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Embedding Child Protection Policies in sports & leisure activities. Needs and Gaps.

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The "Discussion Papers" series aims at widely disseminating the research results of KMOP's various activities, stimulating academic discussion and offering a forum for new approaches on contemporary social issues.

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1. Introduction

“Bullying and Violence have no place in sports”.

L. Avgenakis, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Sports and Education in Greece¹

Sports and activities play a pivotal role in children’s personal development as through sports they advance their skills and experience the most important values of a society. However, a former Secretary of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations estimates that of all children involved in “competitive sports”, 10% have undergone human rights abuse and another 20% are at risk.

Children violence in sports constitutes a reality that stays secret within the Greek society. Few people speak about it and even fewer measures are adopted for its prevention. However, during the last years, due to the increasing incidents of sports scandals and hooliganism among the Greek teams especially in football and basketball, some first steps are taken in order to face violence in sports.

ACTIVE, a transnational project coordinated by KMOP (Greece) with the involvement of CARDET (Cyprus), CESIE (Italy), CESIS (Portugal) and Children’s 1st (Scotland), aims at promoting the embedding of child safeguarding policies across different sports clubs and organisations. Through the desk and field research conducted in the framework of the ACTIVE project, we aimed at (1) improving data collection and knowledge generation on existing child protection policies in sports clubs and organizations, (2) identifying gaps and enabling more strengthened child protection systems in this field and (3) analyzing and recommending the most effective ways to prevent violence against children as well as good practices.

Consequently, through the present analysis, we will begin with the description of the national framework concerning child protection policies implemented by sports clubs in Greece and we will continue with a detailed analysis of the current situation through the eyes of sports representatives and athletes in order to more efficiently identify the existing gaps and recommend measures and good practices that if adopted, would change the phenomenon and reduce violence against children in sports.

1 | VRADINI. (2019). The reaction of the Deputy Minister. Retrieved 30.03.2020 from: <https://www.vradini.gr/avgenakis-ekfovismos-ke-via-den-echoun-thesi-ston-athlitismo-to-logo-echi-i-dikeosyni/>.

2. The national framework

According to the Greek legal framework about violence against children, we should mention on one hand, specific laws that apply to child abuse and maltreatment and on the other hand, the general provisions of the Greek Penal Code and of the Greek Code of Criminal Procedure that sanction all kinds of violence, including violence against minors.

The first laws against child abuse and maltreatment were adopted in 1988² and 1994³ respectively with certain modifications during the years 1999⁴, 2002⁵, 2003⁶, 2004⁷, 2007⁸, 2009⁹, 2013¹⁰ while a specific legal framework concerning sexual child abuse was established through the Law n. 4267/2014¹¹. Law n. 4267/2014 on combating sexual abuse, exploitation of children and child pornography adapted national legislation to the European Directive 2011/92/EU. The changes the aforementioned law introduced to the Greek legal system concerned the penalization of “child grooming”, in other words, the penalization of the procedure by which an adult is befriending a child with the objective of sexual abuse through the internet. The Law sanctions a person who accesses “in full knowledge” to child pornography elements with at least a one-year sentence and it also sanctions people inciting minors to participate in pornography performances. The last related law introduced in the Greek legal system was the Law n. 4322/2015 filling the gap concerning the phenomenon of “bullying” and penalizing it.

Regarding the Greek Penal Code and the Greek Code of Criminal Procedure, they sanction the simple physical damage (article 308 para. 1 point a), the dangerous physical damage (article 309), the serious physical injury (article 310 para. 1), the torture of the victim that causes psychological distress (article 310 para. 3), the provocation of physical injuries to children (article 312), the

2 Law n. 1756/1988.

3 Law n. 2225/1994.

4 Law n. 2721/1999.

5 Law n. 3064/2002.

6 Law n. 4194/2003.

7 Law n. 3226/2004.

8 Law n. 3625/2007.

9 Law n. 3811/2009.

10 Law n. 4194/2013.

11 Greek Gazette 2014-06-12, Part A, N. 137, pp. 4377-4384.

unlawful assault (article 330), the unlawful threat (article 333) as well as sexual assault (337). All the above provisions apply to minors and the fact that an act of violence is committed against a child renders an eventual sanction even higher.

