

# WP3 Training Package – Preventing and tackling Gender Based Violence in and Through Sport

*Guide on Prevention  
Policies and Practices for  
Sport Officers &  
Executives*



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## Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) has long been a serious issue, affecting the safety, fairness, and inclusivity of sports environments. This guide takes a close look at this problem, offering practical solutions to prevent GBV while encouraging a culture of mutual respect and equality in the sports world. It explores the unique challenges of sports environments—such as power imbalances and gender norms—and provides a structured approach to create safer, more welcoming spaces.

The guide serves several purposes. It aims to help stakeholders understand the causes and impacts of GBV, equipping them with the knowledge needed to take effective action. It outlines practical steps for sport officers and executives to implement policies and systems that reduce risks and provide clear ways for addressing incidents. It also emphasises the importance of leadership and collaboration in transforming organisational cultures and strengthening efforts to address GBV. Partnerships between sports organisations, local communities, and policymakers are highlighted as critical in driving meaningful and lasting change.

Built on thorough research conducted across multiple European countries (Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy and North Macedonia), this guide draws information from established international frameworks such as the [Istanbul Convention](#) and the [EU Gender Equality Strategy](#). It also includes examples of successful practices from different European countries, ensuring its recommendations are adaptable to varying cultural and legal landscapes. By combining research with real-world applications, this guide becomes a practical tool for stakeholders aiming to make a tangible difference.

This guide on prevention policies and practices aims at a broad audience, including sport executives/professionals, coaches, administrators, and decision-makers. It is designed to guide them in fostering safe and equitable environments by providing tools for organisational improvement, training initiatives, and partnerships. It emphasises the shared responsibility of all participants in sports to uphold values of dignity and respect.

Sports have a unique ability to bring people together and inspire across cultural and social divides. Yet, the persistence of GBV undermines this potential, creating spaces where harm and exclusion take place. This guide calls for decisive and unified action, offering a pathway to address these challenges and build a culture where every participant feels safe and valued. By taking proactive measures, sports organisations can ensure a future where inclusion and empowerment are not just ideals, but everyday realities.

# Comprehensive Prevention Policies and Practices Against GBV – Legal Framework

GBV continues to be a significant issue across Europe, disproportionately affecting women, girls, and minority groups (such as migrants and LGBTIQ+ individuals). Approximately 30% of women in the EU have experienced threats, physical or sexual violence in their lifetime (FRA, EIGE, Eurostat, 2024), while LGBTQIA+ people face constant discrimination and challenges, with over a third reporting this as a day-to-day phenomenon (FRA, 2024). Recognising the pervasive nature of this issue, the European Union has developed a structured legal and policy framework designed to address GBV comprehensively. This [framework](#) includes the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which prioritises ending GBV, and the Victims' Rights Directive, which sets minimum standards for the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime (European Commission, 2020). Additionally, the EU has acceded to the Istanbul Convention, committing to ambitious standards to prevent and combat GBV. These initiatives collectively aim to protect women, girls, and minority groups across Europe. By harmonising international treaties, EU directives, and national measures, this framework strives to ensure consistent prevention strategies, victim support mechanisms, and legal protections.

The Istanbul Convention remains the foundation of efforts to combat GBV. Signed in 2011, the Convention provides a legally binding international framework addressing multiple forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. The Convention identifies GBV as a violation of human rights and obligates member states to implement legislative and practical measures to eliminate this type of violence. These include the establishment of shelters, crisis centres, and helplines, alongside specialised training for professionals handling GBV cases. Despite these advances, challenges in implementation persist, as highlighted by the 2023 GREVIO report (GREVIO, 2023).

Building on the Convention's principles, the EU adopted [Directive 2024/1385](#), a landmark legal framework focused on addressing GBV uniformly across all member states. The Directive criminalises offenses such as cyberviolence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation, while mandating the creation of accessible victim support services, including psychological counseling and healthcare. This Directive introduces stricter penalties for aggravated crimes, particularly those targeting vulnerable populations such as migrants, individuals with disabilities, and racialised communities (European Parliament, 2024).

One area of particular concern is the growing prevalence of gender-based cyberviolence. Digital platforms have facilitated new forms of abuse, such as cyberstalking, online harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The Directive prioritises the criminalisation of these acts and emphasises the need for digital literacy programmes to empower victims. Moreover, online platforms are now required to swiftly remove harmful content, marking a significant step in safeguarding digital spaces (Spurek & Riba i Giner, 2023).

Despite these legislative advancements, national adaptation remains critical. Limited shelter capacity, inadequate judicial training, and persistent social stigma hinder the effective implementation of GBV prevention measures.

Another critical aspect of addressing GBV lies in the intersectionality of the issue. Marginalised groups such as migrant women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and persons with disabilities often face compounded vulnerabilities, making it essential for national action plans to consider their specific needs. For example, shelters must be equipped to support individuals with disabilities and offer multilingual services to cater to migrant victims. The EU's framework recognises these complexities and encourages member states to adopt inclusive practices, ensuring no one is left behind (Greens/EFA, 2023).

In addition to these efforts, the role of education cannot be overstated. Comprehensive training programmes for law enforcement, healthcare providers, and educators are pivotal in creating a systemic response to GBV. Training not only equips professionals with the skills to recognise and address GBV but also fosters a culture of accountability and respect. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns play a crucial role in challenging societal norms and reducing stigma around reporting GBV. The EU Gender Equality Strategy underscores the importance of engaging communities through targeted campaigns, highlighting the shared responsibility of addressing this pervasive issue (European Commission, 2024).

