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CoViS Needs Analysis

Executive Summary

Evidence from athletes and sport professionals in Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia

184

ATHLETES

16

SPORT PROFESSIONALS

3

PARTNER COUNTRIES

Why this summary matters

Sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence in sport are frequently under-recognised and under-reported. This executive summary presents the main findings of the CoViS Needs Analysis and explains how the evidence will shape practical education, reporting guidance and safeguarding resources.

ERASMUS+ SPORT COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

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Why this study - and how it was conducted

A mixed-methods needs analysis designed to inform practical safeguarding education

The context

Sport can support health, belonging and personal development, but hierarchical relationships, dependence on coaches and staff, travel, shared accommodation, physical contact and cultures of silence may also create safeguarding risks. CoViS examined not only athletes' experiences, but also the beliefs, organisational conditions and practical barriers that influence whether concerns are recognised and reported.



Quantitative study

16-63

years of age

24.16

mean age

124 / 60

women / men

Recreational, first-league and national-team participants

Serbia		64
Greece		68
Bulgaria		52



Qualitative study

5

BG

5

GR

6

RS

A template-based thematic analysis combined predefined safeguarding topics with themes emerging from participants' accounts.

The analysis explored professional boundaries, power and dependency, warning signs, reporting barriers, institutional responses and prevention needs.

How to interpret the findings

This is an exploratory, cross-sectional needs analysis. The findings describe the participating sample and are intended to guide education and safeguarding development; they should not be interpreted as national prevalence estimates or used to rank the three countries.



What the evidence shows

Reported exposure, reporting confidence and the organisational conditions surrounding disclosure

Sexualised and gender-based behaviours were not rare in this sample.

The percentages below refer to athletes who reported the experience at least once.

50.0%

reported exposure to sexualised behaviour

48.9%

received comments about their body, clothing or sexuality

44.0%

experienced insults or mockery because of gender

22.3%

reported unwanted or inappropriate physical touching

14.7%

reported sexual remarks, aggressive calls or unwanted photos

12.0%

reported sexual blackmail or coercion into sexual contact



Speaking up depends on practical ability and safety

Perceived ability to report and psychological safety together explained 54.7% of the variance in athletes' willingness to speak up. This reinforces a central educational message: awareness alone is insufficient; people need clear steps, trusted reporting channels and protection from negative consequences.

QUALITATIVE THEMES



Unclear professional boundaries



Power and dependency



Fear, mistrust and silence



Need for accountable
safeguarding systems



From evidence to practical education

The Needs Analysis provides the content framework for CoViS modules, videos, podcasts and tools

The central lesson

Athletes and sport professionals are more likely to act when they can recognise the behaviour, know what to do, know where to report, and trust that the response will be safe and responsible.

1 Recognise the continuum

Definitions and examples covering verbal, non-verbal, digital and physical behaviours.

2 Clarify boundaries

Supportive coaching must remain professional, transparent and appropriate.

3 Address power and dependency

Explain how authority, selection and career dependence can increase vulnerability.

4 Identify warning signs

Use scenarios to distinguish ambiguous situations from clear boundary violations.

5 Challenge minimisation

Address victim-blaming, disbelief and the protection of organisational reputation.

6 Teach practical reporting

What to do, how to document concerns and where to seek help.

7 Build safety and trust

Confidentiality, independent options, protection from retaliation and follow-up.

8 Strengthen bystander action

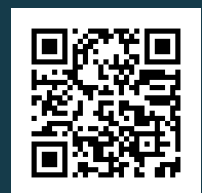
Give peers and staff safe, realistic ways to support and intervene.

9 Ensure accountability

Clear codes, safeguarding roles, consistent procedures and organisational responsibility.

Next phase of CoViS

The consortium is translating these findings into online modules, short animated videos, podcasts and practical safeguarding tools. Materials will undergo expert review and pilot evaluation before wider dissemination.



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Source: CoViS Needs Analysis Report (2026). Full methodological details, analyses, limitations and references are available in the complete report.