This is the reason why the sports laws that we will present in the process of our analysis should be read in conjunction with the general provisions of criminal law.

Regarding sports violence, the Law no. 2725/1999 on professional and amateur sports was one of the first Greek laws to fight against violence in sports. It still remains the main law applied in the domain of sports protection. Specifically, it includes provisions incriminating criminal offences that take place during sports events or in places promoting sports. It is important to mention that it has been modified many times since its institution in order to more effectively apply to the existing social needs in Greece.

In 2015, the Law no. 4326/2015 on urgent measures against sports violence was established. This law introduced new provisions for the prevention of sports violence. It establishes new control methods for supporters' clubs, it includes provisions preventing and sanctioning violent crimes in sports and it created new public entities for the prevention of criminal offences in sports. On one hand, the Constant Committee for the prevention of violence and on the other hand, the Special observers entity providing assistance to the Committee.

The last evolution in the legal framework of sports law in Greece came with the validation from the Greek Parliament of the Macolin Convention of the 18th September 2014 on the manipulation of sports competitions¹².

However, it is important to point out that there are no specific provisions for the prevention of violence against children in sports. Unfortunately, the Greek legislation has not established specific legislation adapted to the protection and prevention of violence against children in the sports environment. This is the reason why, in the incriminated offences, we shall apply the international convention related to the protection of children in conjunction with the Greek legislation, including the general provisions of the Greek Criminal Code and sports legislation.

This constitutes a gap that should be filled during the next steps of the implementation of the ACTIVE project.

12 LAWSPOT. (2019). Greece validated the Magglinger/Macolin Convention – new provision for fighting against violence in sports. Retrieved 10.04.2020 from: <https://www.lawspot.gr/nomika-nea/i-ellada-kyronei-ti-symvasi-magglingen-macolin-gia-toys-stimenoy-agones-nees-diataxeis>.

Concerning national policies that are being implemented in order to raise awareness about sports violence issues, we shall also identify an important gap as there are not many social responsibility and raising awareness national policies with the aforementioned purpose.

We should however, mention the **“Start to Talk”** project of the Council of Europe that raises awareness about sexual child abuse and maltreatment in sports through videos shown in the Greek television¹³.

There were also some national activities organized by the Smile of the Child, a Greek NGO, with the slogan **“It remains a secret”** including media campaigns and web-online advocacy, press announcements, participation to public events, awareness-raising activities and preventative interactive sessions for the school communities nationwide about child abuse and maltreatment in general and in sports¹⁴.

13 TANE Team. (2019). Break the Silence: the video that you should watch today. Retrieved 10.04.2020 from: <https://www.tanea.gr/2019/02/06/sports/spase-ti-siopi-to-video-pou-aksizei-na-deis-simera/>.

14 KOUSIOPOULOU E. (2018). Campaign «It remains a secret». Retrieved 10.04.2020 from: <https://www.ert.gr/ert3/kampania-menei-mystiko-apo-to-chamogelo-toy-paidioy-gia-tin-paidiki-kakopoiisi/>.

3. Methodology

Concerning the field research, KMOP team conducted ten (10) interviews and online surveys with participants of the 3 target groups required by the Annex A of the Grant Agreement, i.e. professionals (coaches, trainers, etc.), parents and children. While conducting the field research, the KMOP team had to adapt its strategy as the Greek Government announced restriction measures (limitation of gatherings, closure of schools) then a general lockdown in order to limit the spread of Covid 19. The adaptations explained hereunder have all been agreed with the European Commission Project Officer responsible for the follow-up of the ACTIVE project.

To begin with, KMOP conducted ten (10) interviews in Athens between February and March 2020. They were at first conducted face-to-face, and after March 11 and the limitation of gatherings imposed by the Greek state to limit the spread of Covid 19, KMOP organized online interviews.

