

## Press Release

# Key Findings Reveal European Sports Organisations Are in Early Development Stage in Safeguarding Readiness

Frankfurt, Germany – November 4, 2024

**Research conducted by the Building European Safe Sport Together (BESST) project indicates that the majority of European sports organisations are still in the infancy stage of safeguarding readiness. These findings highlight the essential need for prioritisation and resources to strengthen awareness and capacity for effective safeguarding measures, and, most importantly, to drive a culture change towards sports free from transgressive behaviours.**

Funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ Sport program, BESST has reached a key milestone with the release of publications and ready-to-use toolkits. These resources support sports organisations and event organisers on all levels by implementing and enhancing safeguarding measures, marking a substantial advancement towards a safer sports environment across Europe.

Daniela Negreda, Advisor and Business Strategist of IGNITX, stressed that *"the BESST project has truly hit a nerve across Europe. The feedback has highlighted the importance of accessible, ready-to-use resources that allow sports organisations to take immediate action in their Safeguarding implementation plans."* These newly released materials, the product of two years of extensive research and collaboration among BESST partners, provide insights and practical toolkits tailored to the needs of sports organisations. The project materials include:

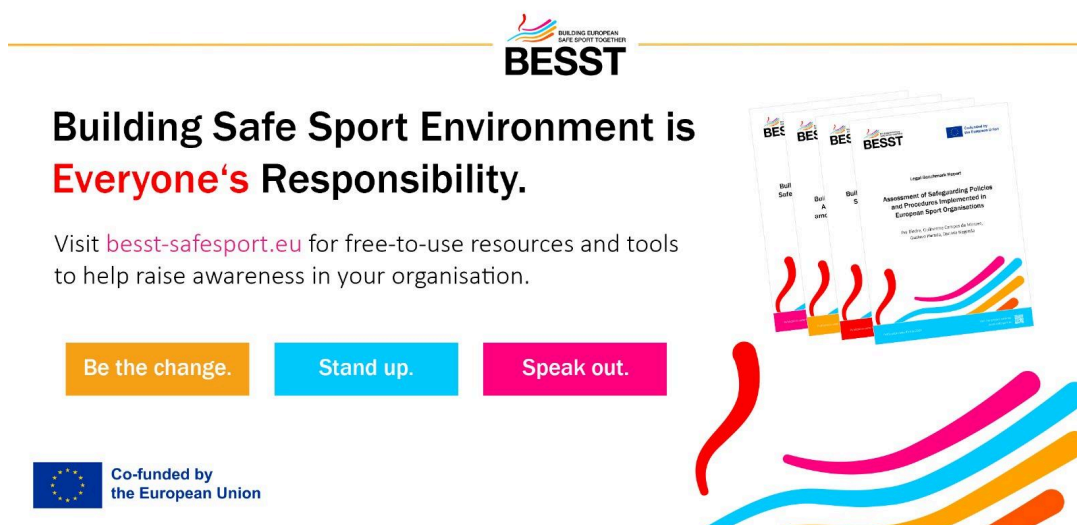
- **Comprehensive Definitions:** Detailed explanations of Transgressive Behaviours tailored for various sports contexts.
- **Research:** A comprehensive body of research was conducted on publicly available data, interviews, and surveys of diverse sports organisations, resulting in 15 insights on the statutes of European sports organisations.
- **Framework toolkits:** Step-by-step guidelines and checklists to help sports organisations and event organisers integrate safeguarding standards effectively, including ready-to-use templates, with special emphasis on legal framework for event organisers.
- **Awareness and Education Toolkits:** Customisable templates and training materials for raising awareness and educating staff, volunteers, and other participants.

To learn more about how to prevent Transgressive Behaviour and access all the resources, visit the project BESST website at:

<https://besst-safesport.eu/>.

Soenke Schadwinkel, Project Coordinator of the European Olympic Academies (EOA), emphasised BESST's commitment:

*"Our goal has always been to equip European sports organisations with resources that are not only informative but actionable. We believe the provided toolkits will empower organisations to proactively raise awareness and establish safe environments for everyone involved in sports."*



**BESST**


## Building Safe Sport Environment is Everyone's Responsibility.

Visit [besst-safesport.eu](https://besst-safesport.eu) for free-to-use resources and tools to help raise awareness in your organisation.

