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Erasmus+

IMPACT STUDY

RESEARCH INTO POLICY AND PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS ON "SAFETY MEASURES FOR FEMALE ATHLETES IN EUROPE"



inforef



ISTANBUL - CATALCA İLÇE MİLLİ EĞİTİM MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ



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Abstract

This study is part of the European Erasmus+ project Empowering Women Athletes (EWA) funded by the European Commission. Its purpose is the in-depth research and mapping of good practices by the public and private sector of the European geographical area, which are aimed at preventing, managing and combating ill-treatment, discrimination and violence against female athletes. Right before presenting the aforementioned elements, it is presented briefly but essentially the domain in which we are operating, namely, sport-related gender violence, in order to have a clear view of the focus area and which issues exactly the policy measures and project achievements are targeting. Across the impact study we are analysing the undertaken policies and after their evaluation, it concludes with recommendations towards the successful achieving of a safer and more equal environment for female athletes in Europe.

1. Introduction to Sport-related Gender Violence

The link between sport and violence is widely acknowledged. While the focus has been on “player violence” and “crowd violence”, it is recognized that a variety of other incidents of sport-related violence exists. The literature, mostly from multidisciplinary studies, is concerning a non-beneficial relationship between higher sport participation and more abusive behavior. Only one exception was indicated about the relationship between higher sport participation and fewer violations for males (Damien J. Williams, 2014).

Empirical and unpublished evidence point towards increased rates of domestic violence among male athletes. Moreover, there is evidence that domestic violence incidents are higher around sporting events in wider society. Nevertheless, the findings are usually quite diverse. It is not argued that sport triggers any abusive behavior, but on the contrary that it can brew the conditions that enable forms of domestic violence. It is evident that the evidence is much complicated, and that further study is needed to understand this crucial phenomenon. In particular, the “holy trinity”, of sport, alcohol, and hegemonic masculinity is examined in order to draw more specific conclusions. The wide appeal of sport can be exploited to engage males and support them in confronting the issues that lead to domestic violence, in addition to female empowerment and the support of gender equality (Damien J. Williams, 2014).

1.1 Definition of Gender-based Violence in Sport

First and foremost, in order to establish a common ground of understanding and specify the scope of the impact study we need to define gender-based violence. The European Commission defines gender-based violence as “violence directed against a person because of that person's gender (including gender identity/expression) or as violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately”. In this document, sexual violence, without neglecting rape, sexual assault, abuse and harassment, is considered a form of gender-based violence. This study document also offers definitions for:

- Gender-based harassment defined as an “unwelcome conduct related to a person’s gender and has the effect or purpose of offending another person’s dignity”.
- Sexual abuse signifying a way “to trick, force or coerce a person into any sexual activity the person does not want, or is not sufficiently mature to consent to”.
- Sexual harassment defined as a “behaviour of a sexualized nature which is unwanted, exploitative, degrading, coerced, forced and/or violent”.

1.2 Societal Benefits of Sport

Sport plays a controversial role within society. On the one hand it is associated with many direct and indirect beneficial aspects for the individuals, communities, and societies. On the other hand, it is linked to a powerful set of ideals and values that can facilitate the confrontation of some of society’s problems. It is acknowledged that sport participation offers many health benefits as well as a number of social and economic advantages of sport events. What is more, the support of a sport team can lead to the creation of a sense of identity and connection within a community in modern social constructions. Such association with a social group can provide health benefits as well as reassure the preconditions for positive social interactions (Damien J. Williams, 2014).

1.3 The Culture of Sport

It is stated that modern sport federations have evolved into male institutions for the presentation of ideological values and power relations that characterize masculinity, while these attitudes are frequently stated in team sport. Sport usually addresses and prioritizes a range of masculine notions such as toughness and aggression, even if just implied, are presented as a norm. Females who participate in “aggressive sport” try to break any existing prejudices for “existing gender norms, causing social instability”. It is argued that by participating in the so called violent and masculine sport, female athletes compromise their feminine

side, and in doing so they are able to adopt an alternate form of femininity - "resistant femininity" - which does not indicate the social role of women as victims and men as perpetrators (Damien J. Williams, 2014).

1.4 Sport in the Civilizing Process

It is generally stated that the modern sport environment is usually idealizing hegemonic masculinity and subsequently accepting its notion in society. Although sport may not be the only setting in which masculine attitudes are being generated, such as power and strength, and in which feminine elements are not being accepted, such as beauty. Moreover, sport is usually connected with the development of masculine features for young boys and male athletes in general. Sport constitutes a significant factor for male's personality and behavior, an important aspect that cannot be neglected from research (Damien J. Williams, 2014).

1.5 Gender-based Sport Violence in Early Stages

Despite the fact that sport promotes ethical values, violence also occurs in the field of sport. In some cases, violence is directed against a person because of their gender, especially when referring to gender identity or expression. The definition of this phenomenon is gender-based violence and may include sexual harassment and abuse, rape, physical or emotional-psychological violence, and LGBTQI violence. These forms of gender-based may also overlap. Gender-based violence in sport has a great negative impact on girls and boys, women and men, as sport is a gendered experience, one that may reinforce gender disparities and the gender order, or power relationships between females and males in society. Gender differences can easily become divisive, with boys often seen as having superior athletic skills compared to girls. Gender-based violence has been reported among athletes, between coaches and their athletes, or even between other personnel within the sport's federations, such as managers, doctors and physiotherapists. Media has drawn attention to some cases that have been prosecuted, as a few

organisations are keeping records of cases of gender-based violence in sport on an international scale. Sixteen EU Member States and a few other non-member countries have made a first try to estimate the significance of gender-based violence in sport. The research carried out in the last few years has several limitations and does not facilitate the process of making comparative assumptions between countries. In the last decades, several policies have been implemented in order to combat the issue. It is worth mentioning that the lack of specific legislation for the prosecution and jurisdiction of cases of gender-based violence in sport, the lack of clarity in the definitions of what is referred to as sexual abuse and gender-based violence across countries can set many obstacles to the confrontation of gender-based violence in sport (Damien J. Williams, 2014). However, the Istanbul Convention was an important initiative of the Council of Europe for its actions supporting women and its fight against all forms of violence, in particular in sport environment. This Convention has made some initial steps for the establishment of a common European legal framework for prevention of violence against women and girls. An additional independent expert body, called GREVIO, was created in order to monitor the implementation of the Convention's initiatives by the co-signed parties.

1.6 Future Directions

Further analysis and study will be necessary for the comprehension of the linkage between sport and gender violence, as well as for the implementation of methods and measures for the restoration of the equilibrium in sport. However, due to the underreporting of the incidents the implementation of specific measures is quite difficult. Moreover, the sensitive nature of the subject and despite the details of national surveys, research does not conclude the association that exists between violence and sport. An alternative method for more accurate evidence will be the examination of health data, such as emergency departments, which treat victims of violent incidents that may have not been reported to the police. The study also of same sex violence and female against male abuse is a quite unresearched theme, which also needs further analysis (Damien J. Williams, 2014).

1.7 Conclusion

To begin with, it was suggested a brief analysis of the paradoxical role of sport in society, and following the complex association of gender-based violence in sport was mentioned. Evidence shows that extremely high levels of gender-based violence among professional and amateur athletes are taking place in the field of sport suggesting an increase in specific athletic domains. The hegemony of masculinity can be described as the main factor reinforcing the prevalence of male domination in sport associations and institutions. Although there is relatively consistent evidence for the link between specific sport this cannot be generalized without further research. This is due to reported rather contradictory results in different fields of sport, as well as with the scarcity of a concrete analysis concerning also several mediating variables, for instance conceptions of masculinity and expectation of result. It is also well known that not all males, both athletes or supporters adopt and generate their masculinity through violent means. Violence between the same sexes in sport is also reported (Damien J. Williams, 2014). Thus, future research is needed to explore the contexts in which sport-related violence may take place and analyze the risks and measures against gender-based violence in sport. Finally, male athletes, supporters and coaches should be engaged and participate in the battle against toxic masculinity and rather increase their involvement in women's empowerment and reinforcement of gender equality and respect.

2. Best Practices Implemented

2.1 Public Actors

2.1.1. Case 1 – Belgium

According to the data derived from the Toolkit published by the Council of Europe, gender-based violence in sport (sexual violence) on children and teenagers is mostly stated against women, with a percentage of 17% in Belgium and the Netherlands, rather than 11% against men (COE, n.d.). In general, it is indicated that most cases of sexual harassment (66%), harm (88%) or violence (33%) is initiated by other athletes in sport environment. Additionally, the social groups that are mainly affected by gender-based abuse, are people included in LGTBI community, disabled athletes, minority groups and elite athletes. More specifically, 42% of elite athletes (of the sample) have experienced psychological abuse with rather severe or moderate incidents. Disabled athletes have the highest rate of physical abuse in sport with a percentage of 30% as well as of sexual harassment with a rate of 31.4% (COE, n.d.). Finally, less than 10% of articles in the sports press were focused on women athletes, while an extreme rate of 85% of articles concerned male athletes.

In Belgium, the Flemish Ministry of Sport, “Sport Vlaanderen”, has developed a code in order to guide the implementation of good governance in Flemish federations according to information derived from 2016. The code contained 43 principles of good governance, including principle 12 which mention that the organisation strives to achieve a differentiated, balanced and competent composition of its board, but regarding aspects such as age and ethnicity.