The interviews lasted approximately one hour for every interviewee and they were recorded. Before starting the interview, the interviewees read and signed a consent form giving their consent about the recording of the interviews and about the use of the information provided for research purposes in regard to the implementation of the ACTIVE project.

They were all active and willing to participate, giving us crucial and interesting information about violence in sports and child protection policies implemented by sports clubs and organizations for the prevention of violence against children.

Regarding the implementation of the four focus groups (two in Athens and two in Thessaloniki), and due to the confinement imposed by the Greek state to limit the spread of Covid 19, the KMOP team chose to obtain the necessary results for the field research through the implementation of online surveys. Therefore, we adapted the questions that would be used for the face-to-face focus groups, in an online form and sent them to participants of the required target groups.

The form of the online survey was the following: a) a short description of the project and of the objective of the field research, b) a consent form about the information they would provide to the researchers and the use of this information for research purposes, c) questions and d) an evaluation test. The survey was anonymous and the participants did not need to provide any personal information.

Especially for the online survey addressed to children: the consent form specifically mentioned that the children willing to participate should be at least 15 years old, as required by the Greek legal system in conformity to the GDPR regulations.

We received online survey responses from 12 professionals in Athens and from 9 professionals in Thessaloniki. 7 from Athens and 8 parents from Thessaloniki answered the online survey. Finally, 2

teenagers of at least 15 years old from Athens and 33 from Thessaloniki participated to the online survey.

Using an online survey allowed the team to gather and analyze more responses from a greater number of participants than it would have with the focus groups, obtaining as a result a larger sample of responses.

However, it should be pointed out that even if the situation was difficult in Greece due to the confinement, people were willing to participate and give their insight regarding children violence in sports. The majority of the persons we approached and to whom we sent the online survey responded and gave us interesting information about violence in sports.

4. Characterisation of the participants in the needs assessment

KMOP interviewed 10 stakeholders in Athens between February and March 2020 and gathered more than 60 online surveys from sports professionals, parents and children from Athens and Thessaloniki.

Concerning the interviews' participants, there were: one representative from the Union of Basketball Clubs of the region of Attica, one representative of the General Secretariat of Sports, five representatives of the NGO ActionAid dealing with cases of violence against children and having experience in child protection policies, a lawyer working for the NGO Eliza specialized in the protection of children's rights, a representative of the NGO Eliza and two athletes of the domain of gymnastics and cycling.

All of them were very cooperative and provided valuable information about the child protection policies implemented in sports clubs and organizations regarding violence in sports as well as recommendations about the prevention of violence in sports. It is important to point out that all participants asked to be informed about the next steps of the ACTIVE project, especially regarding the self-assessment tool that will be designed at a later stage, as they found it extremely interesting and necessary for sports organizations in Greece.

Concerning the online surveys, participants came from the two big cities of Greece, Athens and Thessaloniki.

The first online survey was addressed to professionals working with children. Participants from both cities were working in different sports domains such as dance, taekwondo, gymnastics clubs, and bigger football and basketball clubs such as Aris that is one of the biggest sports clubs in the city of Thessaloniki. Most of the participants were men and had an important experience with sports, mainly working as coaches in the fields described above. In total, we received twelve responses from professionals from Thessaloniki and nine responses from professionals from Athens.

The second online survey was addressed to parents whose children are attending sports classes in different sports clubs and organizations. We received seven responses from parents living in Athens and eight responses from parents living in Thessaloniki. The children of the parents that participated to our second online survey play football, basketball, tennis, handball and practice gymnastics, sailing, taekwondo, athletics and swim. Consequently, we received responses related to a great variety of sports and sports clubs.

Concerning our third and last online survey addressed to children, we received an important number of responses from Thessaloniki. It is important to point out that only in Thessaloniki there were more than 30 teenagers of at least 15 years old, who participated to the survey and expressed their

views concerning violence in sports and the way sports clubs listen to their opinions. Most of the participants play football at one of the biggest sports clubs of Thessaloniki, Aris sports club. Even if we received fewer responses from students living in Athens, it is necessary to point out that the important number of responses that we received from students of Thessaloniki provided us a great insight about the way sports clubs approach their players and the way violence is perceived by younger people in the sports environment.