The [EU Gender Equality Strategy](#) highlights engaging communities by using targeted and context-sensitive awareness campaigns as an important measure against GBV. These campaigns are not only tools for information dissemination but act as catalysts for changing deep-seated social norms and attitudes that perpetuate GBV. By involving diverse stakeholders such as local leaders, NGOs, and survivors of GBV, these campaigns aim to foster collective responsibility and active participation in creating safer communities. They also emphasise empowering marginalised groups to share their experiences and perspectives, helping to break the silence surrounding GBV. Examples of successful campaigns, such as public workshops and digital storytelling projects, have demonstrated their ability to create empathy, reduce stigma, and encourage reporting of GBV incidents (European Commission, 2024). These initiatives underscore that addressing GBV is not just an institutional task but a societal obligation that requires the participation of every individual.

**“Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union, but it is not yet a reality.**

**In business, politics and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity. Using only half of the population, half of the ideas or half of the energy is not good enough.”<sup>1</sup>**

**President Ursula von der Leyen**

In the context of sports, the implementation of these legal frameworks becomes even more crucial. Sports organisations hold a unique position to foster inclusivity and safety. By establishing clear codes of conduct, confidential reporting systems, and comprehensive training programmes, these organisations can play a pivotal role in combating GBV.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2020), *Striving for a Union of Equality The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*.

Partnerships with NGOs, local governments, and international bodies further enhance the capacity of sports environments to address and prevent GBV effectively. For example, collaborations between sports clubs and advocacy organisations have led to the creation of safe spaces and support networks for victims within athletic communities (IOC, 2016).

The combined efforts of international treaties, EU legislation, and national initiatives represent a transformative shift towards eliminating GBV. However, consistent implementation and active participation from all sectors, including sports, remain vital. By aligning their policies and practices with these frameworks, sports organisations cannot only protect their participants but also contribute to a broader culture of respect, equity, and empowerment.

## Developing a Code of Conduct for GBV cases

Developing a comprehensive Code of Conduct to address GBV in sports is essential for creating safe, inclusive, and respectful environments. Such a code must reflect international standards while being tailored to the cultural and legal contexts of each country. It should serve as both a preventive tool and a guide for addressing incidents effectively. Core thematic areas for consideration include promoting inclusion, preventing and addressing GBV and discrimination, and establishing safe spaces.

A basic aspect of a Code of Conduct is the promotion of inclusion. Inclusive environments respect diversity and ensure equal participation for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation. This begins with the use of inclusive language, which acknowledges and respects individuals' identities, such as their preferred pronouns (Council of Europe, 2020). Encouraging all stakeholders to adopt non-stereotypical language and behaviour challenges entrenched biases and fosters a culture of mutual respect. Inclusion also requires that all members of the sports community, from athletes to administrators, feel valued and empowered to contribute. To achieve this, sports organisations should involve diverse representatives in the development and implementation of the Code of Conduct, ensuring that it reflects a wide range of perspectives (IOC, 2016).

Preventing and addressing GBV and discrimination are core objectives of the Code of Conduct. Clear definitions of unacceptable behaviour—including harassment, abuse, and discrimination—help establish a shared understanding of what constitutes misconduct. Confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms are critical for addressing incidents effectively. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasises that these mechanisms must protect the anonymity and safety of those who report (UNODC, 2019). Sports organisations should outline procedures for handling complaints, including investigation processes, disciplinary actions, and support for affected individuals. Training programmes for coaches, athletes, and staff on recognising and responding to GBV are equally vital. Such programmes increase awareness and equip stakeholders with the skills needed to intervene appropriately and responsibly. Training should focus on recognising signs of abuse, understanding the nuances of GBV, and equipping individuals with conflict resolution and trauma-informed care techniques (Spurek & Riba i Giner, 2023).

## Creating Safe Spaces

Establishing safe spaces within sports organisations is a critical component of a comprehensive Code of Conduct. Safe spaces should be both physical and psychological. Physically, facilities must be designed for security, such as well-lit environments, secure locker rooms, and private areas for reporting incidents. Psychologically, fostering an atmosphere of trust and respect is essential. Victims must feel assured that their reports will be taken seriously and handled with discretion.

Research by GREVIO (2023) emphasises the importance of easily accessible zones where victims can receive immediate assistance, counseling, and information on available resources. For example, during the Paris Olympic Games, "safe zones" were established, offering on-the-spot support and acting as a model for other international sporting events (Le Monde, 2024). This approach should be adapted and implemented across national and local sports organisations to ensure uniformity in response mechanisms.



[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/08/05/paris-olympics-safe-zones-set-up-to-combat-sexual-and-gender-based-violence\\_6709125\\_7.html#](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/08/05/paris-olympics-safe-zones-set-up-to-combat-sexual-and-gender-based-violence_6709125_7.html#)

Feedback loops and regular evaluations are vital in maintaining the effectiveness of safe spaces. Gathering input from athletes, coaches, and stakeholders helps identify shortcomings and areas for improvement. Additionally, partnerships with local and international NGOs specialising in GBV can enhance the quality of services provided in these spaces (Georgiadou, 2024).

## Adapting to National Contexts

While the [Code of Conduct](#) should align with international standards, it must also reflect the unique cultural, legal, and societal dynamics of each country. For instance, integrating the principles of the Istanbul Convention and the EU Directive on GBV ensures that the Code is legally robust and contextually relevant. Collaboration with local advocacy groups, legal experts, and community leaders can further customise the Code to address specific challenges and sensitivities (European Parliament, 2024).

Efforts should also address systemic barriers that prevent the full implementation of GBV policies. For example, stigma surrounding reporting, lack of awareness about rights, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms can undermine the effectiveness of the Code. Targeted public awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives can help dismantle these barriers and encourage greater participation and trust in the system.