Moreover, principle 25 encourages organisations to implement actions aiming at the promotion of equality and diversity within the sport discipline and organisations. Sport organisations are increasingly choosing to establish a quota to promote gender diversity whereby a fixed number or percentage of the members of the board must be of the least represented sex.

Finally, principle 36 establishes an annual evaluation of composition and performance. Compliance with each principle is evaluated on a scale from 0 to 4 and each organisation has a period of four years to achieve its objective. Since the

beginning of 2017, federations that are implementing the code are being rewarded financially for their compliance. The implementation of the principles proposed will result in enhanced formal structures and rules. Yet accomplishing good governance requires more than that: it requires a change of culture (Geeraert, 2016).

2.1.2. Case 2 - United Kingdom

In 2001, sport councils in both England and Northern Ireland collaborated with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), which is a national children's charity in order to implement Child Protection in sport federations (Europa, 2016). In accordance with the aforementioned initiative, the National Safeguarding Panel (NSP) was established in 2013. Its main objective is to monitor and investigate further any specific cases that may arise, inspiring a similar approach from national governing bodies. (Europa, 2016) Furthermore, according to statistics from 2019, 13% of females in the United Kingdom have experienced visual or/and verbal abuse in their workplace. A much lower rate, of 5% has been exposed to violence by a current partner, but almost 35% of females experienced similar behaviour from a former partner (Europa, 2014).

The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport is a collaboration of the four home country sport councils with UK Sport and is supported by the Central Council of Physical Recreation, the English Federation of Disability Sport, Sporting Equals and the Women's Sport Foundation. UK Sport is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established in 1996. It is responsible for investing Exchequer and Lottery income to inspire the nation through Olympic and Paralympic sport by driving and showcasing Olympic and Paralympic medal success. This policy framework that was created serves as a tool for sport organisations to join their forces for equality by ensuring that it is adopted into all aspects of sport associations that are addressing members, athletes, staff and volunteers. The framework's aim is to guide sport organisations towards a more equal operation. The guideline will be the main tool for improving equality issues and aid relevant organisations to develop their structure appropriately. It focuses on the content of Achieving Racial

Equality: A Standard for Sport, published by Sporting Equals in 2000 with the following objectives:

1. Increasing Participation: Increase participation by women in a wide variety of sport, physical recreation and leisure activities.
2. Improving Performance and Achieving Excellence: Enable women with sporting ability to achieve excellence in the sport of their choice.
3. Leadership: Increase the number of women leaders at all levels and in all capacities in sport and physical activity

The strategic plan of the UK presents an innovative mission that will lead to better sporting events. To achieve this inspirational change British sport associations will reinforce the power in order to create several alterations in wellbeing, diversity, inclusion and sustainability. The stakeholders are taking promising steps to retain the best possible standards of ethics, integrity and athlete welfare. Their action will be broadly integrated by introducing a more diverse group of athletes and their support for winning in Olympic and Paralympic sport. (Group, 2004)

2.1.3. Case 3 - Bosnia and Herzegovina

According to the results of the OSCE Survey on Well Being and Safety of Women that was conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost one in two women survived some form of abuse including intimate partner violence since they were teenagers. Moreover, 64% of women are considered as conflict-affected. This percentage widely rises when we are referring to partner violence and in particular partners who have fought in a conflict, in comparison to those that have not (Šulc, 2020).

In sport, legal obligations on equal participation of men and women in sport activities have been improved after the introduction of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Sport in the country during 2016. In this year, upon request of the Committee on Gender Equality of the country for harmonization of the Law while the Law on Amendments was integrated in the Law on Sport. The amendment articulates equal opportunities to sport and equal participation, without any discrimination referring to gender. Moreover, the Law also includes the

observance of gender equality in the process of appointing members at the Bosnia and Herzegovina Sport Council. This initiative has made great ameliorations in the reinforcement of gender equality in sport activities at a decision making but also participatory procedure.

In 2019, a study was conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning the diversity and equality in the workplace. The paper was focused on the economic transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a south eastern European country and in particular on the national legislation, a matter that has been the subject of a great public and scientific debate. This specific research mentions a synopsis of the legislative framework and the existing literature upon the matter. Furthermore, public media and personal communications with human resources practitioners were reached for the conduction of the paper. (Renate Ortlieb, 2019)

The paper concludes with the realization of the lack of adequate data and research in the field in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to its findings, ethnicity and gender are the most common aspects concerning cases of discrimination. Despite the fact that the country has formed a concrete legislative body addressing equality and discrimination issues, the implementation of its function is mostly insufficient. The public debate that has been created around this specific subject tends to segregate and reinforce national conflicts as well as increasing the negative atmosphere regarding sexual rights of minority groups. (Renate Ortlieb, 2019)

2.1.4. Case 4 – Albania

According to the statistics in the Albanian territory, one in two, thus a rate of 52.9%, Albanian women have experienced some sort of violence during their lifetime. This is one of the findings of the third National Population Survey “Violence Against Women” that took place in 2019. A percentage of 65.8% of surveyed women stated that they have experienced violence during their life-time, 47% have experienced intimate partners domestic violence. In continuation, 1 in 5 women experienced physical and/or sexual violence and 18.2% of women have experienced non-partner violence. (UN, 2019)

The data of the survey present that 18.1% of women have experienced sexual harassment during their life-time and a percentage of 12.6% of women have been stalking. Moreover, the survey states clearly the acceptance of violence against women among men and women within the country. The data show that 1 in 2 women believe violence between a husband and wife is considered as a private matter and 46.5% of women believe that a woman should tolerate some violence in order to keep her family united. What is more, 26.1% of women believe a female should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone if she is ever raped. (Anon., 2019)

All the surveyed women, declared that domestic, sexual violence, harassment and stalking are major concerns for the Albanian society. A percentage of 83 % believe that it is necessary that the country implement law that protect women and girls from violence in families and 81 .9% believe that it is necessary to create a legal framework that will safeguard women from sexual assault and rape.

Finally, the percentage of women that participate in the bodies of the national Olympic sport organisations in Albania is only 8.9%. (Bashevskaja, 2019)

More specifically, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) operates with a Gender Equality Index which is an instrument that measures gender inequalities in the European Union (EU) in accordance with the European policy context. The index consists of a concrete indicator that enables the measure of gender equality, across the member states of the European Union. The Gender Equality Index and its function is capable of finding gender gaps, while also taking under consideration the levels of development and improvement in each field. In this framework, the Gender Equality Index reassures that a well-structured context will be the reflection of both low gender gaps and high levels of achievement. Subsequently, the index could be considered as a useful tool for indicating gender equality as well as social cohesion.

The Gender Equality Index measures gender equality in six distinctive domains, as follows:

- Work
- Money
- Knowledge

- Time
- Power
- Health

In Albania, the score for the domain of work is calculated at 67.6, with a better level in participation rather than in segregation and quality of work. Gender segregation in European member states is mostly reflected in social services and still has much to improve.

In the domain of money, the results show a rate of 59.6 in the subdomain of financial resources, which measures earnings and income differences between women and men.

In the domain of knowledge, the scores of 55.6 reveals a still large gender gap in both participation and segregation. Although there are more highly-educated women than men in Albania, their rate is still unfavorable regarding men. Most women participate in tertiary education, but mostly in the fields of education, health and welfare, humanities and arts, while male students studying in these fields capture only a small proportion.

The domain of time has the lowest index score calculated at 48.1, indicating very unbalanced responsibilities regarding the care for family members and household activities. While women are responsible for the majority of household work, they participate less than men in social activities that are also imperative for their quality of life.

The domain of power scores 60.9 a rate that automatically places Albania in 6th place in comparison to the rest of the countries surveyed on Gender Equality Index. High representation of women is indicated in political and economic power. On the other hand, women's social power, that is, representation in bodies of education, media and sport organisations boards is quite behind than in political and economic power.

The domain of health has the highest score of 81.8, although is still below in comparison to the rest of the European Union members. Moreover, access to health care presents lower gender gaps than health behaviors that may influence risk factors and healthy lifestyles.

It is considered necessary to proceed to more improvements for safeguarding and supporting gender equality, especially with the aid of all stakeholders, including governments, private sector, civil society and citizens (Juna Miluka, 2020).

2.1.5. Case 5 – Croatia

According to the numerical data, female representation in the national Olympic sport federations is measured at only 11%, while men capture 88% of the same places. Furthermore, less than half of the sport federations, only 46% have female boards indicating a great discrimination rate among women and men in sports. This tendency is also articulated in sport participation, while women athletes represent only 20% of the overall participation (Europe, 2019).

When referring to violent behavior, during the years of 2000 to 2010, more than 6500 sexual crimes against women were reported and 15% are referring to rape. Domestic and sexual violence are the most commonly reported actions with 90% of the victims are females. (Affairs, n.d.) In addition to that, 1 in 5 women in Croatia have experienced physical or sexual violence and among them 31% have experienced physical, psychological or sexual forms of violence. (EIGE, 2016) More recently, in 2020 and during the pandemic, attempted rape cases were increased, reaching 34%. In particular, while relevant cases were measured at 78 in 2019, this number exceeded in 2020 at 168 cases. Murder cases related to domestic violence were also increased by 10%. (ŠLOSAR, 2021)

In the context of protection and efforts for gender equality, the Republic of Croatia has adopted the National Policy for Gender Equality as the main guidance for eliminating discrimination against women and establishing concrete gender through equal opportunities.