5. Results of the needs assessment

5.1 Perspectives on violence in sports and against children

According to the interview findings, the representative of the Union of Basketball Clubs of Attica mentioned that there is violence against children in sports and this violence can be either physical, or psychological. He underlined that this form of violence exists between children and between parents and children. It is important to point out that according to his experience, cases of coaches who had acted violently against children are extremely rare especially in the domain of basketball in which he is specialized.

However, the two athletes shared a different point of view, presenting as a major source of violence in sports, the psychological violence of the coach against children. They also described the existing cases of violence among athletes due to the competition especially in case of competitive sports.

Sexual violence of the coach against an athlete was also mentioned by the lawyer of the NGO specialized in children's rights, describing a case where a girl was sexually abused by her coach, but was afraid to tell her parents, as he had been her coach for more than a decade and was like family to her.

The representatives of the NGO stated that there is violence in sports especially between children. They mentioned that violence between boys and girls is very frequent as well as racism between migrant children. They presented a case when a migrant child was violent against a Roma child due to the racism that he/she had faced and that the migrant child was reproducing.

According to the online surveys addressed to the professionals, we received different points of view regarding violence against children in sports. The majority of the respondents mentioned that there is violence in sports especially between the athletes themselves due to the competitive spirit characterizing sports in Greece. They mentioned that there are few cases of violence deriving from coaches against their athletes but when this kind of incidents take place, violence can be either physical or psychological. It is important to point out that the 30% of the respondents replied that there is no violence in sports or that they had never witnessed any kind of violent incident.

The situation appears completely different concerning the responses of the parents that took part in the online survey. Most of them (80%) mentioned that they had never witnessed any violent incident. Two participants stated that they had witnessed verbal violence among athletes during and after the game. One participant pointed out that we should also take into consideration the verbal violence against the athletes that derives from the spectators of the game and can influence the athletes.

Concerning the children that participated in the online survey, two findings seem very interesting and should be pointed out: on one hand, the majority of the participants mentioned that violence does not exist in sports (60%); while on the other hand, among the participants that mentioned that violence exists in sports, the great majority of them, replied that they had heard about it but not witnessed it themselves (60%). Of those who responded that violence exists in sports, the majority replied that the most frequent form of violence is the verbal violence either from the coach against the child athlete, or among athletes. However, they ascertained that this verbal violence could become physical especially in cases of competitive sports.

5.2 Existence and characterisation of practices preventing violence against children in sports

The representative of the Union of Basketball Clubs of Attica pointed out that there are no specific practices preventing violence against violence due to the fact that in case of violence, the academy protects its children itself. He explained that the coaches and the members of a sports academy in general, protect all children, even if they are foreigners, because they don't want them to leave the academy. He states that the effort to protect all children in an academy is unconscious and is implemented by the great majority of coaches.

The representative of the General Secretariat of sports in Greece agreed with the above point of view mentioning that he is not aware of any good practices against violence in sports clubs and organizations.

The representatives of the NGO ActionAid mentioned that during these last years, more and more sports academies and clubs become more conscious on social questions by helping and encouraging children. Furthermore, the coach is closer to the children and there are psychologists working with them. One of the representatives pointed out that the most important element is the attitude of the coach who should have an appropriate educational background to know how to approach children and encourage them. They believe that many academies have specifically trained coaches that are more sensitive than before on educational and social matters. In ActionAid they have also established a practice of evaluation of the projects of the Organization, including sports projects. Through this evaluation system, they ask parents and children to give their opinion concerning the project anonymously.

However, the representatives of the NGO Eliza were not aware of any good practices for the protection of children against violence. One representative mentioned that what astonishes her is that there are no sports academies having called the organization to train its personnel on questions

of violence and child protection. According to her point of view, this situation is caused by the fact that the bigger sports academies are afraid of what they would find in terms of attitude by the professionals.