## Intersectionality and Inclusivity

An effective Code of Conduct must recognise the diverse experiences of GBV victims. Intersectionality ensures that the unique vulnerabilities of marginalised groups—such as individuals with disabilities, racial minorities, and LGBTIQ+ communities—are addressed. For example, policies should consider accessibility for individuals with disabilities and provide multilingual support for migrant athletes. As highlighted by Greens/EFA (2023), adopting an intersectional approach is critical in ensuring that no group is left behind in the fight against GBV.

Special provisions should also be made for young athletes. Youths are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in sports environments. Codes of Conduct must include child safeguarding policies, ensuring that young participants are protected from all forms of harm. These measures should be supported by mandatory background checks for staff and volunteers, as well as training programmes focused on child protection.

## Technology and Digital Platforms

In today's digital age, technology plays an integral role in addressing GBV. Online platforms can be utilised to provide resources, report mechanisms, and training materials. For instance, dedicated apps can offer confidential reporting channels, while e-learning modules can educate athletes and staff on identifying and preventing GBV. Digital platforms can host anonymous surveys to gather insights and feedback from the sports community, enabling organisations to refine their policies and practices (UN Women, 2024).

At the same time, sports organisations must address gender-based cyberviolence. Policies should include measures to combat online harassment, cyberstalking, and the non-consensual sharing of images. Collaborations with social media platforms and tech companies can help ensure the swift removal of harmful content and provide victims with resources (Spurek & Riba i Giner, 2023).

Developing a Code of Conduct for GBV cases is a multifaceted endeavor that requires collaboration, adaptability, and a commitment to inclusion. By integrating international standards, tailoring the Code to national contexts, and prioritising education and accountability, sports organisations can play a pivotal role in combating GBV. This initiative

ensures safer environments within sports but also reinforces broader societal efforts to promote equity, dignity, and respect. By actively addressing GBV, sports organisations can demonstrate leadership and set an example for other sectors, fostering a culture where safety and inclusivity are fundamental values.

## Safeguarding strategies – Ensuring a safe environment

Creating a safe and inclusive environment is fundamental to the success and integrity of any organisation or project. In contexts involving diverse participants and stakeholders, safeguarding becomes even more critical as it ensures that all individuals, regardless of their background, feel protected, respected, and valued (UNESCO, 2024). Safeguarding measures are not just administrative policies—they are a demonstration of an organisation’s commitment to fostering trust, equity, and inclusivity at every level (Save the Children, 2022).

A safe environment goes beyond the physical. It encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, recognising that harm can take many forms, from abuse to subtle acts of exclusion or discrimination. Safeguarding strategies address these risks by promoting proactive prevention measures, providing clear mechanisms for reporting concerns, and establishing systems of accountability to handle issues effectively and equitably.

Organisations with strong safeguarding frameworks signal to their stakeholders that they prioritise the dignity and rights of everyone involved. Those frameworks are especially important in projects that engage vulnerable populations, including children, marginalised groups, or individuals in challenging circumstances, as these participants often face heightened risks of harm or exploitation (Safeguarding Network, 2024).

### Practical Implementation Steps:

- Designate Safeguarding Roles

Assign specific responsibilities for safeguarding to key individuals, such as HR managers, board members, or designated safeguarding officers. This ensures clarity in accountability and ensures that safeguarding measures are consistently upheld.

- Establish Reporting Channels

Set up clear and accessible reporting mechanisms for individuals to raise concerns. Ensure that these channels are well-communicated and that all participants are aware of how to use them.

- Regular Monitoring and Evaluation

Create a system for monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding measures and conduct periodic evaluations. This allows for adjustments as needed to improve safety and inclusivity continuously.

Prevention is all about reducing risks by educating and taking proactive steps. It's about making sure people can speak up when they have concerns, knowing they'll be heard and their safety matters. It points out the importance of not just having policies in place, but actually enforcing them in a fair and honest way, making sure they work as intended for everyone.

By incorporating these principles into its everyday work, an organisation can create a culture where everyone feels confident and safe to participate, free from fear. This helps build an environment where respect, trust, and inclusivity are the foundation. When safeguarding becomes more than just a rule, but a core value, it not only strengthens the organisation's mission but also has a lasting impact on everything it does.

## Prevention Measures

Regular safeguarding training for staff and volunteers is essential to ensure they understand and can effectively implement safeguarding principles. These sessions should cover topics such as recognising and responding to signs of abuse or neglect, maintaining confidentiality, and practicing cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. Thorough risk assessment protocols should precede any activity to identify and address potential safety concerns, including reviewing venues, planned activities, and participant needs (Safeguarding Network, n.d.).

## Reporting Mechanisms

A clear reporting framework is essential for fostering a safe and accountable environment, ensuring that concerns are addressed promptly and effectively. Such a framework empowers individuals to come forward with their concerns without fear of retaliation or judgment. Anonymous reporting systems, such as secure online forms, suggestion boxes, or dedicated hotlines, provide accessible options for individuals to report incidents while maintaining their anonymity (UNESCO,2023).

Clear and well-communicated reporting channels must be established and supported by designated safeguarding officers trained to handle sensitive matters with professionalism and care. Contact information for these officers should be prominently displayed and easily accessible to all stakeholders.

Once a report is submitted, it is critical that investigations are carried out in a timely, fair, and confidential manner to uphold the privacy and dignity of all parties involved. These investigations must adhere to a transparent process, guided by principles of impartiality and integrity, to ensure trust in the system. The goal is to resolve issues equitably, with outcomes that prioritise the well-being of those affected while reinforcing accountability within the organisation (Safeguarding Network, 2024).

Regular evaluations of the reporting mechanisms should be conducted to identify areas for improvement, ensuring the system remains effective, accessible, and aligned with best practices in safeguarding and ethical governance.

## Accountability and Oversight

To ensure the long-term sustainability and credibility of safeguarding measures, accountability mechanisms must be established and actively maintained. These mechanisms should include regular and systematic reviews of safeguarding policies to adapt to evolving best practices, address emerging challenges and remain relevant in a changing environment.

Engaging external organisations or independent experts to conduct audits or evaluations can offer objective insights, helping to validate the effectiveness of current strategies and identify areas for improvement. These audits not only enhance transparency but also build trust among stakeholders by demonstrating a commitment to rigorous oversight and continuous enhancement.

Stakeholder empowerment is the foundation of effective accountability. Providing stakeholders with accessible resources, engaging workshops, and comprehensive informational materials helps to deepen their understanding of their rights, roles, and responsibilities within the safeguarding framework. This shared knowledge fosters a collective approach to maintaining safety and encourages proactive participation in upholding the principles of safeguarding policy.

Open channels for feedback and suggestions ensure that stakeholders' voices are heard and considered, contributing to a dynamic, inclusive, and responsive safeguarding culture. Through these combined efforts, organisations can reinforce a shared commitment to accountability, trust, and the protection of all individuals.

## Building a Culture of Safety and Inclusion

Creating a culture that prioritises safety and inclusion goes far beyond implementing policies and procedures—it requires an organisational ethos that values and promotes respect, equity, and well-being for all. Open communication must be actively encouraged, ensuring that all participants feel heard, valued, and respected. Platforms for regular feedback, such as surveys, focus groups, or open forums, provide opportunities for organisations to identify and address potential gaps in their safeguarding measures, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Embracing diversity is the foundation of building inclusivity. This can be achieved by using inclusive language, adopting equitable practices, and ensuring diverse representation in leadership and decision-making processes. These efforts send a strong message that equity and respect are not just ideals but tangible priorities embedded in every level of the organisation. This approach helps to create an environment where individuals from all backgrounds feel valued, secure, and empowered to contribute their fullest potential (Save the Children, 2022).

Safeguarding strategies are not merely a set of formal guidelines; they are a reflection of an organisation's unwavering commitment to protecting the rights, dignity, and well-being of every individual it serves or interacts with. These strategies embody the organisation's dedication to fostering an environment where people can fully participate without fear of

harm, exclusion or discrimination. By embedding safety and inclusion into the organisational culture, these values become the foundation for sustainable growth, trust, and collective success (UNESCO, 2023).

By prioritising prevention, organisations proactively address potential risks, reducing the likelihood of harm and setting a standard for respectful and inclusive behaviour. Prevention measures, such as comprehensive codes of conduct, regular safeguarding training, and thorough risk assessments, establish a strong foundation that supports safety and inclusion as core organisational values.

Transparent reporting mechanisms play a critical role in empowering individuals to voice concerns, knowing their reports will be taken seriously and addressed with confidentiality, fairness, and efficiency. Establishing accessible and anonymous channels for reporting not only encourages accountability but also demonstrates a genuine commitment to the welfare of all stakeholders.

Accountability and oversight help ensure that safeguarding measures are constantly assessed, adjusted, and enhanced to stay effective. By regularly reviewing policies, conducting external audits, and collaborating with expert organisations, safeguarding practices evolve to address new needs and challenges. Educating and providing resources for stakeholders strengthens a shared understanding of responsibilities and encourages a collective commitment to maintaining a safe and respectful environment.

Safeguarding is not just about policies and procedures; it is about cultivating a culture of trust, respect, and inclusivity. Such a culture amplifies the impact of safeguarding measures, creating not only safer spaces but also stronger communities and organisations. By integrating these comprehensive safeguarding strategies, organisations establish themselves as leaders in promoting safety, equity, and dignity. These efforts lay the groundwork for long-term sustainability and success, ensuring that their initiatives are not only impactful but also uphold the highest ethical standards. Safeguarding, when practiced with integrity and dedication, becomes a transformative force, empowering individuals and strengthening the foundation of the organisation's mission internationally (UNESCO, 2023).

## Moral leadership – Treat and be treated with respect

Promoting a respectful and safe environment within sports organisations is crucial to cultivate personal growth, inclusiveness and excellence. Below are some strategies that emphasise moral leadership, focusing on treating all individuals with dignity and ensuring that they can do the same.



Illustration: [Women for Women Together Against Domestic Violence](#) by Eszter Czajkowski-Nyári. Creative Commons BY-NC-ND

### Promoting respect through inclusion and empowerment

Sports organisations have a unique platform to challenge social norms and create an inclusive environment. An effective approach is to actively promote the participation of underrepresented groups in all aspects of the sporting world, not only as athletes, but also as coaches, mentors, role models and leaders in advertising and media. In this way, organisations contribute to enhancing self-confidence, well-being and leadership potential by dismantling stereotypes and addressing traditional power imbalances.

Achieving gender equality within sports organisations requires dedicated efforts. Strategies such as recruiting, retaining and promoting people from diverse backgrounds into leadership positions ensure that their voices are an integral part of decision-making processes. Furthermore, inclusive representation fosters a culture of equity, where different perspectives are recognised and valued.

### Prevention of GBV and harassment

Moral leadership requires a firm stance against GBV and harassment in the sporting environment. Preventive measures must be prioritised and supported by clear policies and mechanisms for reporting and redressing (UNESCO, 2023). This includes:

- Enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any form of GBV and harassment.
- Establishing accessible, confidential and victim-centred complaint procedures.
- Ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and that survivors receive the necessary support, including safety measures, medical care and psychosocial counselling.

Independent investigations and proportionate disciplinary procedures within the organisation are essential. These should complement, not replace, recourse to external authorities when provided for by national legal frameworks.

A broader cultural change within the sports sector is also needed. It is essential to shift from a win-at-all-costs mentality to one that focuses on the overall well-being of all individuals. As Daniel Rhind and Frank Owusu-Sekyere argue (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2017), creating a systematic culture of protection requires going beyond individual perpetrators and victims to address the structural factors that make abuse possible.