Croatia is aiming to integrate the gender dimension in all public domains by implementing specific measures in the following seven key fields of action:

- the promotion of the human rights of women and gender equality,
- the creation of equal opportunities in the labor market,
- the improvement of gender sensitive education,

- the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making processes,
- the elimination of all forms of violence against women,
- the promotion of international cooperation and gender equality outside Croatia, and
- the further strengthening of institutional mechanisms and implementation methods.

At the proposal of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Parliament adopted the National Policy for Gender Equality in accordance with Article 81 of the Constitution which expresses the policy of the representative body of citizens and legislative power in the country. The adoption of the National Policy reassures the implementation of the Gender Equality Act, in which article 18 paragraph 2 states that the Government Office for Gender Equality is responsible for the monitoring of its implementation.

In order to combat violence against women and to ameliorate the position of female victims of violence, Croatia actively participated in the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, referring also to domestic violence. Moreover, during January 2006, a National Committee for the Campaign to Combat Domestic Violence against Women was established at the Croatian Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity. Round-table discussions were organized with main subject of discussion "Economic violence against women" and "Systematic financing of civil society organisations which provide direct protection to victims of domestic violence". A manual was also developed offering fruitful instructions on media on how reports on violence against women should be published. (Radin, 2011)

Within its international cooperation, the Republic of Croatia also regularly collaborates with the Steering Committee for Gender Equality of the Council of Europe for the submission of reports on the implementation of the guidelines by the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence in the country.

Furthermore, for the appropriate implementation of the National Policy for Gender Equality 2011 – 2015, some key activities and measures will be realized in

order to improve the status of women in sport. The Gender Equality Act advocates for the equal percentage of women within the management of sport associations and other sporting organisations. The Croatian Olympic Committee, Croatian Paralympic Committee, state and local sport associations will be responsible for the above-mentioned objectives.

The existing legal framework will be regularly revised and models for monitoring the statistical data on the status of women in sport will be closely monitored in order to achieve the combat against direct and indirect discrimination.

Female athletes will be guaranteed equal participation in sport infrastructure, as well as access to professional training, development and employment in the field of sport.

The authorities and bodies that will be in charge of these activities are the Croatian Olympic Committee, the Croatian Paralympic Committee, the state and local sports associations, sport clubs, units of local and regional self-government with a timeframe for implementation between 2011 and 2015. (Radin, 2011)

2.1.6. Case 6 – Croatia

In continuation to the above, the Croatian Olympic Committee has already established the Commission for Women in Sport in 1996, which since 2015 is called the Commission for Gender Equality in Sport. Its main aim is to raise awareness on the role of women in sport, encourage research on women in sport, especially in the health, sociological, educational, economic and societal aspects, as well as to encourage women to be active and more involved in the decision-making process.

The Croatian Olympic Committee collects data of gender structure in management and expert positions in national sport organisations. The findings for 2015 present that the average share of women in management positions in national sport organisations was 19.34%, with the largest share of women among administrative staff (51%) and the lowest share as presidents and vice-presidents of national sport organisations approximately 9%. In comparison, a study conducted in 2007 shows that the share of women in management positions was measured around

10% in national sport associations, over 11% in sport organisations and 15% within the Croatian Olympic Committee. (COE, 2019)

A slightly better situation can be found in management and hierarchy in national sport teams, which was calculated at around 31% of females in 2007. Women's sport events are considered to be less attractive, while the media usually do not cover them as much as men's sport events. Additionally, a study that was conducted by the Croatian Agency for Electronic Media in 2016 declares that coverage on male sport events is first in all sections and TV networks while most sport news are being covered by male reporters.

The City of Zagreb sets a good example, as it is greatly promoting gender equality and balanced percentages in all sport facilities that are located and owned by the city. In this manner, equal opportunities and employability is reassured in the field of sport. Sporting Association of the City of Zagreb was also advised to ensure gender-balanced accessibility concerning training facilities and the composition of the management bodies. (MARTINOVIĆ, 2017)

2.1.7. Case 7 – Slovak Republic

Sexual harassment in Slovakia is addressed in criminal and other legal bodies, relevant to work place. The law is also implemented to the field of education and employment. However, these precautions are not addressed to incidents where athletes are not considered either employees or trainees. The criminal code includes specific cases and categories related to sexual harassment provoked by minors.

In continuation, additional types of violence, such as emotional and psychological mistreatment are subject to the law. For instance, attitudes such as insulting, coercing, hazing, persecution, stalking, harassment, defamation, verbal abuse, or threats in sport and against women can be prosecuted. Any kind of violation against a person due to their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation can be considered a lewd action and case.

Slovakia has a judicial database on sexual offences committed in sport. Also, has implemented codes of ethics, reference to gender or to gender-based violence in sport.

Moreover, recent statistical research shows that one in five women in Slovakia has experienced some sort of violence from their former or current partner. A percentage of more than 5% of women have been physically attacked, while 3 percent have been attacked sexually by their partners. In many cases, this violent behavior was exercised regularly.

According to the data derived from the Coordinating-Methodical Centre for Gender-Based and Domestic Violence (KMC) running under the Institute for Labour and Family Research (IVPR) almost 5% of females have been exposed to sexual violence, a number that corresponds to 100.000 women. (The Slovak Spectator, 2020)

According to the Comenius University of Bratislava and in particular the Department of Sport Educology and Sport, Humanities, as well as the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport specific lawful solution could be suggested to combat the violation of women in sport. The research in 2015 is focused on the legal aspects and acts of violence against women in sport. The moral state of society is greatly associated with these incidents, as violations against women are the most widespread form of violence in human behavior. It is of utmost importance to implement preventive measures and to support projects for the fight against violence and intolerance in sport. (Sakáčová, 2015)

The Slovak Republic, where the study is being conducted, is only at the beginning of this process and needs to make steps towards the connection between law and sports. The study underlines the necessity to increase the legal awareness of sport as a tool for regulation in sport activities. Through the analysis of the current system of the Slovak legislation, there can be drawn interesting conclusions regarding current legal issues of violence towards women in the country. Despite the existence of an Anti-Discrimination Act and the Criminal Code, it has been stated a lack of legal resources and instruments that are able to safeguard women dignity and integrity in sport. In Slovakia, none of the national judicial practices

could convince women athletes of the effective protection of their rights, especially when referring to their dignity.

In continuation to the theoretical analysis of the problem and some specific examples of relevant incidents, the study concludes with the necessity of implementing and advancing the existing regulation for the protection of women rights and subsequently, human rights. The responsibility of the society as a whole is highly indicated as a key player in the process of the optimization and intolerance of the issue. (Sakáčová, 2015)

2.1.8. Case 8 – Austria

According to the data, in Austria almost 57% of the sport federations have a written policy or action plan aiming at the prevention and confrontation of discrimination in sport. These federations are among others athletics, badminton, cycling, equestrian, fencing, figure skating, handball, ice hockey, judo, luge, rowing, rugby, sailing, swimming, tennis, triathlon, and volleyball. While 67% of sport federations have already implemented actions, since the beginning of 2015, in order to reinforce the battle against gender-based violence in the field. Some of these federations are archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, cycling, equestrian, fencing, figure skating, gymnastics, handball, ice hockey, judo, luge, rowing, rugby, sailing, swimming, tennis, triathlon and volleyball. (Europe, 2019) In addition, in Austria the implementation of the project “All in: towards gender balance in sport” covers and standardizes data collection of 18 countries, based on a few specific gender equality indicators in six distinctive fields: leadership, coaching participation, gender-based violence, media and communication, policies and programmes addressing gender equality.

The data and legislative framework will be regularly reviewed and monitored for the best possible results towards equal opportunities and participation in sport. The Austria Olympic Federation has taken important actions in order to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, women coaches and female elite level athletes. The timeframe for implementation of these actions was scheduled for 2017 and 2018.

Despite not being present in all the relevant domains, the Austrian Olympic Committee has made important steps towards improving the situation for female elite level athletes and equal representation in its communication content. It has also developed an action plan to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport, that was implemented from 2015 to 2019.

The Austrian Olympic Committee has made imperative steps towards the amelioration of the current situation both on national and an international level. Nevertheless, there is still much more improvement and effort that is needed for the achievement of the final goal, the protection of women's rights and equality as well as the combat against violence in the field of sport. (Europe, 2019)

The leadership of Austrian sport is also mostly dominated by men. Only three of the 30 sport federations have a female president, which means 10% of the majority. Among the vice-presidents and members of the board, females are measured at 16% and only around 26% of the registered and employed coaches are women. However, the number of women and girls participating in a sport association is much higher at 42% for women and 56% for girls. The Olympic Committee and the sport federations have very few female board members, with rates around 15% and 16% respectively. Only the gymnastics federation has a balanced representation of female and male members on its board.

