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WE, THE GUARDIANS!



REPORT

Desk and statistical research



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DESK RESEARCH - Existing practices of Safeguarding Policies and violence towards young people in Sports in North Macedonia and Serbia

1. Research problem formulation

Sport and physical activity are recognized for their importance in the development of the young people's life, as well as for the well-being of the citizens. Many programs and policies from the Council of Europe and European Commission are developed aiming to increase the number of EU citizens enrolled in sports and physical activities. Regardless of the many attempts to improve the experience while practicing sports or physical activities, many children and young people are exposed to negative situations in sports which affect their decision to discontinue their sport engagement. Sport serves as a platform where young people experience joy, fun and it helps in their self-esteem and building life values and skills. However, this process of self-development is often interrupted by the presence of various types of violence, discrimination, pressure or forms of abuse, according to many studies and statistical reports that this research will present. One of the attempts to prevent and address any form of young people's harm during sport activities, is establishing internal safeguarding and protection policies, jointly with programs of increasing the internal capacities of sport clubs to respond to violent or negative situations as well as work on preventing them from occurring. Safeguarding in sport is a process of protecting youth and children from harm by providing a safe space in which they can play sport and be active, yet many countries such as North Macedonia and Serbia struggle on understanding the importance of having practices and mechanisms in place for every sport club and at their facilities.



When analyzing different reports and channels of various institutions and organizations, we have not identified any information, statistics or research that has been produced regarding the violence experienced by youth in sport. Majority is related primarily to the violence experienced by children in sport activities and such data comes mainly from institutions such as the Council of Europe or United Nations. Council of Europe Human Rights Channel¹ informs us that: **"About one in five children in Europe are victims of some form of sexual violence, which includes sexual touching, rape, sexual harassment, grooming- in the sport"**. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights estimates that 10 percent of all children active in sport have their human rights violated and a further 20 percent of children in sport are for various reasons vulnerable and potential victims of human rights violations. In Serbia, in a report done by UNICEF², in 2017 it was stated that: "Among children involved in sports, 51% of them said they had experienced some form of violence by their teammates, and 41% by their opponents; as many

¹ <https://human-rights-channel.coe.int/stop-child-sexual-abuse-in-sport-en.html>

² https://www.unicef-irc.org/files/upload/documents/serbia_report.pdf



as 61% of them experienced violence by their coaches”. However, there are no reports or statistics found regarding violence or abuse experienced by young people (15-30) in sport.

The denial phase has been prolonged by many sport organizations and institutions about the existence of violence against youth and children in sport, however to shift the reality European Union and the Council of Europe developed policy frameworks inviting governments to take actions. Namely: *The Recommendation of the Council of Europe on gender mainstreaming in Sport (2015)*³, which invites governments of member States to adopt, implement and monitor policies and measures, in co-operation with sport organizations, to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women and girls in sport (physical intimidation or violence, verbal, psychological, physical and sexual harassment and abuse). Also, *The Recommendations of the European Commission Expert group on Good Governance on the protection of young athletes and safeguarding children’s rights in sport (2016)*⁴ that recommends to EU member States to implement effective legislation and regulation in fighting against violence to minors in sport, to support sport organizations for the development of child protection policies, as well as to encourage collaboration/effective partnerships between sport organizations. Yet when we analyze existing practices in the field not only the participating countries in this project (North Macedonia and Serbia) but in many other countries, there is no discussion or meaningful initiatives that are focused on implementing these policies and recommendations. For that reason, in this research we will try to collect and analyze information about the existing practices and safeguarding policies, leading us toward conclusions on the approach “WE THE GUARDIANS” project need to ensure in order to contribute to systematic application of safeguarding policies which will create safe space for practicing sport among young people 15-30 years old.

2. Research aim



Desk research will collect information on the existing practices and policies of safeguarding and protection of youth in sport clubs, while at the same time it will identify the existing statistics of the most common types of violence experienced in sport in European Countries. The desk research will provide concrete information for the following issues:

- **What are the existing practices and youth safeguarding and protection policies in sport?**
- **The most common types of violence experienced in sport and how are they defined?**

³ <https://rm.coe.int/16804c9dbb>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/home?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=25000&no=1>

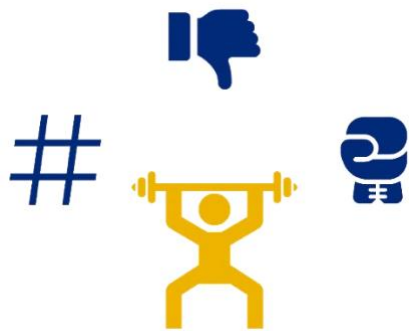


- What is the role of the NGOs in developing comprehensive safeguarding policies in sport?
- Which are the main consequences of lacking safeguarding policies in sport clubs?

The aim of the desk research is to help us in the process of developing practical safeguarding policies in two countries that have no programs or mechanisms in which negative experiences and behaviors of young people in sports are discussed or addressed and as such are under shadowed.

The conclusions of the desk research will support the partner organizations of the project “WE THE GUARDIANS- Effective practices to safeguarding youth in sport activities” to be able to bring European perspective of practices and policies in the local reality, empowering sport clubs in participating countries to actively engage in addressing violence and abusive behaviors toward young people, experienced in sport activities.

3.What is violence in sport and how to identify it



Below is a list of definitions of different types of violence and abuse that takes place in the sports sector against children, youth or adults. These definitions are important to understand how they are defined by different institutions or organizations, as they serve as examples of their experience and cases faced of violence in sports and as such they will serve as a base for the overall research conclusions. In addition, it will help with further analysis of the type of violence which is taking place in North Macedonia and in Serbia firstly to have a better understanding of the

types of violence and also to compare them with other countries as a learning process. Although many of the definitions listed below are focused on children as a target group, they will serve as a base for the project's own formulation of the type of violence which will be identified by **youth** in the two member countries, as the same definitions are also applicable to young people. Definitions of the types of violence will help each actor involved in sport working with young people to understand the role everyone has in the process of preventing or fighting abusive behaviors and violent actions towards youth. It starts with becoming aware of individual behavior and the values adults share in front of young people during sports activity that makes the difference of the whole experience youth has in sport activities on a daily basis.



Based on the “Study on Gender Based Violence in Sport” conducted in 2016 by European Commission⁵ that is relevant for the purpose of this research, below is a list of their definitions of different types of violence in sport:

- **Prevention** refers to measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behavior of boys and girls and women and men. These measures may include, among others, awareness-raising initiatives, the development of educational materials, and the training of professionals.
- **Protection** The primary objective of protective actions is to ensure the safety and meet the needs of (potential) victims. Protection comprises (cooperative) actions to protect (potential) victims of any form of gender-based violence in sport. Protection also includes reporting the occurrence of or potential for abuse or harassment (by a coach, a peer or any individual within the sport entourage)
- **Prosecution** (and disciplinary measures) Prosecution covers not only legal proceedings against those suspected of having abused or harassed an athlete, but also related investigative measures and judicial proceedings, including court cases. This includes criminal and civil offenses, as well as disciplinary/internal grievance procedures.
- **Gender-based harassment** (“unwelcome conduct related to a person’s gender and has the effect or purpose of offending another person’s dignity”)
- **Sexual abuse** (“to trick, force or coerce a person into any sexual activity the person does not want, or is not sufficiently mature to consent to”)
- **Sexual harassment** (“behavior of a sexualized nature which is unwanted, exploitative, degrading, coerced, forced and/or violent”).

