



**EUROPEAN SPORT
SAFEGUARDING EDUCATION
AND PROMOTION ACTION**

**RESEARCH REPORT
ON SAFEGUARDING
POLICIES**



Research and Content Development

This document is developed within **European Sport Safeguarding Education and Promotion Action (ESSEPA)** project, co-funded by the European Union (ERASMUS SPORT 2025). The ESSEPA project is implemented by a consortium of 10 partner organisations from 9 European countries, combining expertise in sport governance, safeguarding, fair play, research, technology, and event organization.

Project consortium

EUSA Institute, Slovenia

Dspot, Slovenia

University of Zagreb, Croatia

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

University of Hamburg, Germany

European Fair Play Movement, Belgium

Albanian University Sports Federation, Albania

Portugal University Sport Federation, Portugal

University Sports Federation of Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein

University Sports Centre of Salerno, Italy

The main aim of ESSEPA project is to strengthen safeguarding in university sport by developing an innovative online education and certification platform that would equip student-athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers with knowledge and tools to prevent misconduct, promote ethical values, and foster a safe sporting environment. As an initial step, existing legal frameworks, safeguarding policies and practices across partner countries were mapped in order to better understand national contexts, identify key gaps and variations, and provide an evidence-based foundation for the development of policy-related and educational deliverables of the ESSEPA project.

The findings from desk research are organized around two main areas of analysis related to safeguarding across the partner countries:

1. Safeguarding in sport at national level
2. Safeguarding in university sport

The aim of the desk research is not to rank countries, but to examine how safeguarding is situated within each national context. Country-specific sections were shared with project partners for review and factual verification during the report preparation process. Information for Albania and Belgium was retained only on the basis of desk research, partner-submitted materials where available, and publicly accessible sources reviewed by the research team.

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1. SAFEGUARDING IN SPORT AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Safeguarding-related legal, policy, and governance documents

The findings presented are based on materials identified by project partners as relevant to safeguarding in sport in their respective countries, including laws, national strategies, ethical frameworks, policies, protocols, regulations, and other official documents. As the desk research relied mainly on publicly available sources, it focused on identifying the most relevant, rather than an exhaustive, body of safeguarding-related documents.

COUNTRY MAPPING

Albania

In Albania, three documents were identified as especially relevant to safeguarding in sport. The broader child-protection framework is provided by the Law No. 18/2017 *On the Rights and Protection of the Child* which establishes the national system for the protection of children from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The law sets out the institutional child-protection system, including Child Protection Workers at municipal level, and introduces mandatory reporting obligations for professionals working with children. The law provides the general legal basis for safeguarding minors participating in sport by placing responsibility on institutions to ensure safe environments for children.

Law No. 79/2017 *On Sport*, as amended by Law. No. 105/2020, establishes the general legal framework for the organisation, governance and functioning of sport in Albania, including the responsibilities of sport federations, clubs, and other sport organisations. Although the law does not contain a dedicated safeguarding framework, it is relevant to safeguarding in sport because it places sport organisations within a legal framework guided by principles such as fair play, sports ethics, and safety. In this way, it contributes to the broader governance context within which more specific safeguarding measures could be developed and implemented.

Law No. 75/2019 *On Youth* defines national policies for youth development, participation, and well-being. While not sport-specific, this law is relevant to safeguarding in sport because it promotes equality, non-discrimination, youth participation, and safe spaces for young people, and explicitly names sport as one of

the fields in which these principles should be supported. Thus, it also helps shape the broader youth policy framework relevant for protecting the well-being, dignity, and safety of young people participating in organized activities.

Belgium

For Belgium, desk research identified five documents relevant to safeguarding in sport. The available material shows that safeguarding is not organized through one single national sport-specific safeguarding law, but mainly through the sport systems of the Communities. In the Flemish Community, the *Decree of 15 March 2024 on stimulating safe sport climate* provides the clearest safeguarding oriented framework. It is built around the duty of sport organizations to provide a safe sport environment and links safeguarding to physical, psychological and social integrity, prevention, awareness raising activities, and organisational responsibility with particular attention to minors. This framework builds on the earlier *Decree of 10 June 2016 on the recognition and public funding of the organised sport sector*, which introduced integrity-related expectations for sport federations, including an integrity policy and integrity contact points, while more detailed elements such as handling protocols, codes of conduct, and reporting duties are developed within the broader Flemish sport-integrity framework.

In the French Community, safeguarding is addressed mainly through sport ethics and child-protection policy. The *Decree of 14 October 2021 on sports ethics* establishes an Observatory of Sports Ethics and an Ethics Network and updates the earlier *Decree of March 2014 on ethics in sport*, which had provided the basis for the Sports Ethics Code and the recognition of a Sports Ethics Committee. The Belgium FWB Roadmap for effective child safeguarding in sport policies, developed in collaboration with European Union and Council of Europe, provides the most clearly defined child-safeguarding framework aimed at developing safeguarding systems and establish Child Safeguarding Officer roles.

For the German speaking Community, no clearly developed sport-specific safeguarding framework was identified in the publicly available materials reviewed. The broader context is reflected in the role of the Umbrella Organisation of East Belgian Sport and the Third Strategic Plan on Youth 2023-2027, which address sport development, coach education, youth needs, participation and well-being.

Taken together, Belgium's safeguarding framework in sport is best understood as a community-based combination of safe-sport regulations, integrity mechanisms, ethics structures and child-safeguarding guidance, rather than as one unified safeguarding framework.

Croatia

For Croatia, desk research identified four documents as particularly relevant to safeguarding in sport. The broader legal and strategic framework is provided by the

Sports Act (141/22), which represents the core legal framework regulating the organisation and governance of sport in Croatia. The law contains safeguarding-relevant provisions relating to responsible coaching conduct, non-discrimination and safety. More specifically, it requires coaches to prevent and discourage all forms of violence and abuse against athletes, especially minors, and obliges all persons active in sport to take child safeguarding measures and report violations of children's rights, including different forms of violence, maltreatment and exploitation.

The Croatian National Sports Programme (2019-2026) is the country's main strategic policy document outlining national priorities for the development of sport in areas including grassroots sport, elite sport performance, sport infrastructure, governance, financing and human resources. The document identifies insufficient awareness of violence in sport as an important weakness and emphasises the need to protect children and young people in sport system from all forms of violence through stronger stakeholder cooperation and educational prevention measures.

The Country-specific roadmap for effective child safeguarding in sport policies – Croatia developed in collaboration with the Council of Europe (EPAS), European Union, and the Croatian Ministry of Tourism and Sport as national coordinator, provides guidelines for developing child safeguarding policies and establishing Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) roles at different levels within the sport system. The roadmap organises its proposed actions around five priority areas (national policy frameworks, partnership, responding to concerns, advice and support, and education and training framework).

A more operational dimension of safeguarding in Croatia is reflected in the *Protocol for responding to violence against / among children in sports clubs*, developed by the Croatian Olympic Committee. The Protocol is intended to promote children's well-being by preventing all forms of violence in sports clubs and providing guidance on effective responses to violence involving children in sport settings. Its implementation relies on several key measures including the appointment of CSOs at different levels of sport system, providing safeguarding education for all relevant stakeholders, establishment of clear procedures for reporting and responding to concerns, the provision of support to children affected by violence, and stronger cooperation with professionals in the field of child protection.

Germany

In Germany, five documents were identified as important in the context of safeguarding in sport. The broader child and youth protection framework is reflected in the *Youth Protection Act (Jugendschutzgesetz – JuSchG)* and in *Social Code Book VIII (SGB VIII – Child and Youth Welfare)*, which establish the legal basis for the protection of children and adolescents in Germany. The *Youth Protection Act* regulates youth protection in public and media-related contexts, while *Social Code Book VIII* provides the central legal framework for child and youth welfare, combining preventive support with intervention duties in cases where child welfare is at risk. Although these laws are not sport-specific,

they are relevant because they provide the broader legal context within which safeguarding in sport can be developed and implemented. Consistent with this broader framework, many schools and sports clubs in Germany develop their own protection concepts as organisation-specific measures to prevent violence and protect the well-being of children and adolescents, supported by federal and sport-sector guidance. The broader framework is further supported by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), which provides recommendations, guidelines, and resources to prevent sexualized violence in settings involving children and young people.

The German Olympic Sports Confederation has also developed important safeguarding measures. These include the DOSB Tiered Model which defines minimum standards for member organizations and promotes the stepwise implementation of safeguarding measures within organized sport and the *Safe Sport Code* which provides a model regulatory framework for addressing different forms of interpersonal violence in sport, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence as well as neglect.