Since 2015 action has been taken to improve this situation. Nevertheless, still only five federations have a written policy for advancing towards gender equality in their sport activities, but 23% have a gender mainstreaming strategy. Most of the federations have at least imposed a strategy for the recruitment of females and their participation in decision making positions. According to the data, 40% are working on recruiting or increasing the number of female coaches, 63% of them are planning to increase active participation in sport and in physical activity and 47% are taking action towards the prevention of gender-based violence and discrimination. (Europe, 2019)

The Austrian Olympic Committee is continuing its efforts to improve the situation for female elite level athletes. The Committee is making an effort to establish a gender balanced representation in its communication material, specifically through the development of image guidelines. A specific action plan has been

created in order to diminish and exclude gender-based violence in the field. (Europe, 2019)

2.1.9. Case 9 – Denmark

According to the data derived from the Council of Europe for the Danish sport community, men hold the most powerful positions in Danish Sport on the whole. Only one federation (weightlifting) has a female president, while 35% of the vice presidents are women. The participation rate of women in sport and physical activity is 41%, but the female board members account for only 21%. There is a clear under representation of women in decision making positions in relation to women and girl's membership of the sport club/ federation. About one third of all registered coaches are women, but among these only 15% are employed. (COE, 2019)

To improve the current position, half of the federations have implemented measures to increase the number of women in decision making positions. Only a percentage of 28% has taken action to increase the number of female coaches and 78% has implemented measures to increase the rate of active girls and women athletic activities. However, none of the federations has a policy on preventing and combating gender-based violence in their sport, since 2015.

Only two sport federation and additionally the Olympic Committee, have a specific written policy for their actions to achieve equality between women and men in sport. To deliver their policy the Olympic Committee has taken a number of different measures to improve the gender balance in its decision making and in active participation of girls and women. (COE, 2019)

2.1.10. Case 10 – Czech Republic

In Czech Republic, none of the sport federations have a written policy and/or action plan for preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport. The

Olympic Committee has had a policy plan to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport since 2005. Only 11% of the sport federations have imposed measures to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport since 2015. These specific federations are fencing, gymnastics, rowing and sailing. (COE, 2019)

However, as mentioned before, the “All in: towards gender balance in sport” project, which is a European Union and Council of Europe joint project collects data from 18 countries in the domain of leadership, coaching participation, gender-based violence, media and communication and policies and programmes concerning gender equality in sport.

Competent authorities of the initiative were the Czech Republic Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and 36 other sport federations, that implemented the project from 2015 to 2019.

According to the instructions of the Czech Republic Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and the participant sport federations will take action in order to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, women coaches, girls and women active in sport and in physical activity as well as to ameliorate the current situation for elite level athletes.

Taking the above under consideration, one could conclude that the Olympic Committee in Czech Republic has been able to work for the improvement of the current situation regarding female elite level athletes and for a more balanced representation in its communication material. Furthermore, in a time framework between 2015 and 2019 the Committee has developed a relevant action plan and policies. (COE, 2019)

In most of the sport organisations in Czech Republic, all presidents, except three, of the 37 sport federations are men, and only 9% of all vice-presidents are women. Referring to the board members, only 14% of them are dedicated to women in the Olympic Committee. Furthermore, only one third of the registered and employed coaches are women.

With respect to the data and need for more equal participation in sport federations, a few associations have implemented measures to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and have implemented different tools to increase the number of active girls and women in sport.

However, none of these federations have a written policy or action plan on preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport and only four federations have taken actions to address this issue. Only one sport federation (rowing) has a specific written policy for gender equality and only the equestrian association has a balanced representation of female and male board members with three women and three men.

The Olympic Committee has been active in improving the situation for women in sport in the areas of leadership, coaching, gender-based violence, and participation, whereas the Ministry for Education, Youth and Sport has implemented measures around leadership and participation. The Ministry has adopted a gender strategy to achieve gender equality in sport. (COE, 2019)

2.1.11. Case 11 – Finland

A survey in 2020 by the Finnish Centre for Integrity in Sport (FINCIS) has found that almost one in three female athletes have experienced sexual harassment in sport in Finland. More than 9,000 over 16-year-old competitive athletes from almost 50 sport federations and organisations responded to the online survey. Almost 700 of them had represented their country at a junior or senior level.

The probability of sexual harassment was high especially for 16-year-old female athletes competing at the senior national level, according to survey. The perpetrator was another athlete in over a third of the sexual harassment cases, their own coach or the coach of another athlete in roughly a fifth of the cases, and a spectator, fan or social media follower in fewer than a fifth of the cases. Female victims were harassed by a man in 55 per cent of the cases. Experiences of sexual harassment were frequent especially among 20 to 25-year-old respondents. The most common forms of harassment were offensive or sexually colored remarks, inappropriate remarks about the bodies of athletes and offensive jokes about sexual minorities. (Sokka, 2020)

Moreover, 4% of the female requested also reported experiences of physical harassment and sexual violence. An additional 70 respondents stated that they had experienced sexual pressure and 14 stated that they had been the victim of a

rape or attempted rape. As many as 59 per cent of the respondents were unable to tell whether their sport federation or organisation had intervened or taken action to prevent sexual harassment. (Sokka, 2020)

In this framework, in Finland the Olympic Committee is one of a few that has managed to create a balanced board, whereas the women on the boards of the sport federations represent 29 %. Only one sport federation, rugby, has a balanced representation of female and male board members. A great percentage of 79% of the sport federations has taken actions, since 2015, to employ more females and appoint them in decision-making positions. Some of these federations are among others athletics, badminton, biathlon, boxing, canoeing and rowing. Despite the improvements, especially in comparison to other European member states, sport in Finland is still dominated by men with a percentage of 67%. Both girls and women, 66% on the whole, are less often a member of a sport club or federation than boys (64%) or men (70%). This is also indicated by the fact that half of the sport federations account fewer than 40% female members as the Finnish delegations had more male than female participants. (Collective, 2019)

More than half of the federations, almost 64% have developed a written policy for preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport, while the figure skating federation was the first one to develop a policy back in 2013.

The actions taken most often to prevent and combat gender-based violence are:

- adopting a written action plan
- arranging training seminars for coaches
- and decision makers
- running awareness raising campaigns (50%) and
- minimizing risk procedures (criminal record checks, risk assessment procedure, etc.)

In particular, the Finnish Ministry for Education and Culture organizes training courses and seminars as well as workshops addressed to coaches and decision makers aiming to prevent gender-based violence.

The national legal framework is also concentrated in gender equality, an aspect that is also evident in the work of the Olympic Committee. This is justified by the fact that the country has had 14% female presidents of Olympic sport federations,

40% of the federations' vice presidents are women, 29% are female board members and there is a general gender balance on the board of the Olympic committee. Successful actions were also taken for the promotion and participation of more women and girls in sport with a percentage of 79%. A number sport federations have implemented policies and measures for the prevention of gender violence and slightly more than 68% of these federations are in the process of developing or have already implemented a specific policy safeguarding gender equality. (Collective, 2019)

2.1.12 Case 12 - Portugal

In Portugal, only 22% of the sport federations have a written policy and/or action plan for preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport. These federations are badminton, boxing, football, gymnastics, hockey and modern pentathlon. The badminton federation was the first to develop a policy and action plan in 2009.

The Institute of Sport and Youth, however, has a written policy since 1990 (sport law) which aims to adopt measures to prevent and punish unsportsmanlike events, violence, corruption, doping and any form of social discrimination. (Anon., 1990)

The IPDJ (Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude) is working in close collaboration with sport organisations, youth associations, student and local authorities, to support the definition, implementation and evaluation of public policy in the sport sector but also to promote daily exercise and physical activity as well as high performance, through the provision of technical, human and financial resources.

The Institute is also in charge of issuing permits and licenses and providing the certifications and credentials necessary by law. Furthermore, it also promotes, in collaboration with public or private institutions, studies and research on sport participation indicators and on the different factors for the development of physical activity and sport.

Moreover, according to research on gender inequalities in gymnasts, gender participation rates are different and the potential reasons are namely sport availability and stereotypes. In spite of gymnastics being recently considered as an “early specialization” sport, characterized by a higher number of female participants than male ones, it has been highlighted that there are much less published studies in female athletes than in males. The aim of this study was to analyze the gender participation among Portuguese gymnasts according to gymnastics’ disciplines. An individual authorized database of all national gymnasts involved in the National School of Gymnastics of the Gymnastics Federation of Portugal among four athletic seasons, namely 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 was used. (Maria-Raquel G. Silva, 2016) From a sample of 14,742 gymnasts, 81.3% of them were female and only 18.7% were male during the athletic season from 2012 to 2013. Similar results were found in the next three seasons as follows: 83.3% females and 16.7% males in 2013/2014, 84.9% females and 15.1% males in 2014/2015 and 85.3% females and 14.7% males in 2015/2016. Significantly gymnasts-gender differences were observed for all disciplines.

No differences between genders were observed in Rhythmic Gymnastics, Women's Artistic Gymnastics and Men's Artistic Gymnastics due to the exclusive sport participation of female and male gymnasts, respectively. Gymnastics should improve participation and combat gender inequalities (DRE, 1990).

2.1.13. Case 13 – France

The French Ministry of Sport has had a written policy and/or action plan since 2013. It also has a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, human resources dedicated to the implementation of the policy and/or action plan, and funds allocated to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport.

Moreover, to support leaders, educators, volunteers and families, the Ministry has a prevention plan co-constructed with the sport movement, local communities, prevention and victim assistance associations, and the territorial services of the ministry. and the professional branches that I warmly thank for their active participation.