The athletes mentioned that good practices in terms of combatting violence in sports exist but depend on the kind of sports and the degree of competition of each athlete. They pointed out that they believe that there are not any good practices implemented when an athlete is doing competitive sports, especially in basketball or football.

Concerning the online surveys, almost all professionals agreed that most sports club create a secure environment for the children. One professional from Thessaloniki mentioned that the coaches are well educated and constantly trained in order to better respond to the needs of children. It is interesting to point out that a professional from Athens stated in his/her own words “we are doing everything for the children, as long as we are able to”. It was also stated that as long as an academy has trained coaches and personnel, they surely create a secure environment for the children. Finally, all professionals agreed that they listen to children’s points of view on various matter and that the latter can express their opinions on things they like and do not like in an academy or club.

The parents that participated to the online survey mentioned that they are not aware of any specific good practices preventing violence in sports. However, most of them stated that their children are able to share their views in the academy and that coaches and the personnel listen to them. They also mention that the professionalism of these academies was the reason why they chose them for their children. 20% of the participants mentioned that they do not believe that coaches listen to their children’s opinion on matters related to sports. None of them was aware of any child protection policies implemented in the sports academies/clubs/organizations.

The teenagers that participated to the online survey mentioned that the environment provided by their academy is friendly and secure, giving them the possibility to express their opinions freely. Most of them (80%) believe that coaches and the personnel listen to them and take into consideration their opinions. However, it is important to point out their responses regarding what they do not like in the academy they are attending. They stated that they do not like the competition existing especially between the athletes as well as between the coach and the athletes. They mentioned that the relations developed between some players are very bad and competitive and that some coaches tend to promote specific players depending on their own personal interest.

5.3 Existence and characterisation of practices preventing discrimination against children in sports

The representatives of the NGO ActionAid mentioned that their coaches have “positive” cards. At the end of every match, they decide which child had the best attitude and they give him/her something extra in order to motivate them. They state that this helps especially children with behavioral problems.

They also mentioned a number of good practices for the prevention of discrimination among children. First of all, they are in direct and constant contact with social services and with parents in order to inform them as long as they see a discriminatory attitude from a child. They also mention that training and education on discrimination can help in order to eliminate this kind of attitude from children. Boys also learn that when they play, they should play with girls and that if they do not pass the ball to a girl, they have to start playing from the beginning in order to learn that it is essential that they play with girls as equals.

The representative of the Union mentioned that they do not adopt any measures of positive discrimination because they were not allowed to. The only case this happens is for economic reasons when the parents of a child cannot pay the academy. In this case almost all academies accept the children without asking for their payment.

The athletes also supported that only for financial reasons there can be a positive discrimination towards a child. Especially from the financial crisis in Greece, there are many academies that let children continue their sports classes without asking for their payment.

One athlete pointed out that when a student is weaker, it is very common that the coach tries to “protect” him/her and supports him/her more than the other teammates. The second athlete agreed with that.

They also mentioned that there are specific practices adopted from coaches for the prevention of discrimination in sports clubs. One of them is that the coach should integrate the new player into the team and when a new player comes, the coach welcomes him/her and helps him/her get integrated into the team, learn his/her teammates and be a part of the team. When this procedure of integration is followed, there are less cases of discrimination reported.

Consequently, they both agreed that all the implementation of all these practices depend exclusively on the coach who can profoundly help them if he/she is not indifferent.

The representative from the General Secretariat of Sports stated that they are not allowed to adopt any positive discrimination measures but there are some good practices established and

implemented by sports academies and clubs related to counseling. They try to raise awareness and inform citizens and sports entities about discrimination and the need to prevent it.

The representatives of the NGO Eliza were not aware of any practices related to the prevention of discrimination in sports. The representative mentioned that it is important to start campaigns with famous athletes who would raise awareness about preventing discrimination in sports. The lawyer working for the NGO stated that there are measures of positive discrimination especially in terms of financial assistance but the situation is more difficult for migrant and refugee children because they cannot express their opinion and what they need according to the Greek and European legislation. She states that there is specific legislation to combat discrimination in sports but she does not believe that there are many good practices implemented by sports academies and organizations.

