insights. Personal testimonies effectively highlighted harassment, making the problem more tangible and urgent, stimulating discussion on change. The focus on public safety emphasised the need for basic measures such as better lighting and patrols. Collaboration with the National Network Against Violence and alignment with the 16 Days of Activism demonstrated how partnerships can amplify advocacy efforts and extend the reach of the campaign.</i>
Transferability	<i>The format of a panel discussion focusing on specific issues such as sexual harassment in recreational sports can be adapted and replicated in other contexts. Adjustments may be necessary to address local conditions and the specific needs of the target audience in different settings.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>Organising a similar panel discussion would require logistical planning, including securing a venue, arranging for speakers, and conducting outreach. Support from local advocacy groups and possibly funding from sponsors or partners would be crucial for implementation.</i>
Source	<u>https://www.facebook.com/TAKT.ngo/posts/pfbidONTqUT2VUS1fvrRsajY9h3f1ME5jBhtxwaWTnfjxBKhWmrrp3kvEENhEtVv61NFarQl</u>

Best Practice 11	
Title	<i>Creating Inclusive Spaces. Promoting LGBTQI+ Participation in Sports</i>
Country/Region	<i>Italy</i>
Duration	<i>Ongoing since 2019</i>
Objective	<i>Addressing the under-representation of LGBTQI+ people in sport and combating discrimination and exclusion within the sport community</i>
Target group	<i>LGBTQI+ athletes and people involved in sports organisations, including athletes, coaches, administrators and support staff</i>
Description & Impact	<i>The practice includes conducting workshops and training sessions to raise awareness of LGBTQI+ issues and promote inclusiveness, developing and implementing anti-discrimination policies, increasing the visibility of LGBTQI+ athletes through campaigns and media, and creating support networks within sports organisations. These efforts have led to greater visibility and acceptance of LGBTQI+ people in sport, a reduction in discrimination and an improvement in the well-being and participation of LGBTQI+ athletes.</i>
Lessons learnt	<p><i>Importance of Education: Comprehensive education and awareness programs are essential to foster understanding and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals in sports.</i></p> <p><i>Policy Enforcement: Effective enforcement of anti-discrimination policies is crucial to creating a truly inclusive sports environment.</i></p> <p><i>Community Engagement: Building strong community networks and partnerships is key to sustaining efforts to promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports.</i></p>
Transferability	<i>The practice can be adapted and replicated in other countries or regions with similar challenges related to LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports. However, cultural and societal contexts should be considered when implementing and adapting the practice.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>n/a</i>
Source	<u>Outsport Project Report: Discrimination and Exclusion of LGBTQI+ people in Sports</u>

Best Practice 12	
Title	<i>Promoting LGBTQI+ Inclusion through Arcigay Sports Groups</i>
Country/Region	<i>Italy</i>

Duration	<i>Ongoing since 2008</i>
Objective	<i>To create inclusive and supportive environments for LGBTQI+ individuals in sports, promoting their participation and combating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity</i>
Target group	<i>GBTQIA+ individuals, including athletes, coaches, and sports enthusiasts, across various sports disciplines in Italy</i>
Description & Impact	<i>This practice involves the creation of sports groups within <u>Arcigay</u>, the main Italian LGBTQI+ organisation, in different cities. The initiative includes the development and implementation of inclusive policies, the organisation of regular sports activities and events and the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns. The initiative also works with local sports clubs, national sports federations and LGBTQI+ organisations to expand its reach and impact.</i>
Lessons learnt	<i>Increased Participation: Significant increase in the participation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in sports, with many feeling more comfortable and supported. Enhanced Visibility: Greater visibility of LGBTQIA+ athletes and sports enthusiasts, challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity within the sports community. Policy Adoption: Adoption of inclusive policies and anti-discrimination measures by collaborating sports organisations and clubs.</i>
Transferability	<i>The model of Arcigay sports groups can be adapted and replicated in other regions or countries with similar challenges in promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports. Customization based on local cultural and social contexts is recommended.</i>
Resources/Support	<i>Funding: Securing funding from governmental bodies, private sponsors, and LGBTQI+ advocacy organisations to support activities and initiatives. Expertise: Collaboration with experts in LGBTQIA+ issues, diversity, and inclusion to provide guidance and training. Volunteer Support: Engaging volunteers from the LGBTQIA+ community and allies to support the organisation and implementation of activities.</i>
Source	<u>Arcigay Sport – LGBTQI+ Italian Association</u>

4. Existing legal or non-legal recommendations, responses or practices on preventing and tackling gender-based violence in sports other than the good practices

Efforts to address violence against people in sport are evolving in Cyprus, Greece, Denmark, North Macedonia and Italy; each country has undertaken significant initiatives, albeit with varying degrees of progress.

In **Cyprus**, the [Cyprus Sports Organisation](#), together with local clubs, is advancing the prevention of GBV through comprehensive policies and targeted training programmes. These efforts aim to create safer sporting environments, reflecting a proactive stance in addressing the problem.

Similarly, **Greece** is carrying out noteworthy initiatives, such as the [ETHOS project](#). This initiative promotes awareness and prevention through a series of workshops and events. Furthermore, the [Hellenic Basketball Federation](#), [Panaitolikos FC](#) and the [#MeNow MeToo platform](#) are playing a key role in supporting victims and advocating against sexual violence. These collective actions underline Greece's commitment to tackling GBV.