### Leadership commitment and responsibility

Leadership at the highest level of a sports organisation must set the standard for moral and ethical conduct. Top leaders play a key role in ensuring that (UNESCO, 2023):

- Policies and codes of conduct are effectively implemented.
- Prevention strategies are a priority.
- Victims are supported through empathetic and non-judgmental responses.
- Offenders are held accountable through transparent and fair processes.

Committed leadership not only promotes a safe environment, but also signals to all members of the sporting community that respect and safety are non-negotiable values.

### Components of protection policies

Protection policies differ between sports, localities and target groups. While some focus specifically on safeguarding children, others extend to all groups at risk of violence (UNESCO, 2023). Key components include:

- Codes of conduct for coaches, staff and other adults.
- Clear reporting structures and processes.
- Strict guidelines for taking on roles involving vulnerable people.
- Rules for changing rooms, showers and other shared spaces.
- Strategies to minimise private and unobserved contact between adults and vulnerable people.
- Guidelines on social media, online violence and the use of images or recordings.
- Safe practices for transport and overnight travel.

These policies have a common goal: to reduce risks to athletes and promote a culture of protection. Safeguarding strategies for competitions, including appointing certified safeguarding officers and ensuring that policies are in line with international standards, are essential for systematic implementation.

### Awareness-raising and education

Educational programming is a key element in preventing misconduct and promoting respect. By sensitising athletes, staff and other stakeholders on the importance of equality, non-discrimination and human rights, organisations instil the principles that underpin a safe and respectful sports culture (UN Women, 2024). Training sessions should cover:

- Recognising and addressing harassment, abuse and violence.
- Familiarising themselves with organisational policies, complaint mechanisms and available support services.
- Building necessary soft skills such as empathy, conflict resolution and cultural sensitivity to nurture interpersonal respect at all levels of the community.

Educational programmes must go beyond policies and procedures. School sports and formal educational settings are instrumental in shaping behaviour early on, reinforcing values of respect and equality, which are transmitted to broader social norms.

### Engaging the wider community

The influence of sport extends far beyond the boundaries of the organisation itself. Exploiting the popularity of athletes and sporting events provides a powerful platform to challenge harmful social norms and promote respect (UN Women, 2024). This includes:

- Raising awareness of the unacceptability of GBV.
- Collaborating with community-based initiatives to address and dismantle stereotypes, discrimination and harmful norms.
- Involving athletes and other prominent figures as role models in prevention strategies.

Collaboration with local and global networks can amplify these efforts, demonstrating the shared responsibility of the sport community in driving societal change. The European Commission's recommendations (European Commission, 2024) on combating GBV in sport highlight further measures, including mandatory training for all persons working with vulnerable populations, education of witnesses and athletes on signs of abuse, and the adoption of zero-tolerance policies for any form of GBV, including online harassment. These initiatives ensure global awareness and action at all levels of sport.

Moral leadership in sport is about setting an example and ensuring that respect is given and received. By implementing these comprehensive strategies, sports organisations not only create a safe and empowering environment, but also play a key role in shaping a more equitable and respectful society.

## Capacity Building - An experts' team within the team

Capacity building is a pivotal element for fostering inclusive, responsive, and sustainable strategies to combat GBV in sports. This process focuses on equipping team members with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to identify, prevent, and address GBV effectively. The aim is to establish an "experts' team within the team," creating a culture of competence, accountability, and leadership in addressing these challenges.

A whole-of-sport approach recognises that preventing GBV is a shared responsibility. This capacity building initiative equips individuals within the "experts' team" to work collaboratively across the organisation, fostering a culture where everyone plays a role in challenging harmful behaviours and promoting respect (Liston et al., 2017).

### Establishing an Experts' Team within the Team

The creation of an internal experts' team involves identifying and training key individuals within sports organisations. This team would function as the first line of support and advocacy, ensuring that policies and practices are implemented effectively. The process could entail the following steps:

- **Step 1: Identify the Team Members** - Select representatives from various roles, including coaches, administrators, and athletes, ensuring diversity and inclusivity of all genders. Criteria for selection should include interest, influence within the organisation, and commitment to fostering safe environments.
- **Step 2: Apply a relevant Training Framework** – It is important to ensure that all team members are trained well. This could be accomplished by implementing structured training modules, focusing on understanding GBV, reporting mechanisms, safeguarding policies and bystander intervention strategies. A good practice could be the supplement of e-learning courses with some in-person workshops for enhanced interactivity, role-playing exercises, simulations and case study analyses.

For example, three e-learning platforms, namely, [Faros](#), [CGBV Basket](#) and [Tackle](#) can be used to offer flexible, interactive, and comprehensive training.

- [Faros](#) - It provides well-structured training modules covering a broad spectrum of topics, including LGBTQI+ Terms, Legal Frameworks, Barriers and discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ people, Consequences of hate crimes for individuals and the society and Contribution to the creation of an inclusive society and workplace.
- [CGBV Basket](#) - It is designed specifically for combating GBV within basketball, although its principles and training modules are applicable across various sports disciplines. Key features of the platform include interactive learning by using engaging content such as quizzes and videos.
- [Tackle](#) - It focuses on preventing violence and discrimination in football, with an adaptable approach that extends to other sports. This platform emphasises among others the comprehensive education of athletes, coaches and sport professionals including modules addressing GBV prevention, cultural inclusivity, and leadership development.