The findings from the online surveys were very interesting as professionals stated that in their academy there are no cases of discrimination among children and that they do whatever they can in order to prevent any such cases. One participant stated that equality is one of the pillars of their organization and this is the reason why during the matches they encourage boys and girls to play together. Another participant also stated that the base of their academy is equality, pointing out that when a child succeeds to do a very difficult exercise, the other children support and applaud him/her. They have created a very encouraging and positive environment among children and coaches for which, as he/she states, “are very proud”.

However, when they were asked if their academy/club/organization takes specific measures for disabled children, the 40% of the respondents replied that no such measures are adopted and that disabled children do not have access to the equipment of the academy. Some participants mentioned that their academy has specific facilities for disabled children. One participant pointed out that they want to ensure the access of the disabled children to sports but they cannot do it due to the absence of specific facilities in their academy.

5.4 Existence and characterisation of practices promoting the participation of children in sports

The representative of the Union pointed out that the administration of the sports club in which he is participating, does whatever it takes to keep an athlete in its premises. They work taking into consideration that all athletes should participate in sports and consequently, they try to reduce violence and discrimination in order to encourage children to participate in sports.

He also stated that they should enter into schools from a very early age in order to educate children and encourage them do sports and keep doing sports though their whole life, from 6 to 50 years old. However, in order to achieve that, it is essential that they take part in the educational system so that they promote sports and prepare children from an early age, something that does not happen in Greece.

Another important practice promoting the participation of children in sports and stated by almost all participants is the fact that they can share their views with their coaches and the personnel of the academy, expressing their opinion on everything that could concern them.

It is encouraging that almost all children that participated in the online survey stated that not only they are able to express their views but they feel that the coaches and the personnel listen to them. Consequently, it seems that the fact that children can share their views with their coaches and the rest of the personnel plays a positive role making them feel that the environment is friendlier.

The representatives of the NGO ActionAid mentioned that campaigns with famous athletes would promote the prevention of violence and discrimination and consequently, it would help children and raise awareness on this sensitive issue.

The same point of view was shared by the representatives of the NGO Eliza who underlined the effectiveness of this sort of campaigns with athletes that many people admire.

The representatives of the NGO ActionAid also stated that during the matches they organize for the implementation of their sports projects, they encourage girls and boys, foreigners and Greeks, to play all together in order to promote their participation and prevent any kind of discrimination that could arise.

In order to later identify possible practices that could be beneficial for the promotion of sports among children, it would be interesting to analyze children's responses to two questions.

First of all, when they were asked what they like most in their academy, they responded that they like the environment, the passion, the devotion and the history of the academy. They also replied that they appreciated being like family and that the environment is very friendly. Another participant from Thessaloniki mentioned that he/she likes that each athlete respects the other.

Another participant shared that he/she likes team spirit and that they are all players unified. Finally, another participant mentioned that he/she likes that the coaches are very friendly and the friendly environment of the academy gives you the chance to create friendship and good relations with the other teammates.

All these answers should be used in order to identify possible good practices that could encourage children and promote their participation in sports. The existence of a friendly and secure environment where everyone can express their views seems to be the principal factor that could encourage children to participate in sports.

5.5 Child protection policies

The representatives of the NGO ActionAid mentioned that they implement sports projects through the method called “football field” for adolescents of 12 to 16 years old, boys and girls, in order to promote values such as integration, respect, cooperation and equality. Furthermore, the whole perspective of the projects carried out by the NGO is concentrated on the idea of equality among children. They have trained personnel and coaches with an educational background as well as psychologists who help children, parents and professionals in case of violent incidents that may arise. They also have a specific code of conduct and they train their personnel in managing difficult cases.

They mentioned that many organizations, especially foreign ones, adopt policies like theirs. However, they do not know if this kind of child protection policies are also adopted by other organizations and sports academies or clubs in Greece.

