Explanatory Notes

to

Pro Safe Sport for Young Athletes

1. Introduction

Sport is the most popular activity of young people in each of the EU Member States according to a Eurobarometer survey. Furthermore, *sport clubs are the most frequently mentioned type of organisation across all age groups where young people are active in*.[1]

Given this popularity of sport among young people, sport organisations, public authorities, coaches, parents and other stakeholders have an undeniable responsibility to provide a most safe and healthy sport environment for young athletes. This is the reason why many sports organisations have developed codes and policies and already ensure that the majority of young people involved in their sport only participate in age appropriate levels of training and competition with relevant safeguards in place. This is also the reason why public authorities have already developed and continuously update the normative framework on the protection and promotion of the physical and psychological well-being of young athletes.

Despite these positive developments, there remain specific concerns around the treatment of emerging athletes with regards to unhealthy coach-athlete-relationship or the sport culture e.g. no pain, no gain; winning at all costs; culture of risk, which compromise the well-being of young athletes. The IOC's position demands as well that *more needs to be done in the areas of child protection, (…) athlete development and codes of conduct for sports organisations*. A strong partnership between the sports movement and governments shall be forged to increase investment in sport so that everyone can benefit from greater access to safe and inclusive sport (…).[2]

This is exactly where the PSS project starts. Within this initiative, representatives of public authorities responsible for sport and relevant private stakeholders such as sport organisations came together to produce a toolkit aiming at the promotion of safe and healthy sport environments by providing guidance and practical tools and tips. Via the self-evaluation tool and the practice examples, Pro Safe Sport provides benchmarks or a set of principles against which performance can be measured. The implementation of Pro Safe Sport principles is an active and ongoing process.

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[1] European Commission (ed.), Flash Eurobarometer 375. European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life, May 2013, p. 7 and 9.

[2] IOC press release, UN Human Rights Council acknowledges contribution of sport to human rights promotion, 08/10/2014: http://www.olympic.org/news/un-human-rights-council-acknowledges-contribution-of-sport-to-human-rights-promotion/239091 (retrieved on 13/01/2015).

2. **Origins and background of PSS**

Being in good health is one of the main concerns of European citizens. Health protection is therefore an important objective of public authorities which impacts also sport. Furthermore, to guarantee safe and healthy sport environments can also be a matter of respect of human rights.

Besides the legal obligations to protect children, there is also the moral and societal obligation for those responsible to take proper and good care of children. More information on the normative framework aiming at the promotion of safe and healthy sport environments can be found in the PSS master presentation of the PSS toolkit.

In the framework of the project the following relevant areas of safe and healthy sport environments have been discussed:

- Physical well-being
- Psychological well-being
- Social well-being
- Sexual abuse and harassment
- Bullying
- Athlete-coach-relationship
- Burn out
- Dual careers
- Match fixing
- Lifestyle
- Fairplay

3. **Why has PSS become relevant to sport?**

Since the 1990s, there have been scandals and high profile cases in sport all over Europe where young athletes were abused counteracting the values of sport such as fairplay, respect and tolerance. The increased media attention put sport in the spotlight, and it became subject to greater public interest and scrutiny. These incidents seriously damaged the public image and reputation of sport stakeholders. Systematic measures were called for instead of individual punishment of perpetrators to prevent those deplorable incidents from occurring.

Safeguarding policies should be understood as a measure to boost public trust and can be also seen as part of a management strategy to secure long-term and sustainable success for sport organisations. Only sport organisations free of scandals – providing a safe and healthy environment – can attract public interest in the form of good will, members, sponsors and public support.

4. **What is a healthy and safe sport environment? – core elements**

A healthy and safe sport environment consists of multifaceted features. For the purpose of this project, the concept of a safe and healthy sport environment has been divided up into the following elements:

- Governance and policies
- Physical well-being
- Psychological well-being
- Social well-being
- Fairplay

The expert of PSS also discussed important elements a sport club should have to be able to guarantee a safe and healthy sport environment:

- Constitution (The general constitution of the club refers to safeguarding/ protection of young athletes)
- Policy statement
- Codes of conduct (coaches/ volunteers/ parents/ athletes)
- Safe recruitment policy
- Bullying & disciplinary procedures
- Attendance records
- Accident/ incident report procedure
- Qualified coaches
- General supervision guidelines
- A children's officer (male & female is preferable)

The lists mentioned above should not be seen as being complete, as the implementation of Pro Safe Sport principles is an active and ongoing process.

Good governance demands policies which safeguard and protect young athletes. Furthermore, it needs a commitment of senior management to implement a pro safe sport strategy. Ideally, a pro safe sport policy/ strategy including well defined standards and procedures is drafted before a problem occurs. A pro safe sport strategy will make sport safer, healthier and more popular for all.

5. Conclusions

There is a legal, moral and societal obligation to safeguard and protect young athletes. Although there is some common ground regarding policies or procedures, pro safe sport strategies have to be specifically designed to fit the individual need of the respective organisation. When developing a pro safe sport strategy, it is important to be fully aware of the concept and fully understand one's own organisation. Then, step by step, it is possible to develop and implement useful measures of a pro safe sport strategy.

Besides the obvious to safeguard young athletes, the implementation of a pro safe sport strategy offers multiple benefits which enables the organisation to position itself clearly, receive acclaim for its efforts and remain proactive.

6. Sources

General resources on healthy and safe sport environments

• Pro Safe Sport Project

http://pjp-eu.coe.int/web/pss/pss-academy

• Empowering Coaching

http://www.empoweringcoaching.co.uk/

• International Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport

http://assets.sportanddev.org/downloads/international_sports_safeguarding_children_standards_draft.pdf

• Promoting Adolescent Physical Activity

http://www.projectpapa.org/

Specific resources on sexual harassment and abuse (SHA)

• NIF (Norwegian NOC/IPC):

  • Guidelines (english)

www.idrett.no/english/Sider/Sexualharassment.aspx

  • Films (english subtitles)

www.idrett.no/english/Sider/The-role-of-the-coach.aspx

  • Presentation (english, 25min)

www.idrett.no/english/Sider/WithSportsagainsthomopbia.aspx

• IOC

  • Consensus Statement: Sexual harassment and abuse in sport (adopted by the Executive Board, February 8th 2007)

http://www.olympic.org/content/news/media-resources/manual-news/1999-2009/2007/02/08/ioc-adopts-consensus-statement-on-sexual-harassment-and-abuse-in-sport/

  • Educational tools:

http://sha.olympic.org

http://www.olympic.org/sha

Specific resources on lifestyle

- Dual career

http://www.olympic.org/ioc-athlete-career-programme

- Crime in sport/ match-fixing

http://www.sportaccord.com/en/what-we-do/integrity-package/