Another example of institutions referring only to children as a target group in the definitions of violence in sport is European Commission which based on the *“Safeguarding Children in Sport: A mapping study”*⁶ conducted in 2019 the typology of violence is as follows:

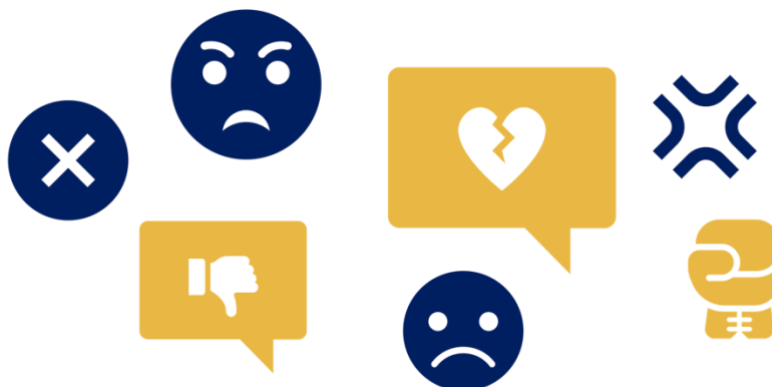
- **Physical maltreatment** (non-accidental injury, forced regimes, etc.)
- **Neglect** and negligent treatment (anything a child may need for his/her physical growth and development: medical care, hygiene, education, etc.)
- **Emotional and psychological abuse**
- **Overtraining**
- **Training not according to individual physical development**
- **Discrimination**, violence and harassment (based on sex, race, sexual orientation, disability)
- **Doping**, performance-enhancing substances or the inappropriate use of painkillers, nutrition supplements and/or alcohol
- **High-level intense training** to the detriment of education
- **Bullying**, including cyber-bullying, and any form of pressure (including to underperform)
- **Grooming** – a process of building a relationship to gain the trust of a child and to make them think that sex with the perpetrator is normal or that they have no choice. It is often very carefully planned, and it can take place over a period of time. Part of the grooming process will be the use of physical contact initiated and justified by the perpetrator as being normal. It may be part of a

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/studies/gender-based-violence-sport-study-2016_en.pdf

⁶ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/03fc8610-e4c2-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>



coaching activity, playful contact outside normal training e.g., tickling and wrestling or expressions of affection. This physical contact will often cross professional boundaries and examples may include lingering or repeated embraces of a child, asking a child to sit in the lap of a coach, administrator, staff member or volunteer “Cuddling” or maintaining prolonged physical contact during any aspect of training, travel or overnight stay. (International Tennis Federation)



In Serbia, based on a UNICEF report ⁷“Determinants and factors of violence affecting children in Serbia” published in 2017 some of the definitions of the type of violence affecting children are listed below; however, there is no definition specifically for the violence occurring in sport and physical activities against young people:

- **Physical** — the intentional use of physical force against a child that may result in harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity.
- **Emotional** — acts that have an adverse effect on the emotional health and development of a child, including but not limited to restricting a child’s movements, ridicule, threats and intimidation, rejection and other non-physical forms of hostile treatment.
- **Sexual** — the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or which the child is not developmentally prepared for, or which otherwise violates the laws or social taboos of society.
- **Neglect** — failure to meet a child’s basic needs — physical, psychological, needs related to the process of socialization — in an extent, duration and manner likely to result in serious impairment of the child’s health or development



In North Macedonia based on a UNICEF report “Prevention, identification, reporting and referral of cases of violence against children: overview of state response mechanisms” published in 2018⁸, it was reported on how the professional practitioners defined violence

⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/1001/file/Violence%20against%20children.pdf>

⁸ [unicef.org/northmacedonia/media/4201/file/MK_ViolenceAgainstChildren_Report_ENG.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/media/4201/file/MK_ViolenceAgainstChildren_Report_ENG.pdf)



against children and some of the types of violence that emerged from them are listed below. However again in our findings we lack on identifying any report which can define child abuse or any type of **violence against youth in sport environment**.

physical violence;
emotional violence;
domestic violence;
verbal violence;
neglect;
sexual violence;
and peer violence.

The definitions identified will be used during the implementation of the project “WE THE GUARDIANS” aiming to enhance the skills and knowledge of sport clubs and organizations from North Macedonia and Serbia on firstly understanding what type of actions are defined in the violence against children in sport, and secondly to be aware about the importance of individual behavior and the values adults share in front of children and young people during sports activity.

4. European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE) policies of safe sport

The European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE) both have taken different actions toward creating a safe environment in sport for all participating or willing to enroll in it. Although their focus of protection and safeguarding is mostly focused on children or women as target groups, we lacked in identifying any project implemented by them which is focused only on young people and violence towards them in the sports sector. The existing documents of the two institutions (EU and CoE) are not legally binding for the member countries, and rather invites them to adopt, implement and monitor policies which are focused on prevention and combating gender violence in sport. Namely: The Recommendation of the Council of Europe on gender mainstreaming in Sport (2015)⁹ and The Recommendations of the European Commission Expert group on Good Governance on the protection of young athletes and safeguarding children’s rights in sport (2016)¹⁰ which complies with recommendations for EU member states to implement regulation in fighting against violence to minors in sport. Both of the documents have great content to be used by EU countries or any other country on taking actions and concrete measures to prevent and combat violence in sport, however we haven’t identified any report which systematically monitors the implementation, nor the type of actions undertaken by EU countries regarding this topic. What is important to take note in this part is that in countries like North Macedonia and Serbia there is no discussion or meaningful projects, initiatives or programs that are focused on implementing these policies and recommendations. Internal economic, political and social situations are presented as different factors diminishing the focus and the attempts of institutions to prioritize

⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/16804c9dbb>

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/home?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=25000&no=1>



implementation of these specific recommendations or just implementing initiatives that promote a safe environment in sport, free of violence for all. Furthermore, in both of them (EU or CoE) there was no project or recommendation for EU countries focused only on young people and the violence they experience in sport. For example, “**Child Safeguarding in Sport**” (CSiS) ¹¹ is a European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (COE) joint project (1 March 2020-30 June 2022). Its main aims are to guide and accompany European countries towards effective child safeguarding in sport policies, through the setting up of positions of Child Safeguarding Officers. 6 countries are partners to the project: **Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Israel, Norway and Portugal**. This project is supporting each country to develop concrete steps on setting up Child Safeguarding Officer roles in sport, capacity building and exchange of practices and also has established an online resource center for good practices. Although the project is focused on children, we are going to use the information and the experience of each individual country to compare the results and challenges faced, to understand how these practices will best serve the process of developing safeguarding policies in North Macedonia and Serbia for young people. Many of the actions in different countries have taken place in 2021, therefore the effects of the implementation are still to be analyzed, however the internal process of countries will be used for lessons learned and a process to follow from the organizations and the sport clubs that are part of the project “WE THE GUARDIANS”.