In **Denmark**, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted strategies to improve LGBTQ+ safety and inclusion. Recent updates to legal categories now explicitly address hate crimes against transgender and intersex persons. These changes reflect Denmark's broader commitment to improving protections and promoting a more inclusive environment.

In contrast, the legal framework in **North Macedonia** includes the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination and the Statute of the Olympic Committee, both of which address discrimination related to sport. However, mainstreaming gender equality into sports policies remains a challenge. Despite these legal provisions, further efforts are needed to fully implement and enforce gender equality measures.

Italy's approach is characterised by the implementation of national laws and specific sport regulations that prohibit gender discrimination. In addition, Italy has developed several policies and training programmes to prevent GBV and support victims. Continuous collaboration and data collection are crucial to refine responses and improve the effectiveness of these measures.

Across these countries, there is an increasing recognition of the necessity for comprehensive and intersectional approaches to combat violence within the sports domain. This growing awareness underscores several significant changes:

Firstly, there is a heightened emphasis on adopting **comprehensive strategies** that are not only extensive but also intricately tailored to address the various forms of violence that can occur in sports settings. These strategies are evolving to consider the complex ways in which factors such as ethnicity, sexuality, and disability intersect with gender-based violence, aiming to provide a more nuanced response.

Secondly, the importance of **ongoing research** has become more pronounced. This research focuses on uncovering patterns of violence, understanding the distinct experiences of different groups within the sports community, and assessing the effectiveness of current measures. This commitment to continuous research ensures that interventions are based on solid evidence and can adapt to emerging challenges.

Additionally, there is a strong focus on **policy development**. Robust policies are being crafted to provide clear guidelines for preventing, reporting, and addressing violence in sports environments. These policies also emphasise creating effective accountability mechanisms and ensuring that support systems are in place to assist victims and promote safer sporting environments.

The active **involvement of stakeholders**—including athletes, coaches, administrators, and advocacy groups—is now recognised as crucial. Engaging these stakeholders helps to foster a collective effort towards creating safer and more inclusive sports environments.

Together, these efforts reflect a concerted push towards addressing the multifaceted challenges of gender-based violence in sports, aiming to enhance safety and inclusivity within the field.

IV. Conclusions

Results from Cyprus, Greece, Denmark, North Macedonia and Italy reveal different national responses to GBV in sport, shaped by legislative, cultural and social contexts. Common themes emerge, including the need to improve prevention measures, policy implementation, education and inclusive support systems, although there are significant regional differences.

Each country has made progress in addressing GBV at national level. Cyprus, which ranks below the average of the EU Gender Equality Index, has sectoral laws on violence, but lacks comprehensive gender equality legislation. Greece has a broad regulatory framework, but has problems with inclusion, particularly for non-binary people, which hinders broader efforts to address GBV. Denmark's progressive reputation contrasts with persistent gender inequalities and high levels of violence, known as the 'Nordic paradox'. North Macedonia faces widespread GBV, despite its strong laws, and Italy's legal advances have not prevented high rates of domestic violence and femicide, with the LGBTQ+ community still poorly protected.

In sport, **GBV is widespread in all countries and affects athletes**, particularly women, LGBTQ+ people and minorities. Researches highlight problems such as verbal, physical and psychological violence, with women and the LGBTQ+ community particularly vulnerable. **Patriarchal norms, power imbalances and societal pressures** exacerbate the problem, manifesting in everything from discriminatory treatment and harassment to exclusion from opportunities. In all countries, the interviewees noted the **inadequacy of current complaint mechanisms**, the **lack of comprehensive training** and the **insufficient enforcement of existing laws**. **Intersectionality** - often unknown to participants in interviews and focus groups - was recognised as crucial, as athletes face composite discrimination based on gender, race, economic status and sexual identity.

The **recommendations** to address GBV in sport emphasise the need for educational initiatives, such as mandatory **training and awareness-raising** seminars for athletes, coaches and staff, as well as **stronger policies and better support systems**. They also call for the introduction of **clear, transparent and enforced reporting mechanisms**. **Technological innovations** such as anonymous reporting platforms were also proposed to make reporting safer and more accessible. Many field research respondents suggested **increasing visibility and inclusion** through media campaigns, **role models** and **community involvement**. Initiatives should also address the need for **safe physical spaces in sports facilities**, **improved leadership and policies** that promote a more inclusive environment for all athletes.

Although some countries, such as Cyprus and Greece, have made progress in developing policies and legal protections, there remains a significant gap between theory and practice. Denmark, despite its high levels of gender equality, faces problems of implementation and

awareness, while countries such as North Macedonia and Italy struggle with deep-rooted violence, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ communities. In all nations, systemic inefficiencies and cultural barriers hinder progress, making it clear that multifaceted, inclusive and sustained efforts are essential to combat GBV in sport.

Recognising these gaps, the next phase of the SPORT GVP project is designed to directly address these challenges. A **comprehensive set of learning resources and tools** will be developed to build the capacity of sports professionals to address GBV in the context of sport. These resources will not only improve understanding of gender issues, but also empower sports professionals, coaches and managers to recognise and respond to episodes of violence more effectively. This approach is crucial to ensure that the knowledge gained is translated into action on the ground.

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