

Executive Summary

Building European Safe Sport Together: Safeguarding amongst European Sports Organisations

Ilva Biedre, Guilherme Campos de Moraes,
Gustavo Harada, Daniela Negreda



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Ilva Biedre, Guilherme Campos de Moraes, Gustavo Harada, Daniela Negreda

Correspondence: info@ignitx.events

BESST Project Partners:

European Olympic Academies – Soenke Schadwinkel, Katrin Wallmann

IGNITX – Ilva Biedre, Gustavo Harada, Daniela Negreda, Guilherme Campos de Moraes

Akademija Rudi Hiti – Alenka Hiti, Andreja McQuarrie

Windesheim University of Applied Sciences – Nicolette Schipper-van Veldhoven, Marleen Haandrikman

UEFA Foundation for Children – Carine Nkoue

NOC*NSF – Erik van Haaren

National Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Polona Samec, Peter Dokl

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1. BESST Work Package 2 Executive Summary

In work package 2 the Building European Safe Sport Together (BESST) project focused on the assessment of the Safeguarding status amongst European Sports Organisations and on the development of a legal framework for the main groups of sport organisation, namely National Olympic Committees (NOC), National Federations (NF) and Clubs.

For the assessment of status, the following methodologies were used:

- Desk research
- Survey questionnaires with NOCs and NFs
- Interviews with NOCs and NFs representatives



Key Findings of the Safeguarding Statuses Amongst European Sports Organisations

The key findings in no specific order across all the methodologies and organisations are:

1. Diversity of Legislative Frameworks

The current landscape of safeguarding in sports is marked by a lack of uniformity in legislative frameworks, nomenclatures, and sanctions. This diversity hampers the effectiveness of safeguarding measures. Organisations call for the establishment of an overarching governing body. Such a body would set the pace and standardise policies across different jurisdictions and organisations, ensuring a cohesive approach to safeguarding in sports.

2. Need for Independence

To maintain the integrity and effectiveness of safeguarding measures, organisations identify the crucial need to ensure the independence of safeguarding bodies. This independence is necessary to avoid conflicts of interest that could compromise the protection of all stakeholders. Safeguarding bodies must operate without undue influence from organisations that may have vested interests.

3. Accountability of Non-Members

Holding non-members accountable poses a significant challenge in the absence of recognised contractual agreements. For example, athletes typically have contractual obligations with their clubs, but volunteer coaches in minor leagues often do not. This disparity highlights the lack of standardised processes that encompass all individuals involved in sports, to ensure everyone is held to the same safeguarding standards.

4. Lack of Funds

Financial constraints are a major barrier to effective safeguard in sports. Many organisations lack the necessary funds to implement comprehensive safeguarding measures, provide training, and support investigative processes.

5. Need for Educational and Training Programmes

There is a pressing need for educational and training programs at all levels within sports organisations. Organisations identify the need to raise awareness, educate stakeholders on safeguarding practices, and provide the skills necessary to identify and address safeguarding issues. Comprehensive training is essential for creating a culture of safety and protection in sports.

6. Limited Data

The availability of hard data on safeguarding initiatives, processes and cases is limited, and information is often perceived differently by various organisations. This lack of reliable data hinders the analysis of stages of development of policies and measures within organisations. This lack of data impacts the analysis and distribution of information to input into safeguarding practices and policymaking.

7. Lack of Formal Structure

Safeguarding efforts are often led by volunteers or added to the responsibilities of already overloaded staff. This lack of formal structure undermines the effectiveness of safeguarding measures. Very few organisations have a dedicated department to the topic, many add to existing structures or roles.

8. Focus on Athletes and Entourage

Current regulations tend to focus primarily on athletes and their entourage, leaving other groups, such as staff and volunteers, vulnerable.

9. Ineffective Safeguarding Processes

While reporting mechanisms for safeguarding issues exist, the follow-through in terms of investigation and adjudication is often inadequate. The diversity and ineffectiveness of these processes result in a lack of accountability and justice.

Legal Framework Checklist

To assist organisations in the development of their legal framework, a checklist divided by stages of development of Safeguarding is provided below.

Organisations can assess their current level of development by checking the items that they already have implemented. Based on this assessment each organisation can identify their specific needs.

The next step is to start the development of the Safeguarding processes and procedures based on the available legal framework documents from this project which includes references to kick start the process for each of the items listed on the checklist.