Cross border and cross sectoral approach have not been identified in initiatives regarding safeguarding in sport. We see that it is only a few years since the safeguarding and safe sport environment has taken place in the discussions and actions led by international institutions, organizations, sport federations, clubs or NGO's. But when we analyze different reports, project results or initiatives in both countries, the biggest partners of the young people are NGOs and many opportunities that they provide for young people such as training, seminars, youth exchanges, volunteering and so on. Serving as a space where a great number of young people are involved in an interactive and learning oriented setup which non-formal education is providing, are important reasons to have joint initiatives between the NGO sector and the sport clubs or federations on this issue. Therefore, countries such as North Macedonia and Serbia, have still a long way ahead on creating an effective system that will have actions both preventing and fighting violence against youth in sport activities. In addition to achieving success in initiatives regarding violence in sport towards young people, cross border cooperation will contribute to establishing a coherent approach where countries with similar issues and struggles will exchange best practices, information and will provide each other with meaningful feedback for effective implementation of safeguarding policies with young people in sport.

¹¹ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/pss/home>



5. NGO efforts and International Sport Federations



One of the aims of this desk research is to identify and analyze the existing practices of safeguarding policies in sport, thus for this purpose we have identified some international sport federations and organizations in order to analyze their safeguarding policies. This is specifically important as it will bring a clear picture of the process they have followed and the steps which can be a learning process serving the needs of this project activities. Comparing their safeguarding policies, toolkits or the information included in them is a great example of the do's and don'ts which we will follow in the process of developing safeguarding policies for youth in North Macedonia and in Serbia. During this research we haven't identified any sport federation or clubs in the two countries, who are currently implementing safeguarding policies. One of the reasons can be that both of the countries have not initiated discussions or actions regarding safeguarding towards young people. However, for the needs of this research we have identified international sport federations and organizations who have developed safeguarding and protection policies and have taken specific measures at their sports or communities regarding prevention and fighting violence:

- **Sportanddev.org**¹² is a website dedicated entirely to sport and development, and within this website there is a specific toolkit developed to provide information about safeguarding and protection of children in sport and the necessity to have internal policies for each of the sport club or structure. The web page provides information on also how to spread and promote the actions needed to keep children safe in sport.
- **FIFA Football** - has developed internal safeguarding policies to enable a safe environment for millions of children in the world who are part of the football sport. Moreover, they have developed a toolkit¹³ to serve as a resource for all stakeholders working with children in football clubs throughout the world. This toolkit provides 5 principles and 5 steps that football clubs should follow to safeguard children in football, which includes first internal assessment and evaluation of sport clubs; setting out and defining the safeguarding policies; developing internal procedures and guidelines; and communication.



¹² <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/toolkit/child-protection-and-safeguarding>

¹³ <https://www.fifa.com/social-impact/fifa-guardians/guidance>



- FIBA Basketball** – In the Safeguarding policy ¹⁴ they have committed to having zero tolerance for harassment, discrimination or abuse of any kind. Within the policy, FIBA has set very concretely the steps to follow each of the Basketball clubs or national federations to identify children in risk or abused, have provided definitions for all types of violence in sport and has given an overview of the process that will follow after someone will report any case at the FIBA Integrity Officer, who has the role of the contact person for anyone who wants to report any case. The policy is written that it applies to all individuals and national federations part of FIBA, however there is no call for action for developing and adopting international national safeguarding policies in basketball or at their clubs. In April-May 2022, FIBA has also created a Safeguarding Council ¹⁵ who will submit advice on helping to provide a safe environment for FIBA stakeholders, which serves as a great example of actions that international federations need to take to provide better safety and protection for all in sport.


- ITF Safeguarding Policy** – International Tennis Federation ¹⁶ puts efforts on the safeguarding policies as part of their long-term growth and sustainability of tennis plans. The safeguarding policy describes the role and the step of each person taking part in tennis on how to respond and act in different situations of child abuse.


- FINA** – International Federation in Water Sports has developed a policy in June 2021 named “FINA Rules on the protection from harassment and abuse” ¹⁷ which is a document that does not address protection of children or young people. Although it has provided definitions of different types of abuse in sport, they are mostly referred to water professional events and lack information on daily sport practices and actions to take for providing safety and protection for children at any time. Serving as an example of the need for more actions and work to be undertaken on an international level, in order to achieve greater success in raising awareness of local clubs or national federations.


- International Olympic Committee (IOC)** – Plays a leading role in protecting and enabling a safe environment for all athletes at all times. Within the Olympic Charter ¹⁸ safeguarding of athletes is part of the key fundamental principles of Olympism. The IOC has established four commissions as part of their prevention of harassment and abuse in sport actions. Moreover, IOC has also developed safeguarding athlete’s policies and procedures to follow during IOC events. Within this scope, IOC has



¹⁴ <https://gb.basketball/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FIBA-Safeguarding-Policy.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.fiba.basketball/news/fiba-announce-members-of-newly-created-safeguarding-council>

¹⁶ <https://www.itftennis.com/media/4458/itf-children-safeguarding-policy-2022.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://resources.fina.org/fina/document/2021/06/25/e82e136e-39bc-41c7-8458-02f584541f76/FINA-RULES-ON-THE-PROTECTION-FROM-HARASSMENT-AND-ABUSE.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/1088617/olympic-charter-in-force-as-from-8-august-2021-international-olympic-committee>



also developed toolkit ¹⁹and guidelines for IFs (International Federations) and NOCs (National Olympic Committees).



Many other international sport federations have internal safeguarding policies serving as a guide during sport events with children, however there is a lack of toolkits or procedures that each sport club in grassroots level or national sport federations should follow to develop safeguarding policies. The project “**WE THE GUARDIANS- Effective practices to safeguarding youth in sport activities**” will bring the new approach and opportunity for the sport clubs, sport federations and NGOs to work jointly in creating a safe and positive environment for young people to be engaged in all sports, starting from the grassroots level. Most of the safeguarding policies or protection policies identified have been targeted either to children or professional athletes taking place in competitions or Olympic events. This project intends to provide information regarding the experience of all young people even if they practice sport as recreational activity, as a really important target group who have the tendency to have decreased numbers of young people enrolled in sports, with their growing ages. We see this approach of the project as an added value and a practice that can serve also to other initiatives

beyond North Macedonia and Serbia. Another important issue is- cross border and cross sectoral approach which has not been identified in initiatives regarding safeguarding in sport. Thus, the project will provide a cross border cooperation and exchange of practices which will feed the process of establishing more effective safeguarding policies and procedures. A very important approach of this project will be the joint work of the sport clubs and NGOs sector, which will enable both to share the sector expertise and combine them which will result in having comprehensive safeguarding policies and follow up actions to achieve greater audience and success of implementation of the policies.

6. Status of the sport clubs in North Macedonia and in Serbia



North Macedonia - When addressing the violence against children or youth in North Macedonia, in different study reports it is mainly referenced to situations happening in school environment, street or at home. However, there is no data available of the situation of young people regarding violence or negative experience occurring in sport clubs or sport events. Sport sector is led by the Agency for Youth and Sport in NM, and as such sport is part of the National Youth ²⁰Strategy of North Macedonia, resulting in lacking national sport strategy separately. Based on the Agency for Youth and Sport there are more than 1,500 sport clubs active in North Macedonia. ²¹ However, there is no public data segregated by gender, age, nationality regarding children and youth engaged in sport clubs or sport structures. The National Olympic Committee of North Macedonia consists of 26 sport federations. In this strategy violence experienced by youth in the sports sector is not addressed at all, therefore there are no activities planned to address the topic. This can be one of the factors which tells that sport clubs and sport federations have no plans on developing

¹⁹ <https://olympics.com/ioc/safe-sport/assistance-for-olympic-movement-stakeholders>

²⁰ https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Macedonia_2005_National_Youth_Strategy.pdf

²¹ <http://ams.gov.mk/en/sports-sector/>



safeguarding policies or taking actions towards prevention or fighting violence against young people in sport.



Serbia - Has no currently sport national strategies, however it is being discussed as to whether it is needed to develop one in the national level. Sport as a sector is part of the national youth strategy ²²in Serbia (available in Serbian), however the violence in sport is not covered as part of this. According to a UNICEF report ²³“Situation Analysis of children and Adolescents in Serbia” published in 2019, about one half of young people regularly engage in sports activities. Boys are more engaged in sports than girls (57 and 28 per cent, respectively). When analyzing the situation of safeguarding or policies which are addressing violence in sport, according to *CoE Gender Equality in Sport in Serbia*²⁴, a leaflet published in 2019, only 3 sport federations in Serbia, which are golf, sailing and wrestling have developed policies to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport - “All three federations have developed codes of conduct or ethical guidelines for coaches and people in managerial and decision-making positions in their sport. Two of them have added a rule in their statutes that forbids gender-based violence”. Only this UNICEF report “Violence against children in Serbia²⁵” published in 2017, have reported regarding violence experienced in sports environments, namely **“Among children involved in sports, 51% of them said they had experienced some form of violence by their teammates, and 41% by their opponents; as many as 61% of them experienced violence by their coaches”**. The National Olympic Committee of Serbia consists of 47 sport federations, however at their public web page there is no data of any safeguarding policy developed or implemented by the NOC Serbia.



The research has identified the lack of concrete information regarding the amount and the type of violence that is experienced in sport from children and even less for young people. Thus, this part specifically will be explored in depth through the statistical research with young people that we will have in these two countries, as an important process that needs to be implemented. The need for establishing internal safeguarding policies and having sport clubs and federations staff capacities increased on the topic, has presented itself as an urgent matter. Another identified issue is that most of the existing practices and examples have been developed in English language, affecting the opportunity for athletes, young people, sport coaches and sport federations of North Macedonia and Serbia to understand the content of the existing examples. Lack of policies, procedures and training on native languages which are aimed at increasing awareness and capacities of the sport communities in both countries, impacts

²² <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2015/22/1/reg>

²³ https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/13466/file/SitAn_publication_2019.pdf

²⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/serbia-gender-equality-in-sport-leaflet-2019-/1680971a6d>

²⁵ https://www.unicef-irc.org/files/upload/documents/serbia_report.pdf



their inability to understand the consequences of lacking safeguarding policies or their individual actions during sport activities. This is another added value of the project which will develop manuals in the native languages and will be available in an online version with free and easy access to all.

7. Conclusion







The aim of the desk research is to help us in the process of developing practical safeguarding policies in North Macedonia and in Serbia, that have no programs or mechanisms in which negative experiences and abusive behaviors are addressed. The conclusions listed below will support the partner organizations of the project “WE THE GUARDIANS- Effective practices to safeguarding youth in sport activities”, to be able to bring European perspective of practices and policies in the local reality, by empowering sport clubs in participating countries to actively engage in addressing violence and abusive behaviors toward young people, experienced in sport activities. In order to have in-depth analysis of the current situation of young people and their experience in sport in these two countries, we will back the desk research with the statistical research which will be implemented with young people in the two countries. However, the desk research has identified the need for initiating the discussion on violence towards young people, by developing internal safeguarding policies focused on youth and having sport clubs and federations staff capacities increased on understanding how to identify abuse and violent behavior as well as to take actions toward them. In conclusion below you can find the main findings from this desk research:

- Many international sport federations have internal safeguarding policies serving as a guide during sport events with children, however there is a lack of toolkits or procedures that each sport club in grassroots level or national sport federations should follow to develop safeguarding policies. We have concluded that in North Macedonia and in Serbia, there is no systematic approach on addressing violence occurring in sport and only rare federations have taken some actions on specific topics such as gender, however not a safeguarding policy based on international practices. That is what this project should be addressing with priority.
- Safeguarding as a topic has arisen as an important matter just in the recent years, however, the research has identified the big gap in having procedures, policies and actions or safeguarding policies that are targeted only for violence towards youth. Most of the safeguarding policies or protection policies identified during this research have been targeted either to children or professional athletes taking place in competitions or Olympic events. Therefore we conclude that it is important for the project “WE THE GUARDIANS- Effective practices to safeguarding youth in sport activities” to firstly collect data targeted only to young people and violence in sport and should bring the new approach and opportunity for the sport clubs, sport federations and NGOs to work jointly in creating a safe and positive environment for



young people to be engaged in all sports. We conclude that the project “WE THE GUARDIANS” should bring the new approach and opportunity for the sport clubs, sport federations and NGOs to work jointly in creating a safe and positive environment for young people to be engaged in all sports.

- The identified international sport federations who have developed safeguarding and protection policies, as well as different study reports, have provided concrete definitions of the types of violence and abuse that have taken part or it is the possibility to happen in sport activities. However, we concluded that both in North Macedonia and in Serbia, there is no data regarding the type of violence occurring in sport, the frequency of violence at national or local level or the actions and the mechanisms that follow abusive cases in sport. That is why the project “WE THE GUARDIANS- Effective practices to safeguarding youth in sport activities” will implement statistical research providing information directly from the youth engaged in sports. This in addition to this desk research will enable the project to define the type of violence which is taking place in sport in North Macedonia and in Serbia. 
- Cross border and cross sectoral approach have not been identified in initiatives regarding safeguarding in sport. Taking into consideration the importance of having both cross sectoral cooperation as well as cross border exchange, we concluded that this project should provide a cross border cooperation and exchange of practices which will feed the process of establishing more effective safeguarding policies and procedures. In addition, the project should also respond to the identified need of having cross sectoral cooperation which will be the joint work of the sport clubs and NGO sector, to enable both sectors to share their expertise and combine them which will result in having comprehensive safeguarding policies and follow up actions to achieve greater audience and success of implementation of the policies. 
- ALL SPORTS APPROACH – International Olympic Committee has provided guidelines and policies for all sports; however, their focus is on big sport events and actions to follow in such events. But the majority of the existing practices and policies are focused on the bases of specific sports. Thus, we conclude that majority of the existing policies from sport federations are focused to respond to situations only for that specific sport. To respond to this need, our project shall provide manuals which have considered the needs of multisport approach, as it will serve better to the sport clubs to have a universal language and actions regarding protection and safeguarding children and youth in North Macedonia and Serbia. 
- From the research we have concluded that the examples identified of safeguard policies, measures and approach, and its content is mostly available in English language, preventing many sport club’s members from North Macedonia and Serbia to be informed about their existence due to the language barrier. Therefore, this project should respond to this need by developing manuals in the native languages and providing it also in an online version with free and easy access to all 



STATISTICAL RESEARCH

Questionnaire report

As part of the project “*WE THE GUARDIANS- Effective practices to safeguarding youth in sport activities*” research on youth experiences on violence and abuse in grassroots sport in North Macedonia and in Serbia was conducted, composed of a desk and statistical research, where 152 young people from both countries have responded to the questionnaire. The subject of the research is the experience and the awareness of violence and abuse in sports activities of the young people aged 15-30, from North Macedonia and Serbia, who are currently involved in sport clubs or have been in the past 5 years. In addition to the primary subject will be also young people's experience with the safety and protection mechanisms within their sport clubs.