Be the change.

Stand up.

Speak out.

 Co-funded by the European Union

A further significant result of the research highlighted the need for a unified and modernised definition of Safeguarding that can be effectively translated across multiple languages. Based on the conceptual framework developed by the study team, the BESST project introduces the following definition of Transgressive Behaviour:

**“Any form of misuse or exploitation of a relationship of power through physical (contact and non-contact), psychological (verbal and non-verbal), and/or sexual (contact and non-contact) conduct that violates access to a safe sport environment and that gives reasonable cause to suspect someone has harmed one or more Covered Persons and/or may pose a risk of such harm.”**

The misuse of a relationship of power involves an imbalance of power that may lead to exploitation for personal, financial, or business interests in a manner that compromises or would be likely to cause detriment or harm to the best interests of any individual. This remains applicable regardless of whether the relationship is deemed consensual. Factors that may contribute to such an imbalance include anonymity (especially in cases of online abuse), physical, hierarchical, or other discriminatory criteria, which can render the relationship potentially abusive.

Discriminatory criteria to be considered include but are not limited to nationality, perceived race, skin colour, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, religious or philosophical

beliefs, disability, sex, and related aspects such as pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. Additional factors may include gender reassignment, gender identity and expression, marital status, birth, socioeconomic status, political beliefs, language, current or future health conditions, physical or genetic characteristics, or social origin.

*"Through the BESST project, we are proud to introduce a unified and contemporary definition of transgressive behaviour that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries to reinforce safeguarding in sport acknowledging the complexity of human nature dynamics,"* said Nicolette Sschipper Van Veldhoven from Windesheim University.

As awareness is one of the main challenges to prevent Transgressive Behaviour, the team at BESST created a toolkit to be adaptable by organisations and used online as well as physically during sports events opportunities.

*"Awareness and education are cornerstones of safeguarding in sport,"* said Andreja McQuarrie, *"Making these resources readily available empowers everyone—from athletes and coaches to staff and volunteers—to recognize, prevent, and respond to Transgressive Behaviours. This knowledge is essential for creating safe, inclusive environments where everyone can thrive."*

Resources are essential for advancing safeguarding efforts. Currently, some countries have made more progress in safeguarding sports than others, and this gap is likely to grow as safeguarding becomes an additional responsibility for various sports organizations (e.g., clubs, national federations, National Olympic Committees). Project BESST's study of European national sports federations and National Olympic Committees found that human and financial resources are key areas requiring improvement to enhance safeguarding efforts, regardless of their current level of progress. The study also underscored a significant need for guidance, knowledge, and support from both governmental and institutional leadership to further advance safeguarding initiatives.

## About the project

The project Building European Safe Sports Together (BESST) is funded by the Erasmus+ programme from the European Commission. BESST developed a unified definition for the foundation of a harassment and abuse-free European sports environment. With strong partners delivering academic research, a continent-wide network of organisations for dissemination, legal and project management, events delivery and sports organisations, the project has a full circle range of professionals with four key deliveries that effectively raise the maturity of the European sports on its safeguarding readiness.

The project aimed:

- (1) To develop a modern definition of transgressive behaviour in sport, with an extensive literature review of the most recent studies.
- (2) To assess the statuses level of European sports organisations and event organisers.
- (3) To develop legal frameworks with policies and procedures proposal for European sports organisations.
- (4) To provide an awareness and education tool kit, facilitating the entities to use their communications channels to educate their communities about transgressive behaviour.

The BESST project was conducted by a consortium of 7 organisations: European Olympic Academies (EOA), IGNITX, Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Rudi Hiti Academy, UEFA Foundation for Children, Olympic Committee of Netherlands and Olympic Committee of Slovenia.

If you are interested in “walk the talk” and join our dissemination efforts, we invite you to get in touch with us at the email address below.

## Contact:

Bastian Grueger, Project Coordinator  
[info@eoalympic.org](mailto:info@eoalympic.org)

BESST Website: <https://besst-safesport.eu/>

**Additional media material from the BESST project team:**