They have also developed an awareness kit, to distribute online and offline, so that all practitioners and their families feel safe when they practice a sport (French Ministry of Sport, 2013).

2.1.14 Case 14 - Bulgaria

Bulgarian Fund for Women is the only initiative in Bulgaria that supports local NGOs while raising funds and offering grants to those focusing on women empowerment, gender stereotypes, gender-based violence and promoting gender equality, and achieving social change. (Bulgarian Fund for Woman, 2019)

The steady increase of the number of women in sport may be promising, nevertheless they are still rather under-represented in public bodies and authorities relevant to sport in both European and International scale, especially in positions of power, where gender inequality scores an even higher level. As the higher the position, the greater the gender inequality. Within the European Union, women's representation remains quite low in management and higher posts. In particular, in 2015, only 14% of all positions were held by women, with extreme differences on rates from 3% in Poland to 43% in Sweden.

Fortunately, Bulgaria is categorized as a quite representative country in this regard, ranking 6th among other EU member states competing countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands. The data collected indicate representation rates in the 10 most popular national sport federations in the examined countries in 2015. (Bulgarian Fund for Woman, 2019)

In this context, BIODERMA and Runner Sport club have organized in 2019 the first running competition that will be completely dedicated to women in Bulgaria. Since then, the three other runs have been organized, while the third one serves a charitable purpose as it raises funds for Children with Onomatological Diseases

Association with children undergoing cancer treatment. The third edition of the competition also includes girls from 10 to 15 years old, as well as mothers running accompanied by their daughters.

2.1.15. Case 15 – Estonia

In Estonia, the legal framework referring to sexual harassment incidents concerns mostly those occurred in the workplace and professional environment. In addition to that, Estonian law prohibits people that have been convicted as offenders and even suspects of exercising violent behaviors, are not allowed to perform any paid or volunteer position, including sport, with minors. However, there is a great lack of further legislation and policies in order to combat violence in the field of sport. Several scandals have been exposed in the recent years in the world of Estonian sport. The Estonia Football League is examining case of sexual abuse by coaches to female athletes, even since they were teens. Disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against a football coach that is suspected of abusing sexually a former athlete when she was only 14 years old. Nevertheless, the Police and Border Guard are not involved, as the age of consent in Estonia is 14 years old. The matter has been greatly covered in national media and women that have experienced similar incidents are encouraged to come forward. (Andrew Whyte, 2021)

2.2 Private Actors

2.2.1. Case 1 – United Kingdom and the Netherlands

The Women Win organisation stands out as an example of dynamic actions for women empowerment. In particular during 2006, Women Win organisation was established as a global women's fund dedicated to advancing girls' and women's rights through sport activities. Since the beginning, more than 4 million adolescent

girls and young women in over 100 countries have been impacted by the implementation of their activities. Through the aid of sport and games, women were able to develop leadership skills and become better equipped so as to exercise their rights. The organisation focus is oriented towards three specific areas of interest in order to support women's right:

- Address gender-based violence
- Access sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Gain economic empowerment

Three basic elements are addressed for the accomplishment of the organisation's goals. Firstly, the strengthening of the team. Establishing strong and healthy partnerships with other organisations and while ameliorating their organisational and programmatic capacities. Through this process, organisations get in touch with key global players and ensure quality and innovation. Secondly, creation of game changing innovation, which means the introduction of innovative concepts in girls' sport programmes while collaborating with new and trusted partners expands their knowledge in women's issues. Thirdly, transformative thinking, as sport, will be presented as a lever for achieving more equitable societies. Their aim is to create a conversation so as to introduce ideas, energy and attention to women, on a worldwide scale. (Collective, 2021).

2.2.2. Case 2 – Spain

Taking into account the data and figures from the Council of Europe and the European Union about gender-based violence in the Spanish Sport Associations, critical conclusions can be drawn.

In 2019, a survey was developed under the name "Exposure to sexual harassment at work in selected European countries" concluding that a high percentage of 31% of Spanish female citizens have experienced some form of sexual abuse within the

work environment and 22% among them has been exposed to disrespectful gestures and language. An unfortunate rate that positions Spain as the first country in comparison to other countries–members. (COE, 2019). In continuation, by the age of 15 years old, 4% of females have been exposed to some sort of physical or verbal violence from a current partner and 18% rate from a previous partner. A general indication referring to any partner or non-partner as perpetrator of the violent behavior concerns 22% of females in Spain. (Europa, 2014) In sport federations and management, men dominate the field and only 13% is governed by women. The only exception stands for the Spanish Olympic Committee, where 25% of its members are female. Moreover, 29% of coaches are women and 59% of sport federations have developed a plan in order to support the battle against gender-based violence, while 745 of them have been quite active in the implementation of relevant measures. Fortunately, the majority of them (82%) has made significant efforts to encourage female participation in sport. (COE, 2019)

An initial effort concerning violence in sport, was made by the Sport City Council in Barcelona in 2014. In particular, the local authorities published the first Spanish textbook that was addressing from an educational approach the combat against sexual abuse in sport. This specific material was a groundbreaking tool for experts and professionals for raising awareness about the great negative effect that this behavior can have on athletes and children, violating their rights and dignity. The authorities that were involved in the process, considered to be essential the comprehension and presentation of the facts before confronting the problem. (Barcelona, 2014)

In Spain, the company IBERDROLA GROUP is the first firm that has made a global commitment to encourage women's participation in sport under the same conditions as men. Moreover, they support several federations, such as gymnastics, triathlon, rugby among others (Iberdrola, 2016).

The company is the main sponsoring partner of the national women's football team in both Spain and Brazil. The Iberdrola group was also responsible for the Universe Woman I and II programme. (Collective, 2016) This initiative was aiming at the promotion and increase of women's participation in sport. Their main goal

was to facilitate social reform and achieve specific improvements via sport and their values. Gender equality and equal opportunities between women and men are promoted. The firm supports projects and programmes that contribute to women's participation in sport through five major pillars of action:

- Training as an element of excellence
- Sport development Plan: from grassroots to the elite
- Visibility and advancement of women in sport and in society
- Leadership
- Women, health and sport

The impact of their activities has to be further examined, as the combat of gender discrimination and inequality consists a great challenge for the society as well as the sport community. (Iberdrola, 2016)

What is more, the Spanish Sport High Council developed a protocol for the prevention, detection and proceedings against sexual harassment and abuse (Europa, 2016). The content of the protocol refers to three main objectives. Firstly, the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse in the field of sport, as well as raising awareness and providing educational information concerning its theme. Secondly, the implementation of a specific procedure in case of sexual harassment or/and abuse incidents. Finally, the support of an environment that will not accept any case of abuse against children or adults. (Europa, 2016) More information can be found in the official website of the Government office about gender-based violence. The responsibilities of the Council are not restricted only to that, as they are also monitoring that the codes of sport federations are taking into account gender-based violence and good practices. But not only that, in spring the State Secretariat of Social Services and Equality of Spain in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport co-signed a mutual agreement reinforcing gender rights and equality in the sport domain.

2.2.3. Case 3 – North Macedonia

In North Macedonia, violence against women is considered to be a prevalent phenomenon. A rate of 60% of women believe it is a common issue, and nearly

17% of women know someone among their environment who has been a victim of domestic violence. A little more than the half of female population in the country has been informed of violence against women and feel more reassured about what they should do if they are in a similar position. However, a few among them are aware of the non-governmental organisations and authorities that they could contact. (OSCE, 2019)

In addition to that, around 42% of Albanian-speaking women perceive violence against women as a common situation and they are less informed about the relevant NGOs. 7% among Albanian-speaking women versus 16% among Macedonian-speaking women stated that they have experienced a form of physical or sexual abuse by a partner. Psychological abuse is even more common among 44% of women. Referring to sexual harassment, 3 in 10 women have experience it since the age of 15 years old and almost 10% of them have been harassed during the previous year.

Most women in North Macedonia consider that domestic violence is a private matter that is solved within the family. An even more problematic approach is stated as some women perceive minor violent behavior as normal. (OSCE, 2019)

Regarding the promotion of equal opportunities among women and men, the association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women in North Macedonia for over 25 years has been taking action through the improvement of relevant laws and policies as well as cases of violation against human rights.

In 2013, the Association initiated its actions for social justice and monitored court cases that were related to different forms of violence against women, mostly referring to domestic violence.

The association has collided with Akcija Združenska, Open Gate / La Strada Macedonia for the implementation of the second, sixth, eleventh, twelfth and fifteenth Articles of the Convention. The adoption of the Law on equal opportunities between women and men has made zero impact on other legislative and policy reforms. Both national and local institutions activities for securing the combat of discrimination, lack of opportunities as well as specific measures to improve the status of women are also defined by the Convention. The government was not capable of planning and programming the appropriate measures and

policies for women's rights and relevant beneficiaries. Due to slow performance indicators and efficiency rate the strategic plan did not meet any success. (ESE, 2018)

Some of the conclusions drawn by the data collection are the following:

The state of the labor market in the Republic of Macedonia and especially the state of women on the labor market is highly unfavorable following the very slow pace of unemployment decline over the last decade.

Women in the RM are insufficiently covered with primary level health care services, including primary gynecological health care and patronage nurse visits. There is a lack of coverage of women on a national level with the Program for Cervical Cancer Screening (PCCS).