The questionnaire comprised of 21 questions, divided in three segments:

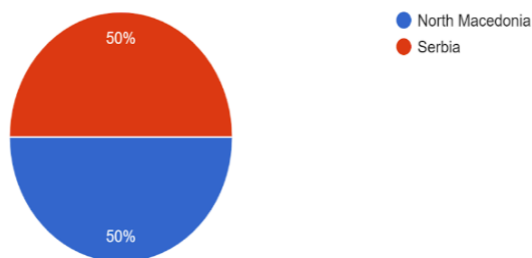
1. **Segment I - Violence in Sport**
2. **Segment II – information and knowledge on safeguarding policies**
3. **Segment III – Actions needed to prevent and fight violence in sport against youth**

❖ Segment I- Violence in Sport

1. General info

The first group of questions were compiled to provide general information of the respondents, regarding their country, gender, age and the sport they are enrolled in or have been in the past 5 years.

Chart 1- Country of representation



The first chart demonstrates the number of the respondents where in total we had 152 young people from both countries, which mean equal representation of North Macedonia and Serbia, having 72 respondents from each country.

Chart 2- Gender of the total respondents

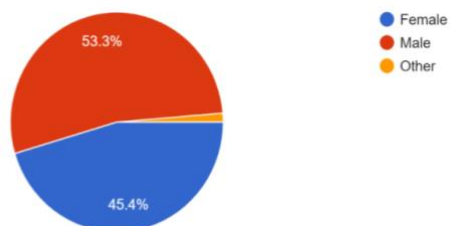


Table 1-Gender information by country

SERBIA		
Female	Male	Other
21	54	1
N. MACEDONIA		
Female	Male	Other
48	27	1

The second chart provides information regarding the gender of the total respondents, where we have **53.3% or 81 male** respondents, **45.4% or 69 female** respondents and 1.3% or 2 respondents who have identified as other gender. This information segregated by country informs us that North Macedonia had a bigger number of female respondents in total 48, whereas Serbia had only 21 females. Regarding male respondents Serbia has 54 and North Macedonia 27.



Chart 3- Age of the respondents

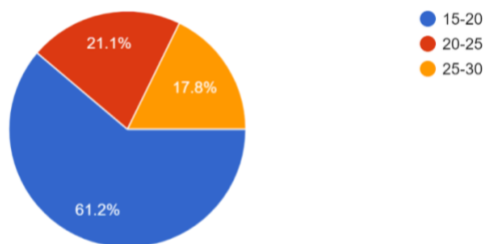


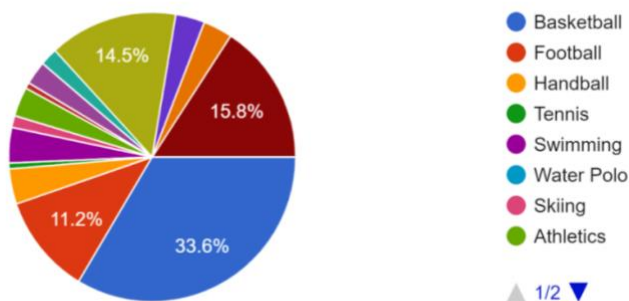
Table 2-Group age segregated by country and gender

Age	15-20			20-25			25-30		
	F	M	Oth	F	M	Oth	F	M	Oth
SRB	12	16	1	6	16	0	3	22	0
MCD	41	22	1	5	5	0	2	0	0

Regarding the age of the respondents we have **93 respondents** or **61.2%** from group age 15-20, **32 respondents** or **21.1%** from the group age 20-25 and **27 respondents** or **17.8%** from the group age 25-30. Table 2 provides detailed information regarding the group age segregated by country and gender, where in comparison of the two countries it indicates that both North Macedonia and Serbia has the biggest female representation coming from the age 15-20, while male representation is bigger from the group age 15-20 for N.Macedonia, while for Serbia the bigger number of male respondents is from the group age 25-30.



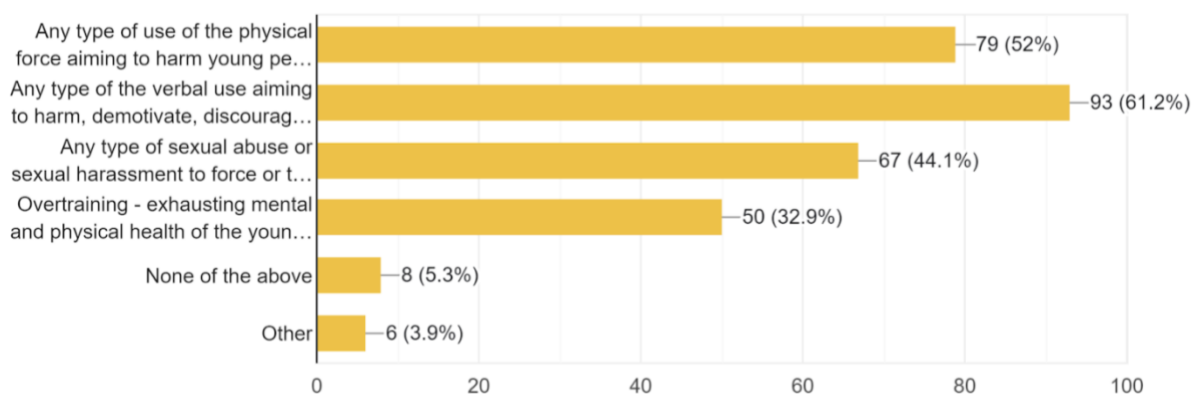
Chart 4 – Sport the respondents are currently engaged or have been in the past 5 years



This question had listed 16 different sports; to understand the type of sport the respondents were actively enrolled at the time of responding the questions or have been in the past 5 years. The sport representation is as it follows: a) basketball 33.6% or 51 respondents; b) volleyball 14.5% or 22 respondents; c) football 11.2% or 17 respondents; d) swimming and handball had the same % of 3.9 and 6 respondents each; d) athletics, Cycling and Running had the same % of 3.3 and 5 respondents each; f) Karate had 2.6 or 4 respondents; g) skiing and boxing had the same % of 1.3 and 2 respondents each; h) Tennis and Gymnastics had same % of 0.7 and 1 respondents each; while other sports was selected by 24 respondents or 15.8%

2. Violence in Sport

Graph 1- How the respondents define violence in sports against young people



The graph 1 indicates that only 14 respondents out of 152 have not identified any of the listed forms of violence against young people in sport, where 8 of them have chosen none of the above and 6 have selected other types of violence. This can be an indication to the respondents having different definitions regarding violence against young people in sport. Regarding the type of violence, 93 respondents have selected verbal abuse as their definition of violence against young people, representing the biggest percentage of 61.2%, while the second type of violence identified by 79 respondents is the physical violence used against young people in sport, representing 52%. Concerning percentages are also the 44.1% of respondents who have selected sexual abuse as violence against young people in sport, and 32.9% have selected overtraining. This information indicates that the respondents have a clear understanding of the type of violence that is currently occurring and can take place against young people in sport.



Chart 5- Witnessing any type of abuse against young people in Sport

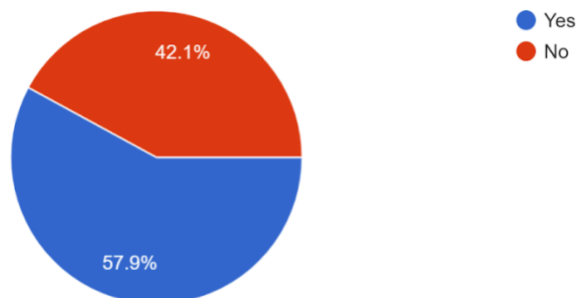
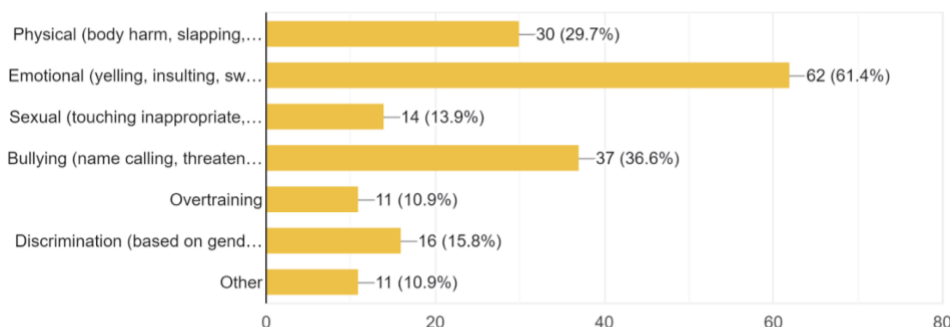


Chart 5 indicates that **88 respondents** from both countries have witnessed some type of abuse against young people aged 15-30 years old in sport, while **64 respondents** have responded with no. Having 57.9% of young people who have witnessed abuse against people, is an indication of the presence of violence against young people in sports, both in Serbia and North Macedonia. If we compare the data between the two countries, **48 respondents** out of 76, have witnessed abuse against young people in sport in North Macedonia, while in Serbia **40 respondents** out of 76, have indicated the same.

Graph 2- Type of violence witnessed against youth in sports



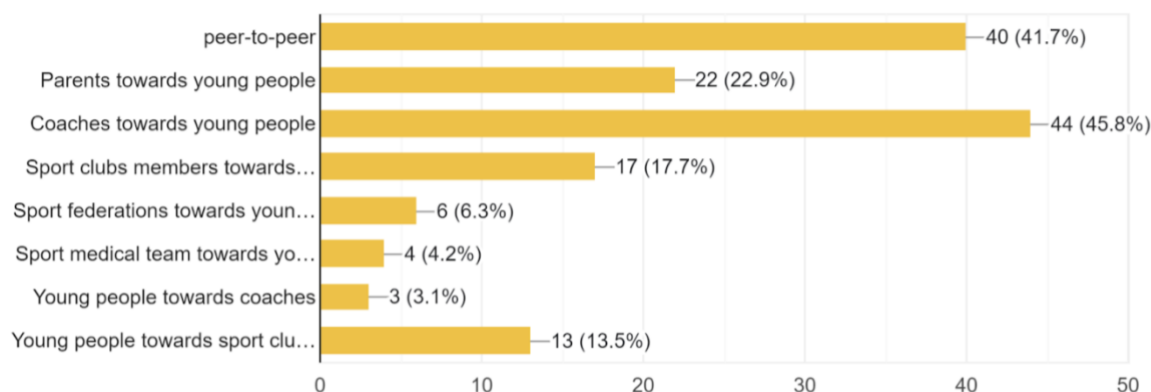
Graph 2 provides information regarding the type of violence which the respondents have witnessed against their peers in sport and from the table it is indicated that the **emotional abuse** (yelling, insulting, swearing and verbal abuse) was the most common form of abuse that has been witnessed against young people 15-30 in both countries, representing **61.4 % of the respondents**. The second type of abuse that was witnessed **36.6%** by the respondents is **bullying** (name calling, threatening, and aggressive behavior). From the respondents who have witnessed abuse against young people in sport, **29.7%** of them have witnessed **physical abuse** (body harm, slapping, kicking, and pulling hair or any form of using physical



force). **Sexual abuse** (touching inappropriate, taking advantage of the person, manipulating or grooming, unwanted sexual activity or making sexual comments) has been witnessed by our respondents **13.9%**. Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, age, social/economical statues has been witnessed by **15.8%** out of 88 respondents who have witnessed different types of abuse against young people in sports.

Graph 3- Identifying the “abuser” from the cases of violence against young people in sport witnessed by the respondents

Chart 5, graph 2 and graph 3, are connected questions in order to provide correct information not only for the presence and the type of violence against young people in sport, but also for the “abuser” that the respondents have witnessed. Graph 3 indicates that the respondents, who have witnessed some type of abuse against young people, have identified with **45.8%** - **“Coaches towards young people”** as the abuser. While “peer-to-peer” abuse has been witnessed from **41.7%** of the respondents. A high percentage



identified as abusers are also “parents towards young people” where 22.9% have witnessed parents in the role of the “abuser”. The respondents have also identified as abusers the “sport clubs’ members towards young people” with 17.7%, as well as young people towards sport clubs’ members with 13.5%. When comparing the data between countries, in Serbia “coaches towards young people” has been identified the most as the “abuser”, in total 21 times, while in North Macedonia “peer-to-peer” has been identified the most as the “abuser” in total 25 times. Both countries have identified 21 times “coaches towards young people” as the abuser, while concerning data is that “parents towards young people” has been identified the third on the list in both countries as the “abuser”.

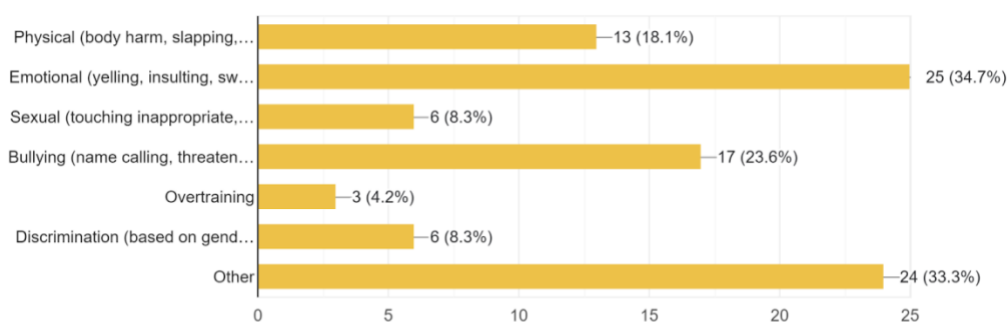


Chart 6- Level of respondents who felt as “victims” in sport



Chart 6 indicates that **35 respondents** have felt like victims in sport, 23 didn't know if they felt as such, while 94 respondents have not felt as victims in sport. Comparing the data between the two countries, the respondents have answered similarly, for example: In Serbia 17 respondents have answered as yes and 9 with don't know, while in North Macedonia 18 respondents have answered as yes and 14 with don't know.