Greece

Desk research for Greece identified five documents as relevant to safeguarding in sport. The wider child-protection context is shaped by the *National Action Plan for the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (2022-2027)*. The plan sets out coordinated actions across several ministries, including the Ministry of Culture and Sport, to prevent and address child sexual abuse and exploitation. It includes measures for prevention, reporting, and inter-institutional cooperation, with a focus on safeguarding children in various environments. Its relevance to safeguarding in sport lies in the fact that it provides a broader national child-protection framework within which prevention, reporting, and inter-institutional cooperation can also be applied in sport settings. More specific sport-related prevention is reflected in parallel actions such as Start to Talk Toolkit, developed in collaboration with the European Union and Council of Europe.

Sport Law 2725/1999 (as amended), issued by the Hellenic Parliament, constitutes the main legal framework regulating sport in Greece. It includes Article 41A and related provisions aimed at preventing violence at sporting events and establishes mechanisms such as the Standing Committee for Combating Violence (DEAV) within the General Secretariat of Sport. Its relevance to safeguarding lies primarily in providing a legal and institutional basis for safer and more inclusive sport-event environments, and for the management of violence incidents in the context of sporting events. This framework is further strengthened by *Law 4908/2022*, which introduces measures to tackle violent fan behaviour in sport and reinforces the legal and administrative framework governing supporters' clubs, oversight, and sanctions in relation to violence in sporting events. Taken together, these two laws are relevant to safeguarding in the broader sense of sport-event safety and protection, because they contribute to safer sport environments

through stronger prevention, oversight, reporting and institutional accountability in relation to violence at sporting events.

A broader strategic orientation is also reflected in Greece's implementation of the Saint-Denis Convention, including the Sport Events Security Regulation, the Policy of Sporting Events Strategic Plan (2023-2024), and the establishment of a National Co-ordination Committee tasked with developing a national strategy on safety, security, and service at sporting events. These measures indicate a move toward a more integrated approach to prevention, coordination, and response among sport authorities, security services, and other relevant stakeholders.

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for Children in Sports (2022), published by Terre des hommes Greece, provides a safeguarding resource for protecting children in sport settings, including practical guidance, reporting procedures, and protective measures. Based on international child-protection standards, it is relevant as a non-governmental resource that supports the prevention and response to abuse, neglect and safeguarding concerns in sport settings involving children.

Italy

For Italy, desk research identified four documents as particularly relevant to safeguarding in sport. The broader national framework relevant to safeguarding in sport is based on Italy's recent sport reform. The most important safeguarding-related provisions are found in *Legislative Decree 39/2021*, while *Legislative Decree 36/2021*, and *Legislative Decree 120/2023* are also relevant as part of the wider reform of the Italian sport system. These safeguarding frameworks introduced obligations for national sport bodies and affiliated organisations to adopt organisational and control models, codes of conduct, and designated safeguarding responsibilities, with particular emphasis on the protection of minors and the prevention of harassment, gender-based violence, and discrimination in sport. This framework is further operationalised through *CONI Deliberation No. 255/2023*, which strengthened implementation across the organized sport system through safeguarding guidelines, the appointment of responsible persons, and the establishment of the Permanent Observatory for Safeguarding Policies.

A broader child-rights and educational perspective is reflected in *The Protection of the Rights of Minors in Sport*, an official Italian national handbook for coaches and sport managers. The handbook, published by the Department of Sport of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, together with the Authority for Children and Adolescents and Sport e Salute / Scuola dello Sport, promotes a child-rights approach in sport and provides practical guidance on safeguarding-related issues affecting minors, including bullying, abuse, violence, inclusion, gender equality, doping, and early specialization.

Liechtenstein

For Liechtenstein, desk research identified two documents as particularly relevant to safeguarding in sport. The general legal basis is provided by the *Sports Act* which sets out the main framework for sport promotion in Liechtenstein, with particular emphasis on youth development, public health, leisure, and physical fitness. The Act defines the principal areas of support, including school sport, children's and youth sport, grassroots/recreational sport, performance sport, elite sport, disability sport, and senior sport. It also assigns responsibilities to the Government, the Sports Commission, and the Office for Sport, thereby establishing the main governance and funding structure for sport in the country. Although the Act does not establish a specific safeguarding system, it is relevant because it provides the institutional and regulatory setting within which safeguarding-related responsibilities and measures may be developed.