1. Codes of ethics and conduct

T1 Codes of ethics and conduct		In place
Beginning	The organisation has developed and adopted a Code of Ethics covering key topics and relevant procedures, which is published and clearly endorsed by senior management. Alternatively, the organisation adopts the IOC Code of Ethics or another applicable Code of Ethics from an organisation of which it is a member.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intermediate	The organisation clearly states who is bound by their rules (See Participants).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation's senior management either has designated responsibility for oversight and implementation of the Code or an individual who reports directly to senior management (e.g. Ethics Commission, Ethics Officer, Compliance Officer).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation dedicates adequate resources to detecting possible breaches of the Code and investigating it.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has developed adequate Codes of Conduct for different stakeholders (e.g. athletes, coaches, staff, volunteers, member organisations).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation ensures that the cases are handled independently (from reporting to case resolution), meaning an individual or group conducts their role free from undue influence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation provides support or education for different groups to promote an ethical culture (e.g. guidance materials, templates, ethical dilemma exercises, seminars).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced	The organisation requires its members to comply with ethical-related regulations, such as by imposing sanctions or holding funds in case of non-compliance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation carries out regular educational work with stakeholders about the Codes, at least annually.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation monitors the effectiveness of the Codes and reviews them regularly in consultancy with the relevant stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Safeguarding policy and related strategies

T2 Safeguarding policy and related strategies		Examples
Beginning	The organisation formally adopts appropriate standards, such as guidelines developed by the relevant International Federation (IF), other national sports organisation, a governmental entity or the IOC Toolkit for IFs and NOCs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has issued a public statement pledging to address safeguarding appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation clearly describes its understanding and definitions of the addressed forms of transgressive behaviours. Alternatively, it indicates which definitions are applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation cooperates with public authorities, where necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intermediate	The organisation developed its own safeguarding policy aligned with appropriate standards that apply all year-round and/or games-times period, if applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has a designated and suitably qualified individual or group of people who lead on safeguarding issues with relevant background and expertise. This person also liaises with safeguarding focal points at other organisations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation's case management is independent, meaning an individual or group is free from undue influence to conduct their role.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation provides mandatory education on safeguarding for a specific group of people involved with its activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation communicates publicly about safeguarding issues and can demonstrate that action has been taken on safeguarding matters.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The safeguarding-related regulations are easily accessible in formats compatible with various devices, like plain text for website viewing and PDFs for download, to support research and mobile accessibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation conducts risk assessments for events, training, transport, accommodations, locker rooms and shared spaces.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The organisation has a safe recruitment procedure in place (e.g. interview, references and background checks).	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advanced	The organisation has several rules and regulations in place that take safeguarding into consideration, such as involving photography of minors or guidance around the appropriate use of technology and social media.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation prioritises diversity in appointing persons or commissions for key safeguarding roles.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation provides mandatory education programs on safeguarding for all people involved with its activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation can demonstrate that action has been taken on time and appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The safeguarding policy is built up in the consultancy of all stakeholders, mainly athletes and affected people, and timely reviewed based on lessons learned from experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The latest version of all safeguarding-related regulations is available on the website, highlighting any revisions from the previous version or, alternatively, providing a document summarising update.	<input type="checkbox"/>

	The organisation is committed to managing every case considering a trauma-informed approach.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation offers appropriate support for any individual who has been affected while involved in the organisation's activities and supports victims in seeking remedies, taking actions to correct or compensate for wrongs that have been done to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation empowers and provides relevant materials to support its members in implementing their strategies, creating a harmonised environment to protect participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Reporting

T3	Reporting	Examples
Beginning	The organisation provides a direct link on its website to external credible and operational mechanisms, such as those powered by the NOC or IF, the IOC Integrity Hotline or any other organisation that deals with safeguarding locally.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intermediate	The organisation has a procedure in place and a reporting mechanism (e.g. a form on the website, a phone number or a dedicated e-mail address).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation guarantees confidentiality and anonymity when appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation takes steps to protect and support any affected person, and those individuals who report, including witnesses or other persons providing information.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation's rules set out clear procedures for processing and managing reports and designate responsibility, including assessing urgency, categorising, prioritising or referring to the appropriate person or agency (See Triage).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has mechanisms in place to mitigate the risk of conflicts of interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation requires participants to report any potential misconduct they are aware of, with potential sanctions for non-compliance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced	The organisation has a robust, confidential reporting mechanism which can be easily accessed through several means and may operate through an external supplier.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation monitors the quality and effectiveness of its reporting system through the implementation of indicators (such as the number of reports received, shelved or processed, processing times, and concerns raised).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation ensures everyone is well informed about what is likely to happen following a disclosure, in a format and language that everyone can easily understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation provides support and guidance to whistle-blowers, victims and other vulnerable individuals.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation takes disciplinary action against acts of retaliation and over those who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intentionally ignore a reporting request for anonymity; - knowingly make false, unfounded, or incorrect reports that harm others; - unfairly penalise or discriminate against someone who has reported a potential breach or contributed information in a safeguarding issue in good faith. 	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Investigation of a concern, suspicion or allegation