Graph 4- The type of violence the respondents have felt, when identified as victims



From the 35 respondents who indicated that have felt like victims of violence in sports (chart 6), emotional type of violence has been selected the most with 34.7%, while bullying was identified as 23.6% and physical violence with 18.1%



Chart 7 – Frequency of “experiencing violence” in sport

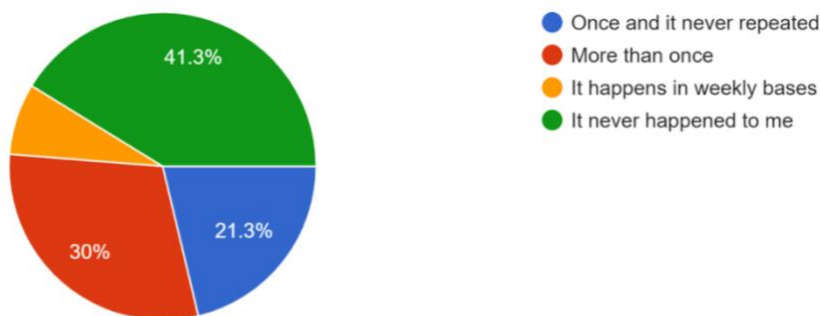
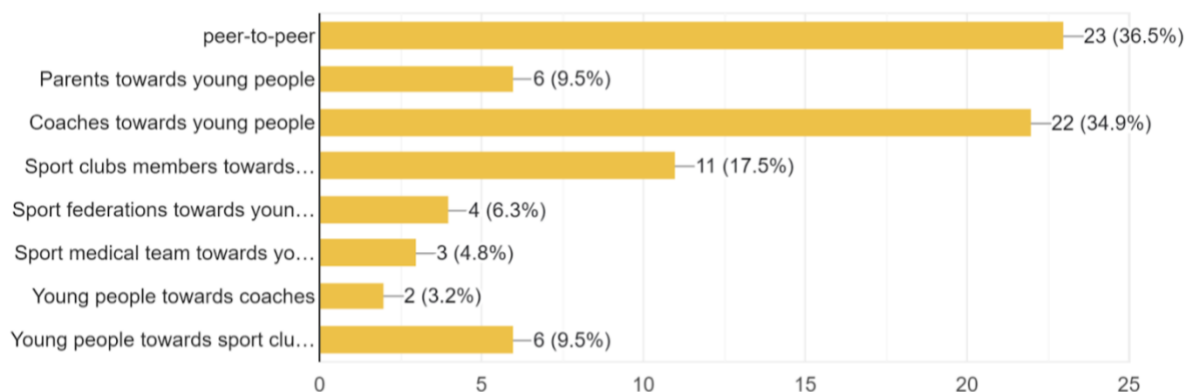


Chart 6 & 7, and graph 4 are also connected questions to provide clearer information regarding the type of violence and the frequency that the respondents have felt like victims of violence in sport. Chart 7 indicates that the respondents who felt like victims of violence in sport, have identified with **30%** that the frequency of the “experienced violence” is **more than once**. While **7.5%** is the percentage of respondents who identified that they “experience violence” on a weekly **basis**. **41.3 %** have indicated that violence “never happened to them”. In North Macedonia **5 respondents** have identified the frequency of “experiencing violence” in **weekly bases**, while in Serbia only **1 respondent** have identified the same. Regarding the frequency of experiencing violence in sport “more than once” both in North Macedonia and Serbia, **8 respondents** each have identified with it.

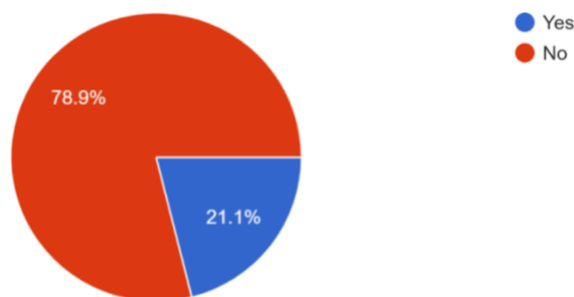


Graph 5 - Identifying the “abuser” from the respondents who “experience violence “in sport



Graph 5 is also connected with the previous chart 6 & 7, where the respondents who identified as experiencing violence in sport, indicate that 34.5% of the “violence” is done by “peer-to-peer”, while 34.9% have identified “coaches towards young people” as the second biggest “abuser”. Concerning statistic is also 17.5% of respondents who identified “sport clubs’ members towards young people” as the “abuser”.

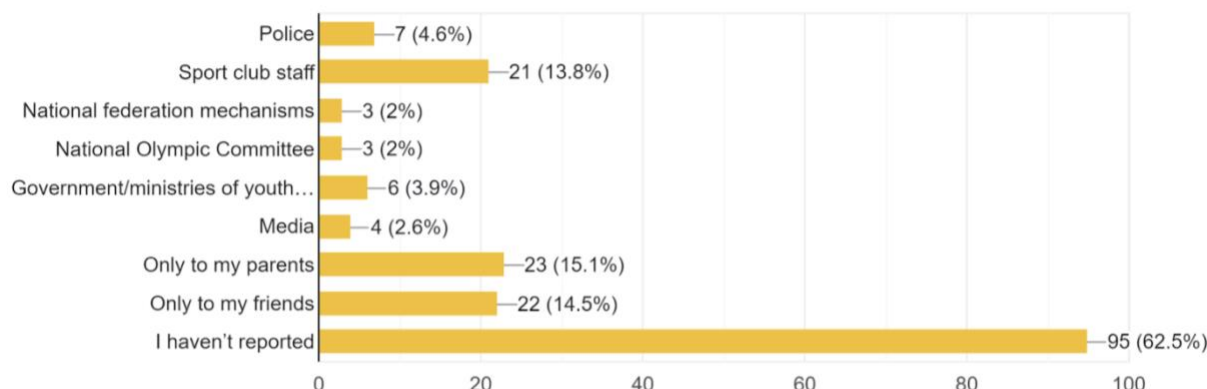
Chart 8 – Level of violence against young people reported to the authorities?



In chart 8, we can understand that only 32 out 152 respondents have reported any type of abuse or violence towards them, their peers or other young people in sports to the authorities. Contrary to 21.1% of young people who have taken actions towards violence, 78.9% of the respondents have declared to never have reported any case of abuse or violence towards young people in sport. When comparing the data between the two countries, Serbia with 19 respondents had a bigger number of cases of violence towards young people reported, while in North Macedonia 13 respondents have declared with yes.



Graph 6- The institutions chosen by the respondents to report cases of violence towards youth in sport



In graph 6 we can see that the 32 respondents who have reported cases of abuse or violence towards young people in sports have chosen the **friends (22 of them)**, **parents (23 of them)**, while **only 7** have chosen the police as an institution to report the cases of violence.

