

## Press Release

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

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**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 by releasing 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:

- **Modern Definition:** A unified and contemporary understanding and terminology of abuse and harassment in sport, defined as "transgressive behaviour". It examines the dynamics that foster such behaviours, identifies obstacles to safeguarding progress, and outlines essential principles for creating a safe sports environment.
- **Research:** Key insights on the statuses of European sports organisations, drawn from a comprehensive body of research on publicly available data, interviews, and surveys of diverse sports organisations.
- **Frameworks:** 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 frameworks for event organisers.
- **Awareness, Education and Framework Toolkits:** Customisable templates and training materials designed to support sports organisations and individuals in implementing effective safeguarding practices within their own structures and among their member organisations.

Soenke Schadwinkel, Project Coordinator from 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."*


Research highlighted the need to broaden safeguarding efforts beyond athletes and children to include all participants in sports—such as coaches, referees, officials, sports administrators, volunteers, and others—to foster a true safe sport culture and uphold the core values of the sport itself.

BESST's academic partners at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences introduced the term *"transgressive behaviour"* as a unified way to describe all harmful behaviours in sports. This terminology clarifies often ambiguous interpretations of incidents, which can be influenced by cultural, linguistic, and ethical principles. Defined as **"any form of misuse of a relationship of power violating someone's access to safe sports"**, transgressive behaviour includes all forms of boundary-crossing, whether intentional or not (Haandrikman & Schipper-van Veldhoven, 2024).

To establish effective safe sports measures, the sports community must raise awareness of transgressive behaviour and integrate safeguarding at all levels. This demands a strong safeguarding culture from top organisations, responsible use of power by individuals, and a collective commitment to prioritising safety and accountability in all areas of sport.

*"The lack of awareness and recognition of transgressive behaviours in sport is a significant challenge that hinders progress in safeguarding,"* said Andreja McQuarrie OLY. Recognising this, BESST has developed a suite of free-to-use awareness and educational tools for sports organisations.

To learn more about how to prevent transgressive behaviour and access all the resources, visit the project BESST website at: <https://besst-safesport.eu/>.





**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.

## About the project

The project Building European Safe Sport 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 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 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 toolkit, facilitating sport organisations 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:

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Additional media material from the BESST project team:

