

Insights into Gender-Based Violence: Research Findings and Data



Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) in sport is a significant problem affecting athletes from various regions, including **Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy and North Macedonia**, SPORT GVP project partner countries.

This article provides insights into recent research findings on GBV in these countries, highlighting the pervasive nature of this issue and proposing measures to address it.

Cyprus: Stereotypes and Systemic Issues

In Cyprus, recent research reveals major problems of GBV in the football environment. Gender stereotypes and societal expectations regarding physical conditioning contribute to the discrimination of female athletes, who are often labelled as 'masculine' or 'intimidating', thus discouraging their participation. Reported types of GBV include physical, psychological, verbal, sexual and financial abuse. Sexual harassment is particularly prevalent, exacerbated by family attitudes that view women's participation in football as inappropriate. Limited complaints and legal action highlight systemic problems and normalised inequalities within the sport.

Greece: Stereotypes and Insufficient Support

GBV in Greek sport is influenced by entrenched stereotypes and a lack of institutional support. Sports are often perceived as male-dominated activities, creating barriers for women. The Greek sporting environment lacks comprehensive policies to address GBV and existing measures are poorly implemented. The absence of effective policies perpetuates an environment where GBV persists, particularly affecting women and LGBTQIA+ people.

Denmark: Need for Comprehensive Measures

Denmark's approach to violence against persons in sport is underdeveloped. The European Commission report points out that, apart from general legislation, there is a lack of specific measures to combat violence against minors. Harassment and sexual abuse are widespread, especially in elite sports and football. Female athletes often feel that their experiences are undervalued compared to their male counterparts. The Danish LGBTQIA+ community is subject to considerable discrimination and transgender and non-binary people face greater challenges. The lack of inclusive policies and prevailing homophobic and transphobic attitudes contribute to a hostile environment for LGBTQIA+ athletes.

North Macedonia: Cultural and Structural Barriers

In North Macedonia, GBV in sport is exacerbated by lack of awareness and systemic inequalities. There is a marked imbalance of resources and opportunities between male and female athletes, with women receiving fewer scholarships and less access to facilities. Mechanisms for reporting discrimination are underdeveloped, with the result that cases of sexual violence are inadequately addressed. There is a crucial need for educational seminars and stronger policies to improve awareness and support for victims.

Italy: Gender and Sexual Orientation Discrimination

The Italian sports sector reveals widespread GBV, which particularly affects women and LGBTQIA+ persons. Female athletes are often victims of sexual harassment, psychological abuse and gender discrimination. The disparity in media coverage and sponsorship between male and female athletes exacerbates these problems. LGBTQIA+ athletes experience homophobic and transphobic violence, including bullying and exclusion. The sports culture, influenced by traditional gender norms and insufficient policies, fails to provide adequate protection and support for these groups.

Recommendations for Addressing GBV in Sport

Research findings in these countries underline the pervasive nature of GBV in sport and the **need for comprehensive strategies** to address it. The following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Awareness-raising and education:** Comprehensive education and training on GBV for athletes, coaches and staff to recognise and respond to incidents appropriately. Mandatory training, workshops and regular seminars can reinforce these concepts.
- 2. Clear policies and enforcement:** Establish and consistently enforce clear policies and protocols for reporting and addressing sexual violence, ensuring transparency and accountability. This includes maintaining confidentiality, serious handling of reports and appointing qualified staff to handle reports in a professional and sensitive manner.
- 3. Accessible resources:** Information on GBV, including helplines, support services and reporting mechanisms, should be easily accessible and available in multiple languages and formats.
- 4. Support systems:** Robust support mechanisms, including counselling, legal aid and confidential and safe complaint routes, are essential to support victims and encourage them to come forward.
- 5. Culture of openness:** Promoting a culture that encourages openness, support and zero tolerance of GBV can help create a safer environment. Peer support and mentoring programmes have been identified as valuable tools in this effort.
- 6. Intersectionality:** An intersectional approach is needed to address the aggravated discrimination that athletes experience due to various identity factors, ensuring that policies and support systems are inclusive and equitable.
- 7. Infrastructure improvement:** Development and maintenance of safe and private areas within sports facilities where athletes can seek help or report incidents confidentially is equally important. Actions should be taken to ensure that these spaces are accessible to all athletes.
- 8. Role models and media representation:** Highlight and support athletes who are positive role models, especially those who stand up against GBV and support gender diversity. Campaigns featuring athletes who are diverse and address the issue of GBV can challenge stereotypes and reach a wider audience.
- 9. Community and stakeholder involvement:** Organise workshops to educate parents about GBV, its impact and how they can support their children. As our research has highlighted, families play a crucial role in preventing violence against people.

- 10. Technology and innovation:** Develop secure digital platforms that allow athletes to report sexual violence anonymously if they wish. These platforms should be easy to use and accessible via mobile devices.

Conclusion

Effectively addressing GBV in sport requires a unified strategy that prioritises education, policy enforcement and support systems. Comprehensive education for athletes, coaches and staff, coupled with clear and enforceable policies and accessible support resources, is essential to create safe and inclusive sport environments. Fostering a zero-tolerance culture for violence and discrimination, supported by robust reporting mechanisms and positive role models, is critical to ensuring that all athletes can compete without fear or prejudice.