A more operational regulatory instrument is reflected in the Sports Promotion Ordinance, which regulates the implementation of sport promotion under the Sports Act. The Ordinance sets out more detailed provisions on public support for sport and provides a basis for organisational oversight in areas such as school sport, children's and youth sport, and broader sport promotion. Its relevance to safeguarding lies in the accountability mechanisms connected with public funding, institutional responsibility, and the promotion of structured sport activities involving children and young people. In this sense, the Liechtenstein framework is relevant to safeguarding primarily because it establishes governance, funding, and oversight structures for sport settings involving children and young people, rather than because it provides a dedicated sport-specific safeguarding system.

Portugal

For Portugal, desk research identified five documents as particularly relevant to safeguarding in sport. The broader legal framework is provided by the *Basic Law on Physical Activity and Sport (Law No. 5/2007)*, which defines the bases of public policy for physical activity and sport and embeds principles of equality and sport ethics. Its safeguarding relevance lies in the fact that it treats sport as a domain that should be governed by ethical principles and explicitly assigns to the State responsibility for preventing and punishing violence, doping, corruption, racism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination in sport.

A more specific regulatory dimension is reflected in the legal regime on security and the combat against violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance at sports events (*Law No. 39/2009, consolidated*), which serves as Portugal's central legal instrument for safety and prevention in sports events and related settings. Its relevance to safeguarding lies in obligations it places on competition organisers, clubs, federations and security actors to adopt regulations and preventive measures addressing violence, racism, xenophobia, and intolerance, as well as in the accountability mechanisms it establishes through security planning, reporting of incidents, and supervisory oversight.

Alongside these legal instruments, Portugal also has an important educational and values-based framework in the *National Plan for Ethics in Sport (PNED)*, a governmental initiative based within the Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth, which aims to promote ethical values in sport through education, awareness-raising, and practical resources, with particular attention to children, young people, schools, clubs, federations, and other sport stakeholders.

Preventive and educational orientation is further expressed in the *Code of Sports Ethics*, developed within PNED, which sets out norms of conduct for the wide range of actors involved in sport, including athletes, coaches, teachers, referees, parents, sport organisations, spectators, and the media, and therefore provides an important normative reference for fostering a respectful and ethically grounded sport culture.

Finally, the *Country-specific roadmap for effective child safeguarding in sport policies – Portugal* brings the most explicit safeguarding focus. Developed through the joint Council of Europe and European Union Child Safeguarding in Sport initiative and presented nationally by the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, the roadmap is intended to strengthen national capacity to prevent violence against children in sport. It identifies priority actions related to national policy frameworks, partnership, responding to concerns, advice and support, and education and training, while also including concrete steps for the establishment of Child Safeguarding Officer roles.

Slovenia

For Slovenia, the desk research identified three documents as especially important to safeguarding in sport. The broader legal framework is provided by *the Sports Act of the Republic of Slovenia*, which serves as the core framework law governing sport in Slovenia. It sets out the general principles, organization, supervision, and data systems of sport, including the evidence of registered and categorised athletes, and provides for inspection oversight and sanctions in cases of non-compliance. It also includes principles relating to equal access to sport, participation in a safe and healthy sporting environment, and the protection of moral and ethical values in sport. Although the Act does not establish a dedicated safeguarding framework, it includes principles relating to a safe and healthy sporting environment, and the protection of ethical values in sport, thus representing a broader legal basis within which more specific safeguarding measures can be developed and implemented.

A more explicit strategic safeguarding dimension is reflected in the Resolution on the National Programme of Sport in the Republic of Slovenia for 2026-2035, a comprehensive national sports strategy that places a safe sporting environment, integrity, and good governance among the central elements of contemporary sport policy. In this document the protection of athletes and sport professionals is understood as a set of standards and safeguards intended to ensure a safe sporting environment for all participants. It sets strategic objectives that include creating a safe environment for sport, ensuring consistent protection of the rights, and prevention of all forms of

violence and abuse in sport. It also identifies practical measures such as including safe-sport content in training programmes, developing mechanisms and measures for participant protection, raising awareness of athletes' rights and safe sporting environments, and strengthening the protection of participants' rights. In addition, the Resolution addresses equal opportunities in sport in a related but distinct section, including discrimination and gender-based violence.

Finally, a more operational dimension is introduced through the 2026 amendment to Rules on Co-financing the Implementation of the Annual Sports Programme at State Level, which makes public co-financing for national sport federations conditional on clearly defined minimum standards for a safe sporting environment. These include an anonymous online reporting tool, publicly accessible reporting pathways, a designated contact point for advice and complaint handling, internal rules addressing abuse and conflicts of interest, accessible information on recognising and preventing different forms of abuse, and additional education requirements for sport professionals.

Safeguarding-related educational resources and awareness-raising activities

Across the reviewed countries, safeguarding education and awareness-raising activities are visible through several European and national initiatives. For example, among the reviewed countries, Croatia, Greece, and Slovenia participate in Erasmus+ project GUARD – Safeguarding Children in Sport, which supports the establishment of Child Safeguarding Officer structures within national sport systems and provides education for future Child Safeguarding Officers. Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia also participate in Erasmus+ project SAFE HARBOUR aimed to strengthen response mechanisms for safeguarding concerns across European sport. Several partner countries have engaged with the Council of Europe Start to Talk initiative, with Croatia, Portugal, and Belgium providing clear examples of national implementation and adaptation of campaign materials for awareness-raising on child sexual abuse in sport. Other relevant examples include Albania's Safer Grassroots Sport, Belgium's Safeguarding Officer Training, Sport with Boundaries – The Flag System, Safe Sport Allies and Safe Football Allies, Germany's DOSB Safe Sport framework, Safe Sport Code, resources developed by German Sports Youth (Deutsche Sportjugend) and Anlauf Gegen Gewalt (independent reporting and support service for victims of violence in sport), Greece's HALT and HALT4Kids, Italy's FederCUSI/CUS Salerno safeguarding materials, Portugal's Protection of Sports Participants (Proteção de praticantes desportivos), Ethics Flag (Bandeira da Ética), and White Card / Fair Play Card (Cartão Branco), which promote athlete protection, reporting, and ethical values in sport, and Slovenia's contribution to BESST/BESST 2.0, which supports safe sport education, awareness-raising, and the development of legal and organisational safeguarding frameworks.

SUMMARY

The desk research shows a considerable variation across partner countries in the extent to which safeguarding in sport is formally regulated, conceptually defined, and translated into practice. In some countries, safeguarding is addressed primarily through broader legal frameworks relating to child protection, youth policy, or the general governance in sport. In others, more explicit safeguarding-related measures are present through country-specific roadmaps, codes of conducts, event-safety regulations, funding conditions, or practical protocols. The review also identified several safeguarding education and awareness-raising resources, although they differ in scope and are not always clearly linked to formal safeguarding roles or practical implementation procedures.

The identified differences between countries are particularly important in the context of university sport, which brings together athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and organisers across diverse international settings that are characterised by different legal frameworks, national regulations, and institutional approaches to safeguarding. In addition, although many of the identified documents contain principles that are clearly relevant to safeguarding, they do not always provide concrete guidance for implementation within sport organisations, particularly regarding prevention, reporting, responding to concerns, education, and the allocation of specific safeguarding responsibilities. Thus, the next part of the desk research focuses on the more specific context of university sport.

2. SAFEGUARDING IN UNIVERSITY SPORT

Policies, frameworks, regulations, and other safeguarding-relevant resources

While the previous section examined the broader national legal, policy, and strategic frameworks relevant to safeguarding in sport, this section examines whether, and to what extent, these broader frameworks are reflected in university sport policies, regulations, and other safeguarding-relevant documents. Examining both levels is important because, across European countries, university sport is not always governed through the same legal and institutional arrangements. In some countries, relevant provisions are found in documents issued by university sport federations, while in others they are embedded in broader university regulations, ethics codes, disciplinary rules, or national sport frameworks that shape the university sport environment.

COUNTRY MAPPING

Albania

The *Code of Ethics of the Albanian University Sport Federation* is identified as the main document relevant to safeguarding in Albanian university sport.

Although it includes some formal expectations regarding conduct, Albanian university sport system does not have a dedicated safeguarding policy, a designated safeguarding officer, or structured safeguarding education in place. Although reporting mechanisms are accessible to athletes, competitions are only partly covered, travel and overnight stays are not specifically considered, and different forms of violence are not clearly defined.