- **Step 3: Transfer the Knowledge and Mentor others** - Encourage the trained team members to act as mentors and trainers for others, ensuring knowledge dissemination across the organisation. Pay also attention to the establishment of peer-to-peer learning sessions and regular feedback mechanisms to maintain engagement and adaptability.
- **Step 4: Sustainability and Growth** - To ensure the longevity and continuous impact of the experts' team within the organisation, sustainability and growth must be integral to the capacity-building process. This step focuses on embedding the team's expertise into the organisation's strategic framework and promoting their professional development to adapt to evolving challenges. Key actions include:
  - **Ongoing Professional Development:** Provide regular training sessions, workshops, and e-learning opportunities to ensure the experts' team stays updated on the latest research, best practices, and policy changes related to GBV prevention.
  - **Integration into Strategic Planning:** Involve them in the development and implementation of policies, safeguarding strategies, and advocacy initiatives to ensure a proactive and inclusive approach to addressing GBV.

Two promising practice examples are the [International Olympic Committee \(IOC\)](#) and the organisation [Women Win](#). The IOC established within the organisation a “Commission on Women and Sport” to tackle discrimination and violence as well as to enhance women’s participation and involvement in sport. Similarly, the Women Win - global women’s fund dedicated to advancing girls’ and women’s rights through sports - spent two years collaborating with experts, coaches, programme leaders, and girls globally to learn how sport can be used to combat GBV. The result is a guide designed for anyone, from individuals to grassroots organisations, wanting to create or enhance girls' sports programmes.<sup>2</sup>



<https://www.olympics.com/ioc/gender-equality>

## GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH TIME

Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls.

Great progress has been made in terms of balancing the total number of athletes participating at the Games

[Learn more >](#)

2

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/Essentials-for-addressing-VAW-in-sports-en.pdf>

## Curricula for Personal Training

Building the capacity of sports professionals to address GBV requires a solid and well-structured curriculum that equips participants with essential knowledge and practical skills. Personal training curricula must address both the foundational understanding of GBV and specialised strategies to tackle it effectively within sports settings. By incorporating diverse modules, the curriculum can develop comprehensive learning, empowering individuals to become proactive in creating an environment where everyone feels safe, included, and has equal access to resources.

The curriculum could be divided into Core Learning Modules and Specialised Modules to ensure a holistic approach to training. The core modules could focus on understanding the broader dynamics of GBV, while the specialised modules could provide actionable tools and strategies for addressing specific challenges. This blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application ensures that participants are well-prepared to recognise, to respond to and to prevent GBV in sports communities.

### Core Learning Modules

- **Understanding GBV in Sports:** Definitions, prevalence and impact, with a focus on vulnerable populations such as women, LGBTQ+ individuals and minority groups.
- **Intersectionality in Sports:** Exploring how overlapping social identities impact individuals' experiences with GBV.
- **Policies and Legal Frameworks:** Training on international and national policies, reporting mechanisms and compliance standards.

### Specialised Modules

- **Bystander Intervention:** Techniques for safe and effective intervention when witnessing GBV.
- **Communication Skills:** Strategies for sensitive conversations with survivors and promoting awareness.
- **Leadership in Prevention:** Empowering team members to become advocates and change agents within their communities.

In developing these modules, valuable insights and resources can be drawn from existing courses and programmes. For example, online learning platforms like [Coursera](#) offer a range of courses related to gender equality, human rights, and violence prevention, which can provide a strong foundation for the core learning component. In addition, several EU-funded initiatives like the [Tackle](#) project, focused on combating GBV in sport, offer practical examples and best practices that can inform the development of specialised modules tailored to the unique context of sports.

Furthermore, resources like UNESCO's [Sport and gender equality game plan: guidelines for gender-transformative sport policies and programmes](#) offer valuable guidance and frameworks that can inform the development of both core and specialised modules. This "game plan" provides a practical, step-by-step approach to implementing gender-

transformative policies and programmes within sports organisations, including guidance on needs assessments, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and evaluation.



<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390527>

## Benefits of Capacity Building

1. **Enhanced Responsiveness:** An informed team ensures timely and effective responses to incidents of GBV, building trust within the organisation (See for example, [US Centre for SafeSport framework](#)).
2. **Sustainable Change:** Embedding knowledge and expertise within the team ensures continuity and growth, irrespective of staff turnover.
3. **Cultural Shift:** Promotes a proactive approach to tackling GBV, creating a safer and more inclusive sports environment. Training that is proactive, will help to create a culture that does not tolerate GBV.

The establishment of an experts' team within the team represents a transformative step in addressing GBV in sports. Through targeted capacity building and the use of advanced training curricula, sport organisations can create environments of respect, equality and safety. By committing to continuous learning and empowerment, this initiative ensures that the fight against GBV is not only effective but also sustainable in the long term.

## Visibility & Awareness Raising – Putting GBV on the spotlight

The Sport GVP project serves as an inspiring example of how a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach can address a critical and sensitive issue like GBV in sports (United Nations Women, 2023). By framing sports as a platform for promoting equality, safety, and inclusion, the project redefines the role of sports organisations beyond athletic performance. It highlights the significant responsibility of coaches, trainers, and sports leaders as educators and role models in fostering safe environments, a concept that others can replicate to create broader social change (Brackenridge, 2008).

The project seeks to prevent and tackle GBV in and through sports, making it essential to amplify its visibility and awareness among its target groups, stakeholders, and the general public. Achieving this requires innovative, comprehensive strategies that maximise outreach and impact. The Sport GVP project can inspire others by exemplifying how a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to addressing a sensitive and critical issue like GBV in sports can lead to impactful outcomes (Kerr & Stirling, 2019).

**A critical component of this endeavour is enhancing visibility and raising awareness** among the general public. Employing a multifaceted approach that includes digital media, on-site campaigns, and community engagement can significantly amplify the project's impact (UNESCO, 2023b).

As leaders committed to fostering safe, inclusive, and equitable sports environments, your role in addressing GBV is crucial. The Sport GVP project offers a strategic framework to enhance visibility and raise awareness about GBV in sports. Below is a practical proposal for how your organisation can take action, create impact, and inspire change within your community and beyond.

