SPORT GVP
Gender Violence Prevention in & through sport

Intersectionality : a vital component for tackling Gender-Based Violence in Sport

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The **Sport GVP project** addresses this challenge head-on through a **structured and inclusive set of actions** aimed at preventing and tackling GBV both *in* and *through* sport. One of the assets of the project is its **intersectional approach** and how intersectional identities contribute to unique experiences of GBV.

Why Intersectionality Matters

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected and simultaneous forms of oppression that individuals may experience based on their **ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and other axes of identity** (Crenshaw 1991).

The intersectional approach implemented within the Sport GVP project is aligned with the field reality as revealed in recent research conducted by EIDGE:

Evidence shows that [...] gender, class, race and ethnicity were historically perceived to be the major social divisions within intersectionality research, with other axes of power gradually included, such as age, dis/ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion etc. (EIDGE, *Intersecting inequalities: Gender Equality Index,* 2019).

In the context of gender-based violence (GBV) in sport, this approach is vital to understanding how athletes face unique and compounded vulnerabilities—particularly those who are LGBTQ+, refugees, economically disadvantaged, or belong to racial and ethnic minorities.

Field Findings Highlight the Complexity of GBV in Sport

Field research conducted within the Sport GVP project revealed that intersectionality was often an unfamiliar concept among participants, yet its relevance became clear through lived experiences of composite discrimination.

Cyprus

In **Cyprus**, LGBTQ+ athletes were found to be particularly at risk due to the convergence of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status and ability.

Greece

In **Greece**, patriarchal norms and entrenched gender roles contribute to a culture of silence. The study showed that marginalised identities, such as being LGBTQ+, a refugee, or economically disadvantaged, intensified experiences of GBV.

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Denmark

In **Denmark**, despite progressive initiatives, deep-rooted cultural attitudes continue to hinder inclusivity. Field research revealed a low level of awareness, among sport professionals, on the matter but once familiar with the concept athletes reported discrimination incidents related to intersectional identities.

North Macedonia

In **North Macedonia**, a lack of reporting and data obscures the full extent of the issue. However, where understanding of intersectionality existed, it was linked to recognition of the specific vulnerabilities faced by marginalised groups, particularly within the LGBTIQ+ community. Thus, the probability of experiencing aggravated violence remains considerable.

Italy

In **Italy**, the sports system struggles with both policy implementation and deep-seated stereotypes. The intersections of ethnicity, gender and disability intensifies vulnerability to GBV. Coaches and athletes noted how religious beliefs, economic hardship, and traditional gender roles intersect to create an environment where GBV is both underreported and inadequately addressed.

Conclusion

Addressing Gender-Based Violence in sport requires more than one-dimensional solutions. It demands strategies that recognize how intersecting forms of marginalization compound vulnerability.

Improved awareness, inclusive policies, and **cross-sectoral training**—especially for coaches—are crucial to addressing entrenched prejudices and supporting marginalized athletes.

Sustainable prevention and intervention depend on coordinated efforts, better reporting mechanisms, and a genuine commitment to inclusivity in sport.

References

European Institute for Gender Equality (2019), *Intersecting inequalities: Gender Equality Index*

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