The degree of practicing contraception is low amongst women in their reproductive period and abortion is still used as a method of family planning, in particular by married women.

Roma women face multiple barriers in access to gynecological health care on a primary level, including distance, discriminatory practices and paying for services that are free of charge.

Access to justice in Macedonia is limited for the poorer, making them more vulnerable.

The State fails to provide effective legal protection for women who suffered violence. There was not a single case of domestic violence where the State has provided free legal aid in the specialized civil and criminal court procedures for protection of women who suffered domestic violence.

Overall, the transposition and the implementation of the EU gender equality acquis in North Macedonia, as a candidate country, is improving. Considering the relatively recent change in context, the developments are positive. However, it cannot be concluded that the remedies and sanctions meet the standards of being effective, proportionate and dissuasive. The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has not been used as a basis for legal proceedings, either by claimants or by the courts themselves. Secondly, court processes in relation to gender equality are rare and slow. There is still no systematic approach to addressing gender equality. Positive action measures providing visible results are

still lacking. The strategies and action plans adopted during the current reporting period¹⁹⁵ do not offer the necessary measures or means to improve the situation and to address the identified problems (ESE, 2018).

2.2.4. Case 4 – Romania

Recent study among Romanian citizens shows that 60% of the population thinks that football is mainly a male sport activity and on the other hand sport such as ice skating, gymnastics and volleyball are activities dedicated mostly to women. An extreme amount of 75% of Romanians believe that women are not capable of performing in sport at the same level as men. A minor percentage of 2% think that women can be competent players in football. (Journal, 2021) The rate of physical activity in children and adolescents is much higher among males (16% for adolescents aged 15 years old) in comparison to females (only % for girls aged 15 years old). (WHO, 2016)

In Romania, coverage of women athletes from the media is the highest among UK, Sweden, Greece and Malta according to the data from a relevant study, nevertheless the percentage has only reached 14% and was mainly referring to tennis reporting. The study concludes that even though men dominate sport, women athletes and successful women athletes can stand out and be broadly presented in the media. (Collective, 2018)

An overall view of the current situation in Romania, according to the European Gender Equality Index, Romania scores 54.4 points. The women's participation in power and decision making has slightly improved, but the gender gap remains quite high in the field of employment and income. (EIGE, 2020) Moreover, it is estimated that in Romania 1/3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence, or even both since the age of 15 years old. In particular, 30% of Romanian women have experienced some sort of physical and sexual violence in their life, but only 23% of them has reported the incident. A percentage of 32% of women has experienced sexual harassment and 5.4 per 100.000 people were declared victims of human trafficking. (EIGE, 2017) A high percentage of almost 77% women in Romania has admitted that gender-based violence against women is

widespread in their country. (Drob, 2020) Official statistics state that more than half of the Romanian population (60%) perceives domestic violence as normal and justified in certain circumstances. (Collective, 2018)

Referring to harassment cases in Romania, an article “Girls Gone Running: Taking on Street Harassment” has triggered the interest of a great amount of the public regarding incidents of sexual violations. In particular, Andreea Călugăru, a 34-year-old national triathlon champion, and her story inspired many other women to create and support the “Girls Gone Running” Facebook group in Romania. The group has gained a large reputation, where member can report sexual harassment incidents. (Ciobanu, 2021) Women that read the posts can ask questions and discuss the issue further with the community. Furthermore, the questions asked can offer an example of the current situation, lack of information and education around the problem.

A new Facebook group called «Project legislative Girls Gone Running» was also created aiming at the introduction of a bill that will state some regulations about street harassment. Oana Solomon, a runner and law school graduate, was appointed responsible for the research upon the existing legal framework for harassment in Romania. While examining the factors, interesting conclusions were made. And prior to the existing law, there had been no provision to penalize harassment in public spaces in Romania. The 2018 law states that in cases of harassment police are enforced with the responsibility to impose fines of between 3000 and 10.000 lei, an amount which is equivalent to 615 and 2050 euros. (Ciobanu, 2021)

Oana Bîzgan that was the first to propose the initiative and articles of the 2018 law stated that she began with clarifying the legislation on harassment as the equal opportunities law that existed at the time, did not concerned penalties and the person that will be imposed to, excluding in this manner most street aggression incidents. It is necessary to punish such incidents, given the fact that otherwise the aggressor thinks that he can get away without any consequence. This could lead to more juvenile behavior and disrespectful attitudes towards women.

When working on the legislative initiative, Bîzgan discussed with various women’s rights organisations and activists. A woman that was also approached was Simona

Chirciu, a researcher who represents Romania for global anti-harassment movement HollaBack. According to her doctoral research, over 80% of women ignore their aggressors when exposed to street harassment, while only 2.9% of them will call the relevant authorities. The reason behind this case is the wide mistrust towards the police and local authorities as well as victim blaming and lack of information. (Ciobanu, 2021)

There is a general social tendency around street sexual harassment due to the fact that usually public spaces are not seen as abusive environments reinforcing these attitudes, like for instance in the case of rape or physical abuse. However, street harassment can create psychological trauma, and can trigger even more serious attitudes if the victim has experienced sexual or physical violence from a partner in the past.

When the advocates first presented their need and desire to the Parliament about harassment, they accepted almost all ignorance and mockery, while only 19.8 % of the parliamentary seats were occupied by women. (Ciobanu, 2021)

The function of the Facebook group can be used as an effective tool for the information of others, the implementation of law when the public is unaware of them. They were aiming to initiate a conversation about what abusive behavior is and is not acceptable in public space, and to obtain an agreement that gender-based harassment under no circumstances should be tolerated. Nevertheless, much more work remains to be done to clarify the definition of harassment and what women can do when they experience it. A newly imposed legislation is not enough for the elimination of the harassment of women in public space.

2.2.5. Case 5 – Lithuania

In Lithuania the absence of relevant information is a result of a general lack of understanding of gender-based violence in sport as a problem in addition to the low visibility of the topic in sport. The result of this could be identified the sensitivity of the topic as a key reason for this resistance. Also, Lithuania, like Estonia, has a lack of policy, legal or grassroots initiatives on violence topic in sport.

However, the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee (LNOC – LTOK) has taken the initiative to advocate for athletes and impose protective measures concerning sexual harassment and discrimination as well as mental and physical abuse. Athletes that are registered to sport federations and are also members of the LTOK will be provided with free legal advice including consultation session as on victims of sexual harassment, discrimination, mental or physical abuse. Moreover, a complaint sheet delivered by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman will be introduced and pre-trial investigations will be conducted. (LTOK, n.d.)

Additionally, the LNOC has participated in a number of projects that were focused on gender equality. The first International Olympic Committee (IOC) forum that was held in Vilnius concerning Women’s Leadership, three years ago, attracted huge attention on a worldwide scale. The IOC has also funded the women leaders of the project “Time for Change!” funded by the European Union’s Erasmus+ programme, where the LNOC was involved as a partner. (LTOK, n.d.)

In collaboration with the Lithuanian Union of Journalists, the LNOC organized the event “Gender-Related Trends” in the Lithuanian Media and drafted Recommendations for the Media on Sport Topics and the Portrayal of Athletes. Finally, during last year, the LNOC joined the United Nations “He For She” initiative, which encourages men to show solidarity and support women willing to develop their career in the field of sport. (LTOK, n.d.)

2.2.6. Case 6 – Denmark

Denmark as a partner in the project “All in: towards gender balance in sport”, as mentioned, has implemented the necessary policies and activities according to the European Union (EU) and Council of Europe, while participating in the consortium of the project during 2015 and 2019. (COE, 2019)

Subsequently, the existing legal framework will be once more reviewed and accordingly the models for monitoring the statistical data on the status of women in sport will be further monitored aiming to combat both direct and indirect discrimination. The specific measures that will be taken are going to increase the percentage of women in decision-making positions, women coaches, girls and

women that are active in the sport field and in physical activity in general and will improve the situation for female high-level athletes (COE, 2019), in the framework between 2017 and 2018.

Despite not being active in all areas, the Danish Olympic Committee has, nonetheless, worked towards improving the situation for female elite level athletes and to having gender balanced representation in its communication material, specifically through the development of image guidelines. It has also developed an action plan to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport (COE, 2019).

2.2.7. Case 7 – Norway

The majority of the studies conducted about the examination of sexual violence, do not only refer to coaches as perpetrators. According to the data, a percentage of 28% among Norwegian female athletes, in the national team, have experienced sexual violence. Norwegian female elite athletes, that took part in the studies, declared prevalence rates for their sexual violence experiences outside sport (Kari Fasting, 2014). Almost 28% of the athletes had experienced some form of sexual harassment in sport environment, and 39% had experienced sexual harassment outside sport. Subsequently, a 51% in total of the athletes had a sexual violence experience within or outside sport. Furthermore, when compared with a group of female non-athletes, it was revealed that athletes experienced the same rate of sexual harassment as the non-athletes.

It was also indicated that female athletes experienced less sexual harassment in of sport than in irrelevant situations. (Kari Fasting, 2014). A great question arises, whether these incidents can be explained by the perilous sport culture, or if female athletes are considered a vulnerable group.