T4 Investigation of a concern, suspicion or allegation		Examples
Beginning	The organisation's rules clearly outline fair and impartial investigation procedures, which are published alongside other relevant regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has clear and objective criteria for selecting an ad hoc person or commission to conduct the investigation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation cooperates with public authorities when there is suspicion of a criminal offence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intermediate	There is a clear separation between investigating and adjudicating responsibilities, which different persons or commissions conduct each of them independently.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has a defined process and appropriate resources for investigating safeguarding threats, such as previously designated individuals or commissions with sufficient expertise, clear mandate, term of office and oversight.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	An individual or commission is responsible for assessing urgency, categorising, prioritising or referring to the appropriate person or agency (See Triage).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has contacts previously established at a local and national level with relevant child protection and social services, police, NGOs and other public authorities to be referred to if any specific incident occurs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation can impose provisional measures on a participant in cases where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the violation was committed and/or there is a risk of further harm if the participant is allowed to continue participating in the sport, pending the outcome of the investigation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All personnel with designated responsibilities are trained and receives specialist advice, support and relevant information.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Information is only shared on a “need-to-know” basis (confidential), thereby limiting unnecessary or inappropriate dissemination of potentially sensitive or private data.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Participants are obliged to cooperate with investigations and may be sanctioned if they fail to do so.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Victims have the right to submit (written) observations and evidence and are granted specific rights, including the ability to access their case file, which may be unrestricted, partial, or under a confidentiality agreement to protect others’ rights.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The organisation responds to every case brought to its attention, either recent or non-recent, although statutes of limitation are applied.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advanced	The organisation can show evidence of the implementation of the procedures, monitor their effectiveness, and improve them according to lessons learned through practical implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation maintains the investigation case records stored securely for a reasonable and proportional period.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation has regulations governing the inspection of data stored in personal records and electronic devices that lead to potentially relevant evidence, respecting proportionality, confidentiality and privacy regulation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation makes special protection measures available for vulnerable witnesses who have actual or potential fear or distress about providing testimony in a given case or investigation.	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Victims can have their testimony facilitated, preferably without the alleged perpetrator presence, using communication technologies when possible. Additionally, efforts are made to avoid further contact between them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisations allow and support victims in seeking remedies both within and beyond their domain throughout the entire process, leading to results.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No statutes of limitation are applied to severe safeguarding breaches.	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Disciplinary proceedings

T5	Disciplinary proceedings	Examples
Beginning	The organisation's rules reference clear, fair, and impartial adjudication procedures, including a notice and the opportunity to be heard.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation's rules are published alongside other relevant regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Individuals and organisations affected are entitled to formally challenge and seek a review of a decision made by the relevant authority (right to appeal).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation adheres to relevant privacy legislation that may limit the details that can be made public in certain instances.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intermediate	There is a clear separation between investigating and adjudicating responsibilities, which different persons or commissions conduct each of them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation's adjudicatory person or body works independently and there are procedures in place to mitigate potential conflicts of interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Adjudicators are appointed from a standing body composed of individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise. They have a clear mandate, term of office and oversight and cannot be removed without a cause.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The rules provide a clear set of applicable sanctions proportionate to the offence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Victims have the right to submit (written) observations and evidence and to be consistently promptly informed about the progress and outcomes of the proceedings, including being notified of the final decision.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation maintains a table of decisions and sanctions on its website, detailing basic information, such as the individuals or organisations currently under sanction, along with the specific rules they breach.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Less severe cases, such as poor practices, can be resolved through alternative measures (e.g. mediation, guidance, training).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced	The organisation allows and supports victims seeking remedies throughout the resolution process.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	An assessment of risk and legal obligations shapes the overall adjudication approach, and supportive engagement with victims is upheld.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation can impose measures other than disciplinary to hold members accountable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation can show evidence of the implementation of the procedures, monitor their effectiveness, and improve them according to lessons learned through practical implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation appropriately publishes decisions and sanctions in force, providing brief reasons, detailed reports, or summaries as necessary, while respecting personal data.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation maintains adjudication case records for a reasonable and proportional period.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organisation requires its members associations to report any sanction imposed, with potential sanctions for non-compliance.	<input type="checkbox"/>

All publications within the BESST work package 2



Legal Benchmark Report

Assessment of Safeguarding Policies and Procedures Implemented in European Sport Organisations

[Link to document](#)



NOC Survey Report

Assessment of Safeguarding Status Amongst European National Olympic Committees

[Link to document](#)



NF Survey Report

Assessment of Safeguarding Status Amongst European National Federations

[Link to document](#)



NOC and NF Legal Framework

Safeguarding Legal Framework for NOCs and NFs

[Link to document](#)



Club Legal Framework

Safeguarding Legal Framework for Clubs

[Link to document](#)