Belgium

For Belgium, the publicly available university sport material suggests that safeguarding is supported mainly through competition regulations, sport ethics documents, broader Community-level safe-sport frameworks, and institutional university policies, rather than through one distinct national university sport safeguarding policy. The Belgian University Sports Federation (BUSF) coordinates national student championships and supports participation in FISU and EUSA competitions, while university sport activities

are mainly organised through ASEUS (Sport Association for University and Higher Education) in the French-speaking sector and Studentensport Vlaanderen in the Flemish sector. BUSF itself does not appear to publish a dedicated safeguarding policy. However, ASEUS provides documents for organising sport competitions, including competitions guides, rules on exclusions, volunteer instructions, and safety requirements. It also refers to the sport ethics framework and the *Charter of the Sport Movement* of the Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles. Studentensport Vlaanderen also provides rules and guides for Flemish student sport competitions, but no explicit safeguarding policy was identified in the publicly available material reviewed. At the institutional level, the KU Leuven Sport Code of Conduct offers a clearer safeguarding-relevant example, as it addresses physical, psychological, social and sexual integrity, bullying, harassment, abuse of power, unwanted sexual behaviour, aggression, violence and discrimination, and identifies reporting routes. Overall, Belgian university sport contains ethical, disciplinary, safety and conduct-related elements relevant to athlete protection, but no unified university sport safeguarding policy, designated safeguarding officer system or standardised mandatory safeguarding education was identified.

Croatia

In Croatia, the key document is the *Ethical Code of the Croatian Academic Sport Federation*, which sets out the ethical and behavioural standards for Croatian academic sport system. Its safeguarding relevance lies in the fact that it goes beyond general principles of respect, equality, inclusion, and dignity by explicitly identifying violence, discriminatory conduct, substance misuse, and sexual abuse as violations of ethical norms. It also provides a disciplinary framework through complaint procedures, competent bodies, and sanctions. This ethical and disciplinary basis is complemented by the *Regulation for Organising and Conducting UniSportHR Competitions*, which defines the formal structure of university sport competitions, including competition bodies, complaint mechanisms, and disciplinary responsibilities. Taken together, these documents provide an important normative and regulatory basis for addressing safeguarding-related concerns in Croatian university sport. At the same time, based on the publicly accessible documents reviewed, no dedicated safeguarding policy, designated safeguarding officer, or systematic safeguarding education was identified. Competitions are clearly regulated, but other safeguarding-relevant contexts, such as travel and overnight stays, are not specifically addressed. The available documents also do not provide a clear safeguarding framework that describes different forms of violence that can occur in university sport context.

Germany

In Germany, safeguarding in university sport appears to be shaped by a combination of safeguarding and ethics measures developed at the level of the German University Sports Federation and broader university-level institutional frameworks, rather than by one single nationwide university sport safeguarding policy. At national university sport level, the *Ethics Code of the German University Sports Federation* provides an important

normative reference, as it defines the values and principles governing conduct and is binding for volunteers, employees, and representatives of member universities. A more operational layer is visible at institutional level, for example in the *University of Hamburg Directive on Protection against Sexualized Discrimination, Harassment and Violence*, supported by the university's broader anti-discrimination framework. These documents are not university sport regulations in the narrow sense, but they are directly relevant because university athletes, coaches, staff, and volunteers participate within the institutional environment they regulate. The available material indicates the existence of a code of ethics, designated contact structures, and formally defined reporting pathways. The available material does not clearly indicate systematically required safeguarding education and provides only limited evidence of coverage extending beyond institutional and competition setting, including travel or overnight stays.

Greece

In Greece, no clearly defined national university sport safeguarding policy could be identified through publicly accessible online sources. The most relevant material appears instead at institutional university level. A notable example is the student complaints mechanism of the *School of Physical Education and Sport Science at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*, which refers to complaints concerning issues such as equal treatment, equality and harassment, including sexual harassment. More broadly, the *Gender Equality Plan of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2022-2024)* provides an important institutional framework by addressing discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, and violence, while also identifying the need for clearer mechanisms of reporting and support. Comparable responsibilities are carried out by the Committee on Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination at the University of Patras, which records complaints, provides support to victims, and promotes training and awareness on harassment and discrimination. Taken together, these sources suggest that, in Greece, safeguarding relevant to university sport is addressed mainly through broader university-level institutional mechanisms rather than through a distinct university sport safeguarding framework. Based on the publicly accessible material reviewed, no clear evidence was found of a dedicated safeguarding policy, an appointed safeguarding officer, or systematic sport-specific safeguarding education.