Furthermore, a report by the Quarterly for Exercise and Sport makes a fruitful comparison between the prevalence of sexual harassment and abuse with data from 660 Norwegian elite female athletes and a sample of non-athletes. It also examines differences about harassment and abuse in sport, work or school environments by male authority figures and peers in these distinctive but relevant

contexts. Surprisingly no differences were found between the athletes and controls referring to sexual harassment or abuse. (Kari Fasting, 2014) However, the athletes experienced significantly more harassment from male authority figures than did the controls. Based on these findings, the study questions the protection that sport may or may not offer to female athletes. The data show that both the elite athletes and the controls experienced sexual harassment and abuse, which is depressingly higher than incidents in the workplace. Finally, the oldest athletes reported fewer experiences of sexual harassment and abuse from someone outside sport than someone outside work or school.

The importance of changing the culture of sport itself is greatly argued. Sport organisations need to move beyond gender equality policies and measures against harassment or abuse in sport and the workplace. Educational programs that address coaching styles, personal relationships, language, and behavior in sport are important methods, but are not capable of making a great change and bring sustainable improvements in the culture of sport (Kari Fasting, 2014).

2.2.8. Case 8 – Sweden

Overall, the results imply a 5.5% prevalence rate of athletes who report they have experienced sexual harassment and abuse in Swedish sport. Organized sport in Sweden is an extensive social phenomenon and as many as 80–90% of the 10 million Swedes have been a club sport member at some time in their life (Nordensky, 2020). Despite the relatively low response rate in this study, findings suggest that a number of athletes experience sexual harassment and abuse. Sweden is usually depicted as an open to all, independent, non-profit, and democratic society, an assumption that needs to be further examined in the field of sport (Susanne Johansson, 2017).

According to the collected information 5.5% of athletes reported 31 cases of coach-related sexual harassment and abuse that they have experienced in the past, while five athletes stated that they had been exposed to more than one incident of sexual harassment and. Most of the sexual harassment and abuse concerned

unsolicited physical contact. A higher percentage of female than male athletes reported experiences of sexual harassment and abuse with a percentage of 3.6% among men and 7.0% among women. The majority of the perpetrators were male coaches. Regarding the highest performance level, 10.0% of elite level reported sexual harassment and abuse, and 4.9% athletes on competitive non-elite level and 2.3% of athletes on recreational level. A majority reported they had been children or adolescents, less than 12 years old, when they were subjected to these incidents and only six participants reported that they had been older than 18 years of age. The majority of athletes reported that sexual harassment and abuse took place in the sport environment. A minority of the responses referred to incidents outside sport, such as during a social activity. In addition to that, only 10 athletes reported that they had told someone about the sexual harassment and abuse and only two had not reported it to anyone. Finally, 10.7% of athletes stated that they knew some peers in their sport association that had experienced some sort of abuse by a coach. (Susanne Johansson, 2017)

In 2015 Parent conducted a national survey on Quebec adolescent students, from 14 to 17 years old, including athletes and non-athletes. A percentage of 10.2% declared sexual harassment. Moreover, in 2016 and a relevant study led by Vertommen reported 14% prevalence of sexual violence towards children in sport in the region of Netherlands and Belgium through an online questionnaire. A Danish study also reported 5% prevalence of 5 in 83 cases in which the offender was reportedly a coach. Among Australian athletes, a percentage of 27% reported sexual abuse and 10% stated that perpetrator was a coach. (Leahy et al., 2002). Finally, in a Canadian study, 8.6% of elite-athletes reported experiences of rape or attempted rape in sport (Kirby et al., 2000).

According to the Swedish Sports Confederation annual research report is based on survey responses from 762 associations concerned with support for children and youth activities, from 7 to 25 years old. The associations refer to 48 special sport federations in 290 different municipalities of Sweden. A quite positive attitude towards gender equality, and sport associations is generated in the Swedish community. Training times, financial resources and participation conditions are non-discriminative towards children and youth. (Nordensky, 2020)

However, the notion of gender equality is quite undeveloped while gender equality in sport is only referring to girls and female sport participation. This could be described as the exact indication of the existing inequality in the field.

In conclusion, about nine out of ten associations state that gender equality is a starting point in the association's work. Regardless of whether it concerns the distribution of training times, financial resources or conditions for going to competitions, matches and cups. The most common answer is that resources are distributed equally among all practitioners in the first place. The majority of the associations follow a relevant governing document that concerns equality and gender. Of course, there are also challenges with gender equality in sport association. Most commonly, sport associations have difficulty recruiting and retaining practitioners. There is usually a large number of children and young people participating in sport, but girls in particular are quite less represented. Finally, another challenge is the lack of leaders. The associations especially lack more women as leaders in their management (Nordensky, 2020).

2.2.9. Case 9 – France

In France, the Non-governmental organisation FEMIX SPORT is aiming at a better representation of women in sport, to encourage diversity and equity and to be a support and support tool for the promotion of women's sport in general. (FEMIX, n.d.)

Their main goal is to facilitate access of women in sport by ensuring the promotion of actions in favor of women's sport and disseminate the relevant information. The organisation also takes part in studies and research work on this perspective as well as debates as in conferences on this theme. A better media coverage of women in sport is targeted and training dedicated to promotion of access in positions of responsibility. FEMIX SPORT supports Federations, decentralized bodies and sport movements by consulting, conducting research and organizing training courses. (FEMIX, n.d.)

Despite the great contribution of FEMIX SPORT in this cause, local authorities have the upper hand and real responsibility in making a change in France. Finally, they

organize a form of “Women's Sport Day” or “Mixed Sport Day”, where they can combine different activities with the participation of high-level athletes, interventions in schools or businesses, an exhibition, connected sport activities, etc. (FEMIX, n.d.).

2.2.9. Case 10 – Malta

In 2018, Malta participated in the testing and piloting of a survey on violence against women as part of a Eurostat project. The aim of this project was to pre-test, translate and pilot an EU questionnaire on violence against women which is based on the methodology used by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for its report “Violence against women: an EU-wide survey” published in 2014. Report showed that 22% of women in Malta had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a (former or current) or non-partner.

According to the numerical factors, the rate of physical and sexual violence from partners is calculated at around 15%, while in the last 12 months the rate was 4%, which is almost equal to the rate of lifetime non-partner sexual violence calculated at 5%.

In this framework, the Malta Women’s Lobby (MWL) advocates for women’s interest through dialogue and networking at a national, European and international scale. The objective of the Lobby is to connect and unify all national women’s NGOs and their members in order to represent Malta at the European Women’s Lobby (EWL). (MWL, 2020)

The main goals of the Malta Women’s Lobby are to act as a national forum where informed reflection and debate on women’s rights lead to concrete recommendations, conclusions and actions. They are responsible for the dissemination of best practices in the field of women’s rights and guarantee equal opportunities. They are willing to improve the cooperation between policy makers, NGO’s and individual members working in the field of women’s issues, as well as raise awareness on European women’s issues. They collaborate and work directly with European institutions to ensure that women’s needs are integrated

in European policies. Finally, they inform and update members about national and European legal framework and regulations on gender issues. (MWL, 2020)

In continuation to the aforementioned actions, the 25th of November is the kick off date for the annual international campaign of 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence. It starts on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and continues until the 10th of December, a day dedicated to Human Rights. The campaign debuted in 1991 by activists that wanted to raise awareness for the complete elimination of violence against women and girls. It concerned bullying, rape, physical violence and abusive speech, human trafficking, prostitution, female genital mutilation, among others. (MWL, 2020) A huge number of cases is being reported every year, pressuring governments and other organisations to provide holistic services and support that prioritize the needs of victims and survivors of violence and encouraging them to report the abuse. Governments must acknowledge the legacy of past failures and the need for new collaborative approaches to preventing violence against women. The civil and criminal justice systems should aim at the protection of women and children who have been victims of violence. Greater support should be provided to those women with less opportunities or abilities in abusive relationships facing discrimination. (MWL, 2020)

Moreover, the National Council of Women takes action despite generations, cultures, for the elimination of violence against women. Through movements such as the #Me Too survivors and activists had touched upon imperative social problems, however violence against women continues to increase. (NCWMalta, n.d.)

They propose national educational campaigns in schools, on national media and in the workplace in order to disseminate awareness around gender-based violence, professional assistance for women, support services and housing to women and children suffering from domestic violence, strengthening of justice systems. All these initiatives will be contributing to the existing work and goal of relevant NGOs, who are providing these tools and funds (NCWMalta - National Council of Women of Malta, 2019).

3. Analysis

3.1 Impact Made from Policies

Taking under consideration the aforementioned cases and initiatives, it is argued that it is important to change the culture that sport adopts in its core. Although the implementation of training and educational programs in general are of great significance, they are not capable of tackling the problem from the root and efficiently lead to sustainable improvements and changes in the gender culture of sport. More drastic policies should be imposed that could lead to constitutional changes and achieve a wider representation of women in sport. Equal rights and opportunities in sport activities and associations have to be reassured.

Methods and techniques for the elimination of gender-based violence in sport have been interestingly supported by distinctive actors and stakeholders. These multidisciplinary activities that should and usually do include governmental, public, private and civil society organisations promote and raise public awareness about gender violence and gender equality measures in sport.