### Utilising Digital Media

Social media platforms are powerful and indispensable tools for awareness campaigns in the contemporary digital landscape. You can use these platforms to disseminate information, share personal narratives, and engage a broad audience. **Developing a cohesive social media strategy with regular posts, infographics, and video content can effectively communicate the objectives and findings** of the initiatives. Utilising hashtags such as #SportGVP or #PreventingViolenceInAndThroughSport can **unify the campaign** and **facilitate broader reach, as well as provide means to track online perceptions of different topics** (Moreno-Ortiz, 2024). Here is a list of actions that you can take to amplify the visibility of your initiative in preventing GBV in sports:

- Collaborating with influencers and athletes who advocate for safe sports environments can further amplify the message.
- Sharing impactful visuals, infographics, and videos featuring your athletes and staff speaking against GBV.
- Creating an interactive and user-friendly website (or dedicating a section of your organisation's website) is a central hub for resources, updates, and educational materials. A blog section featuring articles, interviews, and success stories can keep

the audience engaged and informed. Implementing a subscription-based newsletter can provide regular updates and maintain engagement with stakeholders. Resources such as reporting mechanisms, helplines, and educational material for athletes and parents are more important than one would think.

## On-Site Campaigns and Community Engagement

While digital media extends reach, on-site campaigns facilitate direct interaction with the community. Organising workshops, seminars, and training sessions at local sports clubs, schools, and community centres can educate individuals about GBV in sports and promote preventive measures (Mountjoy et al, 2016). These events can be tailored to address specific community needs and cultural contexts, ensuring relevance and effectiveness.

Hosting sports events promoting safe and inclusive environments can also raise awareness.

- **Host Awareness Events:** a "Safe Sport Day" or a week-long campaign with various activities, including matches, exhibitions, and panel discussions, can draw public attention and foster community involvement.
- **Collaborating with local authorities,** sports federations, and non-governmental organisations can enhance the credibility and reach of these events.
- **Workshops and Training:** Offer targeted training for athletes, coaches, and staff to understand GBV, recognise warning signs, and respond appropriately. Partner up with local experts to facilitate these sessions.

## Educational Programmes and Training

Developing comprehensive educational programmes targeting coaches, athletes, and sports administrators is vital and is key to long-term cultural change. These programmes should cover topics such as recognising signs of GBV, understanding reporting mechanisms and fostering a culture of respect and equality within sports settings. **Train your team on the dynamics of GBV, focusing on prevention and creating a respectful environment** (Mountjoy et al, 2016). Utilising e-learning platforms can make these programmes accessible to a wider audience, accommodating different learning paces and schedules.

Incorporating gamified elements into the training modules can increase engagement and information retention. Scenarios and role-playing exercises can provide practical insights into handling real-life situations involving GBV. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms can help evaluate the effectiveness of the training and identify areas for improvement.

Last, but not least, the most important elements: include **GBV awareness sessions for young athletes and their families, emphasising respect, consent, and inclusivity.**

## Policy Advocacy and Institutional Partnerships

Engaging in policy advocacy is crucial for sustainable change. The Sport GVP project can help you work towards influencing policy at both organisational and governmental levels to implement stringent measures against GBV in sports. Collaborating with sports federations is key to developing and enforcing codes of conduct, reporting protocols, and support systems for victims is essential. On the local level, the following are of utmost importance:

- **Ensure your organisation has clear policies against GBV, outlining reporting and accountability measures.**
- **Promote diversity within your leadership and coaching teams to reflect your commitment to equality.**

Furthermore, **building partnerships with educational institutions** can facilitate the integration of GBV awareness into academic curricula, promoting early education on the subject. **Engaging with media outlets** to ensure responsible reporting on GBV cases in sports can also shape public perception and encourage informed discussions.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks is necessary to assess the impact of visibility and awareness campaigns. Collecting data on engagement levels, participant feedback, and incidence rates of GBV in sports can provide insights into the effectiveness of the strategies employed. Regularly publishing reports and case studies can maintain transparency and accountability, fostering stakeholder trust (Women In Sport UK: <https://womeninsport.org/why-we-exist/our-impact/>).

In conclusion, enhancing the visibility and raising awareness about GBV in sports requires a strategic and multifaceted approach. By effectively utilising digital media, conducting on-site campaigns, implementing educational programmes, engaging in policy advocacy, and establishing monitoring mechanisms, your organisation can create a significant and lasting impact in fostering safe and inclusive sports environments.

By implementing these strategies, your organisation can take charge of addressing GBV in sports. This initiative enhances the safety and well-being of members and strengthens your organisation's reputation as a progressive and socially responsible organisation. Together, we can create a sports culture where everyone feels respected, valued, and safe.

Let's take this step forward together. We support your efforts with resources, expertise, and collaboration opportunities.

## Case studies – Best practices

### Best Practice 1: Comprehensive Toolkits and Handbooks

International Olympic Committee (IOC):

The IOC introduced a [Safeguarding Athletes from Harassment and Abuse Toolkit](#) which provides guidelines on developing policies and procedures, training stakeholders, and establishing reporting mechanisms.

UN Women, UNESCO, and the Spotlight Initiative have developed the [Tackling violence against women and girls in sport: A handbook for policy makers and sports practitioners](#) to facilitate informed and constructive conversations about how we can work together to address Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in sport. This Handbook aims to create a shared understanding of the problem, offer practical tools for addressing VAWG in sport, and propose areas for effective collaboration. It is aimed at sports practitioners and policy makers wishing to address VAWG in sport.