The representatives of the NGO Eliza pointed out a policy implemented by the Prosecution of Rethymnon in Greece after the revelation of one of the biggest scandals of children violence in sports. The prosecution was inviting parents to call them and share their stories as well as to report other cases. However, she mentioned that even if it was helpful, it was not enough taking into consideration that Rethymnon is a small city and that other measures should have been adopted, such as the implication of the Mayor who could encourage citizens to speak and protect their children.

The lawyer working for the NGO was not aware of any child protection policies implemented either in the private or the public sector.

The same situation arose from the interview of the representative of the General Secretariat of Sports who also replied that he was not aware of any child protection policies carried out by sports clubs and organizations.

The two athletes that took part in the interviews also responded that they weren't aware of any child protection policies in their professional environment.

The answer of the representative of the Union when he was asked if there are any child protection policies implemented by sports clubs and academies, is very interesting and should be noted. He replied that he didn't know any specific child protection policy but an unconscious policy is established among players and professionals. He explained that an academy protects all athletes and if there is a problem of violence or discrimination that arises, the academy “heals it itself” because they want all players independently of their origin, age or capacities. He described an

internal method of protection that encourages children to understand that they are all important for the team.

According to the professionals' responses in the online survey, all academies/clubs and organizations have an internal procedure and a person that is responsible for the reporting of violent or discriminatory incidents, an element that could be very beneficial and helpful to the protection of children in sports. In most cases, children can report incidents to their coaches who are trying to establish a friendly relationship with their athletes so that they can easily talk to them about all incidents. Another representative mentioned that every team has a responsible person that is also a member of the Council of Administration of the academy who listens to all problems and receives eventual complaints. Only one representative mentioned that there is no one responsible of the reporting of violent cases. What is necessary to point out is that all representatives underlined the importance of the creation of a close relationship with their students in order to encourage them to speak freely about their views and their problems.

When parents were asked for the existence of child protection policies in the clubs and academies of their children, all of them replied that they were not aware of any such policy apart from one parent who replied that he/she knew that there were some child protection policies without providing however, any supplementary information on the content and the results of these policies. One participant affirmed that he/she didn't know any child protection policies and he had never asked the specific academy where his/her child is playing sports if there are any.

However, the 70% of participants mentioned that there was a specific person competent to receive complaints by their children in every academy. In one case, a parent pointed out that a coach seemed to have undertaken the role of receiving all forms of complaints by children and another parent mentioned the existence of a psychologist who helps them manage difficult situations.

5.6 Changes that can be introduced

All participants underlined the importance of adopting measures and policies that would combat violence and discrimination and encourage children, parents and professionals to report violent cases and render the sports environment more secure.

The two athletes underlined that it is necessary that professionals get trained. Through specific training, they could be more conscious about these topics and help children and their parents when this kind of incidents arise. They pointed out that in Greece, everyone can become a coach as coaches don't receive specific training before entering an academy. The only coaches that receive specific training are those who study in the Sports Academy of Greece and they follow some human rights courses as well as some specific courses related to the management of violent incidents and bullying. However, not all professionals receive this training and education, rendering their approach towards children more rigid.

The representative of the Union stated that the academies should enter into schools in order to educate children from a very early age and promote the values of sports. He also pointed out that professionals are not trained in human rights, which however should happen and would be extremely beneficial. There is no information in all levels and there must be specific seminars for coaches and players. Furthermore, parents should be informed about violence in sports so that they know how to speak to their children about these incidents and about how to protect themselves.

The representative of the NGO Eliza pointed out the following measures that should be adopted:

- Training and information for coaches, parents and children.
- Campaigns for raising awareness implemented by the Ministry of Sports.
- Establishment of specific Helplines for the reporting of violent incidents in sports. Through these helplines, children and parents could be informed about the legal steps they could take.
- Famous athletes should share their stories in order to raise awareness about violence in sports.

The lawyer of the NGO also mentioned the need to create a protocol which could be the guide provided to all professionals and especially to coaches for the management of violent incidents against children. They also agreed that children and parents should be informed.