Italy

In Italy, the available documents point to a relatively clear framework for safeguarding in university sport. At federation level, the *FederCUSI Safeguarding Regulation* requires affiliated CUS bodies to adopt organisational models and codes of conduct, appoint a person responsible for preventing and responding to abuse, violence, and discrimination, and operate within a federal system that includes a Safeguarding Officer. This framework is further reflected in local documents such as the *CUS Salerno Organisational and Control Model for Sporting Activities*, which applies to all those participating in CUS Salerno activities. The document defines different forms of abuse, sets out reporting pathways, a code of conduct, and measures aimed at protecting

minors and preventing harassment, gender-based violence, and discrimination. Taken together, these materials show that safeguarding in Italian university sport is characterised by defined roles, formal procedures, and organisational accountability. The safeguarding framework extends beyond the immediate sport setting and includes competitions, transfers, and overnight stays. The reviewed federation and local documents also include a training dimension: FederCUSI guidelines refer to training and annual follow-up activities, while the CUS Salerno model provides for periodic training of staff, collaborators, and volunteers.

Liechtenstein

In Liechtenstein, no dedicated university sport safeguarding document was identified in the publicly available material reviewed. The available evidence suggests that safeguarding is beginning to emerge as a topic within the wider sport system, including recent education and awareness-raising initiatives delivered through national sport structures, but this has not yet been translated into a distinct and formalised safeguarding framework for university sport. Publicly available materials from the University Sports Federation of Liechtenstein focus primarily on organisational structure, sport activities, and international representation, rather than on safeguarding regulation. At the same time, the University of Liechtenstein provides university-level procedures and confidential contact points in relation to sexual harassment, although these are not specific to sport. In the publicly accessible university sport materials reviewed, no documents were found that explicitly define different forms of violence, set out sport-specific reporting pathways, address safeguarding in relation to competitions, travel, or overnight stays, or provide evidence of structured safeguarding education.

Portugal

Portugal appears to have some safeguarding-relevant measures in place, but not yet a clearly developed university sport safeguarding framework. No dedicated safeguarding policy for university sport was identified in the publicly available material reviewed, and no publicly designated safeguarding officer appears to be in place. At the same time, several safeguarding-relevant elements are already present within the Portuguese university sport environment. The university sport federation provides materials related to ethics in sport, disciplinary regulation, anti-doping regulations, regulations on the prevention and control of violence, as well as mechanisms for reporting misconduct. It has also made publicly available awareness-raising and educational initiatives relating to violence prevention, ethics, and integrity in university sport. These features suggest that ethics, accountability, reporting, and violence prevention are already part of the Portuguese university sport context. What is less evident, however, is their consolidation into a distinct and coherent university sport safeguarding framework.

Slovenia

For Slovenia, in the publicly available university sport material reviewed, no dedicated safeguarding policy, no published code of ethics, and no publicly designated safeguarding officer were identified at the national university sport level. Nevertheless, some relevant elements are present in the system, such as a disciplinary commission and competition documents with basic rules on behaviours and safety, but these do not yet form a distinct safeguarding framework. Formal and systematic safeguarding education does not appear to be mandatory or standardised at the national level for student-athletes or coaches and delegation staff. While some initiatives and awareness raising activities exist, there is no clear evidence of unified mandatory programmes in university sport.

SUMMARY

The results of the desk research of national safeguarding-related documents in university sport across the reviewed countries show that safeguarding frameworks remain uneven and, in most cases, still insufficiently formalised. In most countries, safeguarding is addressed either through ethics codes, disciplinary mechanisms, broader university procedures, general violence-prevention measures, or broader legal and institutional frameworks, but not through an integrated safeguarding model.

Across countries, several common gaps are visible. Dedicated safeguarding policies are often absent, safeguarding officers are mostly not appointed, and structured safeguarding education is not mandatory or systematically implemented. Reporting pathways are sometimes present, but they are often partial, dispersed across different documents, or embedded in broader institutional procedures rather than in university sport-specific safeguarding systems. Another important pattern is that competition settings are more often regulated, while other relevant contexts such as travel, overnight stays, and off-field situations remain only partly covered or not addressed at all. In most inspected documents, different forms of violence and abuse are not clearly defined, which makes it difficult to identify harmful behaviours accurately, and may weaken both recognition of incidents and the adequacy of the response. In addition, in the inspected documents, procedures for reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns are either missing, or only partly developed. Taken together, the findings indicate that safeguarding policies and frameworks related to university sport vary considerably across analysed countries, and that participants are often left without clear, accessible, and standardised guidance.