However, the impact of these policies on equal rights and respect of women and girls in sport has yet to be researched. The consequences of the pandemic have also to be studied as it is expected to arouse gender-based violence. Women and girls must be equally participants and leaders in the process of articulating and developing the relevant policies that concern them. In this manner, additional value and impact will be created as women take part in the decision making and create together a better future with less discrimination and violence against them, in particular in the field of sport.

3.2 Evaluation

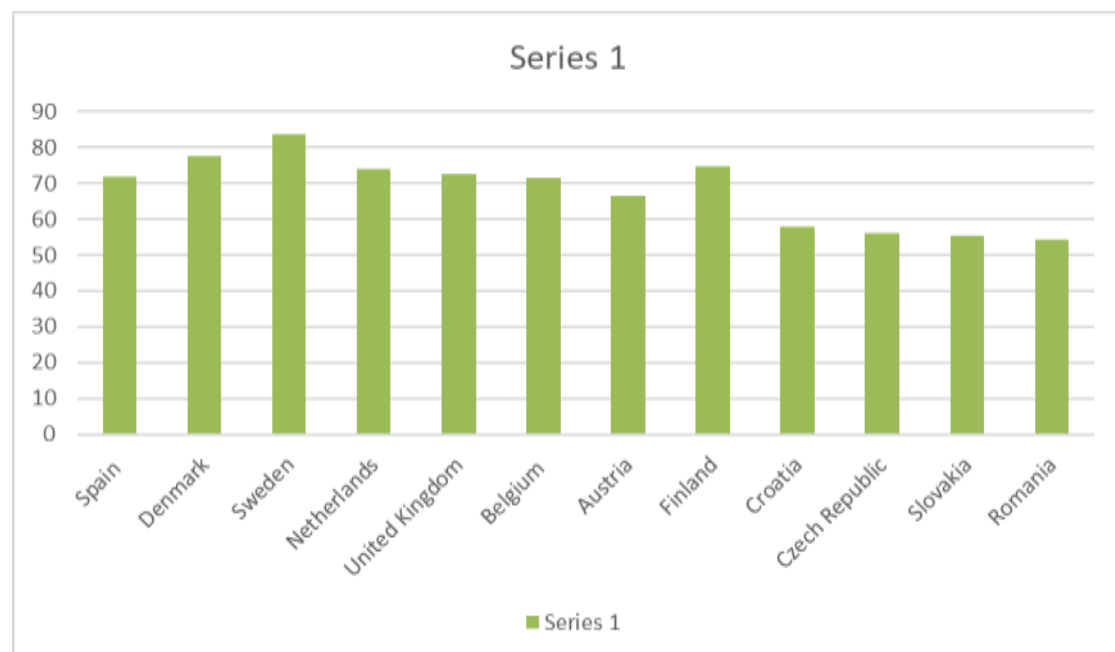
Despite the great steps that have been made from several European countries towards the implementation of the adequate legislations and activities for the protection of women in sport, much more effort and unity is required from the responsible institutions and authorities. The aforementioned case studies consist

of important examples of the dynamic actions taken by the member states in accordance with legislation of the European Union. (Window, 2016)

While establishing the appropriate programs and initiatives, women rights are being promoted and safeguarded particularly in the field of sport. Young girls, amateur athletes and professionals are targeted in order to ameliorate the conditions of their participation in sport activities. At the same time, the impact of these actions on men's attitudes as well as the behavior of coaches and trainers are being continually developed. The constant education of the relevant professionals and stakeholders will offer further support to this never-ending battle.

Much progress has recently been made in measuring and eliminating gender-based violence. Nevertheless, the framework for the protection of women in sport is still quite limited. Policy recommendations are lacking the necessary power in order to alter the current situation. An instant change would not be possible given the fact that this fragile issue should be attentively confronted. The solution to this fundamental violation of women's rights in sport will need much more time and effort to be achieved and a great amount of patience is required for the combat of the problem.

According to the European Gender Equality Index, in 2020 by country



(European Institute for Gender Equality Index)

3.3 Recommendations

Even though greater research is necessary for the comprehension of sexual violence and abuse in the field of sport, it is clearly stated that the current measures have been proved inefficient. In the last few years, many countries have developed policies and best practices that could be useful guidelines for the combat of sexual harassment and violence among athletes. However, these attitudes are mainly unrecognized or neglected in most countries and sport associations.

Subsequently, it is clearly articulated the necessity for improvements in order to combat gender inequalities and violence in the field of sport. There is still a great need and space for more drastic changes and actions.

The relevant organisations and federations should implement with the appropriate manner their strategies, confronting any setback and obstacle that may occur during the process. Many local governments explicitly mention social and leisure spaces as a setting where prevention against women action can be successfully implemented.

A few suggested actions from relevant organisations could be adopted and be included in their main initiative, the promotion of women's independence and empowerment. Firstly, consultations with women and girls in the sport environment could be organized, as well as the implementation of specific safety measures to ensure that management and physical spaces are inclusive and accessible. Reviews of the sporting environments and their facilities could be introduced through surveys and questionnaires completed by members and athletes for the evaluation and representation of women. Gender stereotypes and roles should be constantly challenged. A healthy relationship approach and indication should be presented and reinforced. Communications and awareness campaigns could be also organized and implemented in order to promote respectful relationships and gender equality in the field of sport and all its internal layers of management. Finally, funding, management of resources and facilities

should be appropriately allocated and divided for best possible representation and support of women and girls for gender equality and non-discrimination.

On a national level, countries and governments should provide effective measures and policies to reassure the combat of violence against women. Governments should ensure that all educational institutions provide quality physical activities, even by implementing digital tools when social distancing. Sport organisations should expand the activities that they offer and are available to the public, without discriminating or neglecting women. All sport programmes should be also accessible to women and girls, especially when combined with soft skills and empowerment training. The appropriate financial support should be dedicated to these activities, as well as the distribution of resources for men and women equal participation. (Van Eekeren, 2013)

On a local level, sport organisations could continue to invest in women's sport participation and include them in the creation of their policies. Extensive consultations and training should be conducted among women athletes and members as well as coaches to comprehend their problems and address them properly. Local beneficiaries and associations should be included in these activities in order to increase the impact and outcome of the policies. It would be even better to involve local civil society organisations, such as sport organisations or other organisations that can support the initiatives. Male athletes, journalists and coaches should be recognized as allies in the effort for equality for women in sport. High profile persons and athletes should be invited to raise awareness about the gender discrimination and need for safe sport, new policies and procedures. (Van Eekeren, 2013)

In conclusion, athletes themselves should be adequately informed of their rights and responsibilities with regard to the prevention and be encouraged to report any relevant incident. They should also offer their support to their peers and stand by them in order to express what they have experienced or witnessed. Advocates and unions among women athletes could also represent and negotiate these terms in the field of sport.

Conclusions

As with other social institutions such as schools and workplaces, people learn and reproduce particular attitudes, behaviors and social norms through their participation in sport. Athletic activities are able to positively affect participants and reshape their personality and behavior. Sport offers great opportunities of change to the community and its people. Values such as respect, empathy, patience, consistency are some of the advantages when one is involved in sport. People from different countries, gender, social class and religion can understand each other and collaborate within their team. Unfortunately, even in these respectful and comprehensive environments unfavorable incidents can occur in particular against women. Violent behavior or even sexual harassment are some of the examples of violent attitudes that are usually evident in sport. (Fortier, 2018)

However, all these incidents can be controlled and improved, if sport associations and environments are appropriately monitored and utilize sport as a tool for less discrimination and prejudices. Important changes can be achieved when sport is used correctly and with respect towards all participants. On the one hand, self-esteem and confidence can be increased via sport participation and interpersonal interactions and social competences. (Dr Damien J. Williams, 2013) On the other hand, while sport can influence one's perspective of body image and its appreciation, participants tend to be more confident and respectful about themselves. The increased confidence of participants can facilitate the reinforcement of their personality and their power to confront unfavorable situations and possible harassment. (Health, 2011)

Furthermore, the quite high interest of men in sport when combined with women empowerment actions can influence domestic violence elimination and lead to the improvement of gender equality, especially among athletes and sport associations. The engagement of men in these activities and the development of a respectful attitude towards women can reinforce the combat against gender-based violence and toxic behavior against women, due to the hegemonic masculinity that is usually present in sport. (Dr Damien J. Williams, 2013)

These activities cannot be achieved without the support and contribution of sport organisations. The involvement of relevant stakeholders and their commitment is necessary for the battle against gender-based violence. Moreover, victimization of women that have experienced some kind of violence should be avoided as it is also possible that these women adopt violent behaviors themselves in their future life. Especially in developing countries, these experiences are tightly linked to social-cultural factors. Religion, income, social and economic class, education and country of origin are only some of the factors that can affect the perception and confrontation of violence. (Fortier, 2018)

Despite the evident improvement and changes made in the field of sport, especially during the last few years, the economic crisis as well as the advent of the pandemic in the last few years have led to important setbacks. Gender equality and gender-based violence have been deteriorated due to the consequences of Covid-19 and the quarantine. The next steps towards the empowerment of women in sport and gender equality are still uncertain as the pandemic still thrives and the economic impact of this is still not clearly articulated. Finally, there is a lot more room for improvement in the field of sport and the confrontation of violence. Thus, additional research is needed to understand the contexts which trigger sport-related violence as well as the risk that this attitude can provoke to sport associations and measures to eliminate them.

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