### Best Practice 2: Respect in Sport (Canada)

#### Respect in Sport Programme (Canada)

[Respect in Sport](#) is a programme designed to train organisations' leaders to recognise, understand and respond to issues of bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination (BAHD). Respect in Sport for Activity Leaders offers a highly engaging and easy to use internet-based training course for sport leaders of all levels (recreational, competitive and elite).

### Best Practice 3: Small Legal Guide (France)

The Small Legal Guide For a Better Understanding of The Legal Consequences of Incivilities, Violence and Discrimination in Sport is a tool that is designed to shed light on 18 issues of prevention of violence and discrimination in sport, in an educational and interactive way. It has two main objectives:

- To allow everyone to have a basic level of legal information to better understand the consequences of a wrongdoing.
- To better protect the victims of such deviant behaviour.

Every case (including the one about sexist behaviour – factsheet 11) is completed with questions and answers and real-life examples in order to allow people involved in sport (including managers and educators) to have a deeper understanding of the different problems and to better prevent them.

The Small Legal Guide answers the expectations of people involved in sport who wished to have accessible legal information. It completes an existing set of legal information, created in 2004 by the Ministry of Sports, containing the Legal Guide on the prevention of and fight against incivilities, violence and discrimination in sport (available to legal professionals in the field of sport).

### Best Practice 4: Her Game Too (UK)

Founded in May 2021, [\*Her Game Too\*](#) is a passionate movement dedicated to tackling sexism and promoting gender equality within the world of sport. Recognising the pervasive challenges faced by women and girls in sport, *Her Game Too* strives to create an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of gender, can enjoy and participate in sports without fear of discrimination or harassment.

Their mission is to raise awareness of the issues women face in sport, to celebrate female fans, players, and professionals, and to work alongside clubs, organisations, and governing bodies to foster a supportive and equitable atmosphere. Through powerful campaigns, community engagement, and educational initiatives, *Her Game Too* aims to inspire change and ensure football remains a game for all.

### Best Practice 5: Leads like a Woman (Finland)

[\*Leads like a Woman\*](#) - Sport Leadership Education for Women was part of the Finnish NOC's awareness raising activities and work to support its member organisations to make sport more equal. 20 volunteer leaders from local, regional and national level were chosen for this one-year programme. This programme consisted of five two-day sessions, tasks between sessions and mentoring. The education offered practical tools and techniques for personal goal setting, development and branding. The main themes were the sport movement and the structure of sport in Finland, self-management, leading others, strategic leading and goal setting, effective communication, conflict management and networking skills.

The concept was shared as a good practice for sport federations and developed further as the Finnish NOC continues organising leadership education programmes for women. The first programme received positive feedback and several participants have reached new positions in their sports. The results support the view that programs for women can have positive effect on gender equality in sport.

### Additional best practices

Thanks to creative ideas all throughout Europe, gender equality in sports has made great progress. The Council of Europe's "ALL IN" project highlights 25 best practices that are driving change in areas such as coaching, leadership, participation, and media representation. One encouraging example of best practice comes from Estonia, where the **Women's Coaches Development Programme** is providing female football coaches with the tools and instructions needed to succeed. This programme not only raises the proportion of women serving as coaches but also improves their visibility and confidence in the game. Likewise, the Leadership Talent Camps and Mentoring Programmes run by the German Olympic Sports Confederation equip women with the tools, knowledge, and contacts required to occupy leadership roles in sports leagues in Germany. From grassroots to elite competition, Ireland's Women in Sport Programme aims to encourage female involvement at all levels. The initiative is building a more open athletic scene by removing obstacles and providing financing chances. In Spain's Basque Country, meanwhile, initiatives are under way to guarantee fair media representation of women in sports. Policies for non-sexist language and fair media coverage assist to change public opinion and honour female athletes equally. Another strong example comes from

France, where the **Sport Féminin Toujours** campaign advances media equal coverage for female athletes. The project is helping to normalise gender balance in sports journalism and public debate by pushing broadcasters to devote more attention to women's sports. **The Hands On project** is also helping clubs and federations in Sweden to establish gender-equal leadership structures, therefore fostering sports governance's inclusiveness. This project guarantees that sports' decision-making procedures are varied and reflect society as a whole by means of seminars and best practices recommendations.

In the following link, you will find a list of best practices, including the aforementioned:

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/gender-equality-in-sport/online-library-25-best-practices>

## Conclusion

Addressing GBV in sports requires a well designed approach based on legal frameworks, prevention strategies, capacity building and community engagement. This guide has highlighted the importance of developing inclusive policies that create a respectful environment and implement effective prevention mechanisms within the sports sector.

In order to stand against GBV, it is crucial to ensure that all stakeholders -athletes and coaches to administrators and policy makers- stick to principles of respect and equality. The implementation of confidential reporting mechanisms and strong accountability structures strengthens these efforts, guaranteeing that incidents are addressed effectively and survivors receive the proper support.

Education and awareness are also vital in preventing GBV. Training programmes specifically made for sports professionals, including intervention strategies and the promotion of digital literacy equip individuals with the knowledge and necessary tools to identify and address GBV properly. By integrating these training initiatives into sport organisations, a proactive step is taken forward, building inclusive and safe sporting environments.

Community involvement and advocacy efforts are also important. When local organisations, social media and campaigns come together, they challenge outdated norms that boost GBV and show the way towards transformation. These efforts stand against GBV through collaboration and shared responsibility.

As for the best practices, those that have been implemented across different countries prove that change is possible. Whether through leadership programmes, legal resources for sports professionals or legal campaigns that reach a broader audience, these kinds of initiatives show that well-planned interventions can lead to concrete results.

Of course, the responsibility to fight GBV in sports lies within all of us. By having sports organisations committing to strong policies, ongoing education and accountability, they set an example for actual change. Sports should be a space where people feel safe, respected and empowered to become their best selves. By working together with determination, we can build a GBV free society.

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