3. DESK RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

The desk research on broader national frameworks related to safeguarding in sport showed considerable differences across partner countries in how safeguarding is regulated and implemented, while the university sport review revealed an even more fragmented picture. These results highlight the need for a safeguarding policy that can establish common minimum standards for participants in European university sport competitions, as they come from national contexts characterised by substantial differences in safeguarding frameworks.

In order to turn these findings into practical recommendations, the gaps identified through the desk research, together with internationally recognised safeguarding standards and policy frameworks in sport, were used as reference points for analysing the EUSA Safeguarding and Incident Policy and formulating recommendations for its further development. The current EUSA Safeguarding and Incident Policy is structured primarily around expectations of proper behaviour, transgressive conduct, reporting and disciplinary response during the event period. However, in order to ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are not left to variable national practices, or informal interpretations, the EUSA framework would benefit from further development into a more comprehensive and standardised safeguarding system. Based on the IOC Guidelines for International Federations and National Olympic Committees, the International Safeguards for Children in Sport that lay the foundations for ensuring safe sporting environment, recent Council of Europe guidance on strategy and policy frameworks and safer recruitment, and examples of safeguarding policies from international federations (e.g. FIFA, World Athletics, International Tennis Federation, International Ice Hockey Federation and World Rugby) with developed safeguarding frameworks, the current EUSA safeguarding framework might be improved by establishing common minimum safeguarding standards (e.g. each delegation must appoint a delegation safeguarding contact person; all participants must complete safeguarding training; athletes should have access to a reporting route outside the team hierarchy); expanding the list of safeguarding risks and harmful behaviours (e.g. grooming, coercive control, exploitation); adding a section on event-specific safeguarding risks including transport and accommodation; strengthening safer recruitment provisions for staff, volunteers, officials, and other personnel; expand the support section for affected individuals (immediate safety measures, referral to medical, psychological, legal or other support services); and clarify cooperation with statutory authorities. For greater clarity and consistency across the safeguarding field, it is recommended that terminology and definitions related to interpersonal violence in the

EUSA Safeguarding and Incident Policy corresponds more closely to those set out in the *2024 IOC Consensus Statement on interpersonal violence and safeguarding in sport*.

The desk research also points to important unmet educational needs in safeguarding across university sport contexts. In most reviewed countries, safeguarding education is either not clearly identified, not mandatory, or not systematically embedded within national university sport structures. While some examples of awareness-raising activities, ethics-related materials, institutional training, or local educational initiatives were identified, these remain uneven across countries and are rarely connected to a comprehensive university sport safeguarding framework. The reviewed material provides limited evidence about the structured education that prepares student-athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and delegation staff to recognise different forms of violence in sport setting, understand safeguarding responsibilities, use reporting mechanisms, or respond appropriately to concerns. As a result, participants may enter European university sport competitions with significantly different levels of knowledge and understanding of safeguarding principles, responsibilities, and procedures.

To move from analysis to practical recommendations, the educational needs identified in university sport were considered in relation to both safeguarding education resources mapped at national level and internationally recognised safeguarding standards and guidance, including those developed by the International Olympic Committee, the Council of Europe, and international sport federations (e.g. FIFA Guardians, World Athletics Essentials). According to these frameworks, safeguarding education should not be limited to general awareness, but should equip participants with role-relevant knowledge and practical guidance on how to prevent harm, respond to concerns, and contribute to a safe and respectful sport environment. On this basis, a structured safeguarding education programme for European university sport should address the core concepts of safeguarding, including definitions of different forms of interpersonal violence that may occur in sport settings; signs and indicators of harm; roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders; reporting mechanisms and guidance on how to respond appropriately to disclosures and support affected individuals. Special attention should be given to safeguarding risks that arise in sport-specific settings, including competitions, travel, accommodation, team hierarchies, and informal situations around events. At the same time, because university sport has specific characteristics that distinguish it from grassroots, youth, and professional sport, the development of education curriculum should be informed by the needs of university sport stakeholders and adapted to empirical findings from the target groups.

Overall, the desk research results support the development of a more coherent EUSA Safeguarding and Incident Policy accompanied by a mandatory educational course in order to provide athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and organisers with a shared practical understanding of safeguarding, and to promote more consistent, understandable, and applicable safeguarding practices across European university sport.



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essepa.eusa.eu

projects@eusa.eu



University of Zagreb
Faculty of Croatian Studies



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