The representative of the General Secretariat of Sports pointed out that new policies for raising awareness addressed to children, parents and coaches, should be adopted. He also mentioned that it is necessary to respect the existing legal framework in terms of combating violence in sports.

The representatives of ActionAid proposed the following measures:

- Constant monitoring of children and professionals.
- Education and training of professionals.
- Sports should become a vehicle of social integration and not the final objective of children. One representative proposed to organize a match with unaccompanied minors which will be “a huge moment”.
- Delivering messages against competition.
- Constant contact with social services when violent incidents arise.

According to one professional participating to the survey, there is nothing to change in the sports clubs environment. Another participant stated that a psychologist should monitor and discuss with the children their problems and issues that may arise. The same point of view was also shared by another participant who proposed to recruit special councilors for children. They also proposed constant meetings in order to inform parents as well as the establishment of a better relation between coaches and their students.

More information and specific trainings addressed to professionals were also some of the propositions. Finally, another participant mentioned the importance to respect the law in case people try to violate it and another parent mentioned that he/she had never thought about possible changes in the sports field.

6. Conclusions

Through the desk research, the interviews and the online surveys' findings, we were able to draw certain conclusions about violence against children in sports in Greece.

- Greece is a country with an insufficient legal framework concerning the protection of children against violence in sports. More precisely, there is no specific legal framework regarding the above situation, rendering the reporting of these cases even more difficult and rare.
- Most participants ascertained that violence in sports exists. This violence can be physical, mental and/or verbal. The interviewees drew attention on violence between children and between parents and children especially, in cases of competitive sports. Two interviewees pointed out that there is no violence between coaches and students. On the other hand, the online survey participants and especially children that participated in the survey underlined that the most common forms of violence in sports is indeed violence among children but also violence between coaches and athletes and this violence is mainly verbal but sometimes it can also be physical.
- Most participants also underlined that violence is more frequent in competitive sports than in leisure activities.
- The participants presented many good practices to combat violence. Most of the good practices were proposed by private initiatives and NGOs, trying to prevent violence by teaching young people the social values of equality and collaboration. However, the public sector does not seem to implement specific good practices through guidelines that should be followed by all sports clubs/academies and organizations.
- The same situation applies for national policies concerning the prevention of violence in sports. The initiative is mainly private, deriving from NGOs whose goal is to promote equality. As the representative of the General Secretariat of Sports ascertained, everyone should apply the law, without mentioning any specifically targeted policies for the prevention of violence in sports.
- Concerning discrimination incidents in sports, most participants pointed out that they are not common. On one hand, one interviewee mentioned that an academy wants all players independently of their ethnicity or nationality. Another interviewee pointed out some incidents involving young children but they were directly managed by psychologists and other specialists working with the children. Even according to the online survey responses, most children ascertained that discrimination is not frequent

in sports as new athletes are directly integrated into a team. They underlined that everything depends on the coach who, if willing to do so, can welcome new athletes and integrate them into the existing team.

- The promotion of sports in the young population in Greece seems necessary and constitutes a goal that should be achieved, according to an interviewee. He proposed that sports academies and especially sports public authorities access schools and teach students sports from a very early age. However, just doing sports is not enough, as young people should get in touch with the social values that sports can promote from a very early age so that they keep up doing sports for the rest of their lives.
- The Greek society has faced several violent incidents related to violence against children in sports. Some of these incidents were presented in public in order to raise awareness about violence in sports and encourage people to raise similar incidents and create some effective measures for their prevention.
- The participants suggested measures that could be adopted at a national level in order to raise awareness about this specific issue and prevent any incidents in the future. Some of the most interesting suggestions were the following: (1) the establishment of a national helpline for the reporting of incidents, (2) the creation of campaigns with famous players who would share their stories and raise awareness, (3) the training of professionals working in the sports domain on how to protect children and manage violent incidents and (4) the training of parents on how to speak with their children and prepare them to protect themselves against any violent incident.

All the above suggested measures as well as the findings through the field research should be efficiently used in order to achieve the goals of the present project, better address the needs and fulfill the gaps concerning child protection policies in sports.

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