Graph 7- Process of handling the claims of violence towards young people in sport, from the institutions

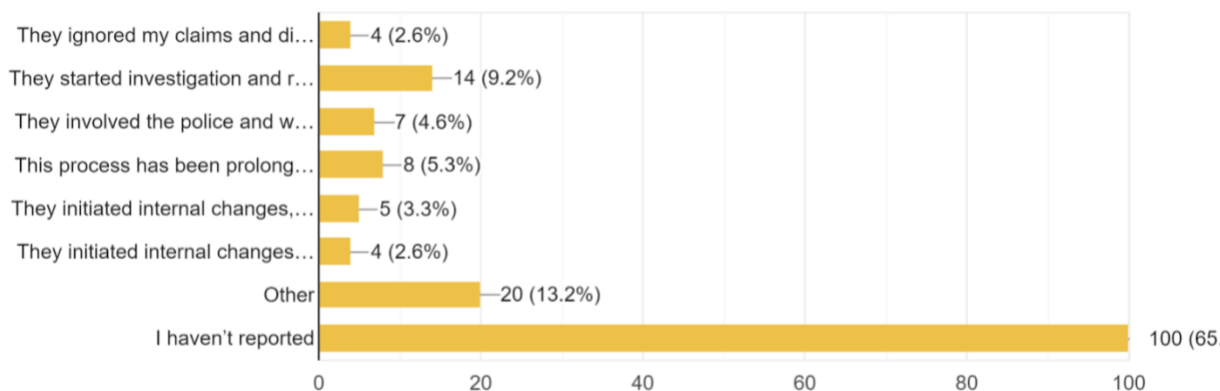


Chart 8 and graph 6 and 7 are connected questions, providing detailed information about the cases reported regarding abuse and violence towards young people in sports. The ones who have reported the cases of violence mostly have chosen the close circle such as friends or parents to confide on, while the ones who have chosen the institutions such as police, ministry of youth, national federations or Olympic Committee, 9.2% of them have indicated that after the reporting they have started the investigation and reporting to other state mechanisms, while 5.3% have indicated that the process have been prolonged on purpose.



❖ **Segment II- Information and knowledge on safeguarding policies**

Chart 9 – Information received by young people on identifying and responding to violence in sport

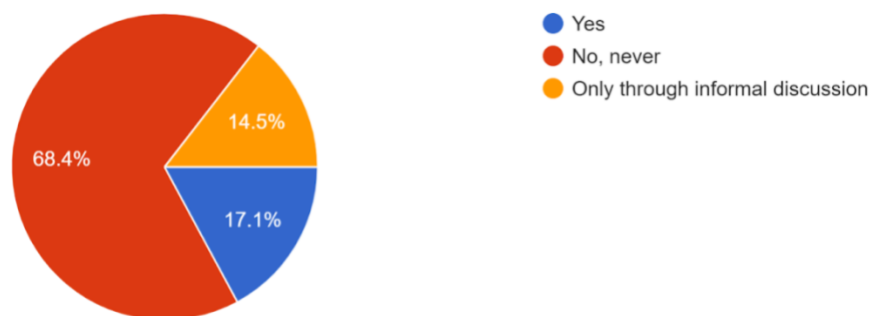
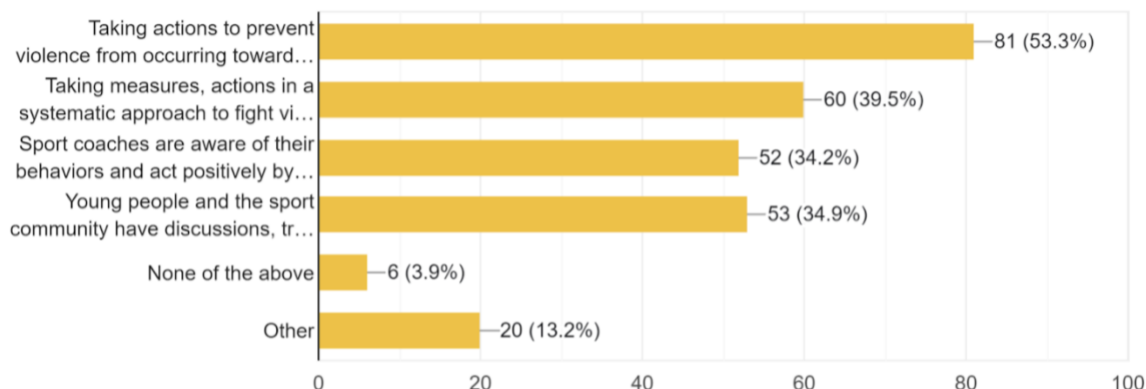


Chart 9 indicated that **68.4%** of the respondents **have never** received any information regarding identifying and responding to violence, neither from sport clubs, NGO's or other organizations. **Only 17.1%** have identified to have received information regarding the topic from a **formal setting** either sport clubs or NGO's, while **14.5%** have indicated to have received information through **informal discussion**. In North Macedonia 11 respondents have received information regarding the topic from sport club, NGO's or other organizations, while 11 respondents have information through informal discussions. In Serbia 15 respondents have received information through formal setting, and 11 through informal discussions.



Graph 8 – How do young people understand “safeguarding and protection of youth in sport”

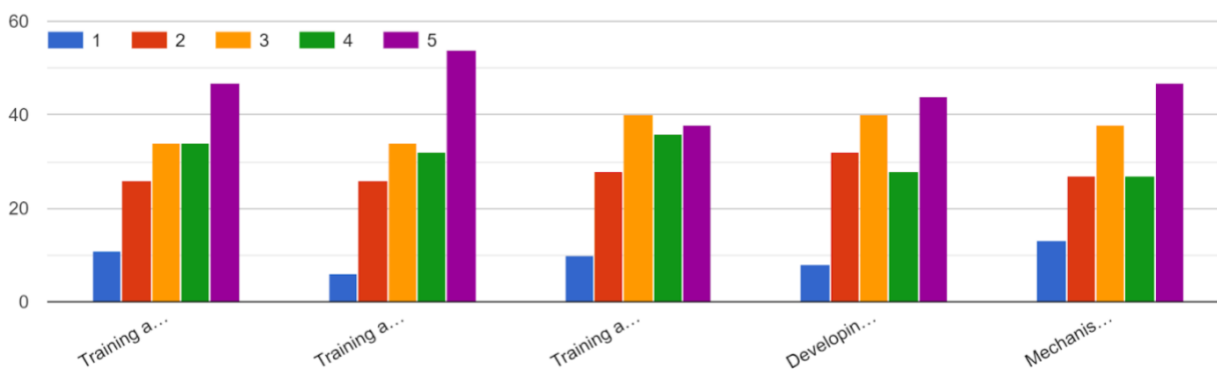


In *graph 8*, 53.3% of young people respondents have indicated that they understand “safeguarding and protection of youth in sport” by taking actions to prevent violence from occurring towards young people in sport, while 39.5 % understand it as taking measures, actions in a systematic approach to fight violence against young people in sport. None of the above (listed options) was identified by 3.9% of respondents and 13.2% with other, which can be an indication of having different understanding for the concepts of safeguarding and protection or not proper information.

❖ Segment III- Actions needed to prevent and fight violence in sport against youth

Graph 9 – Relevance of different measures for preventing and stopping the violence against youth in sport activities

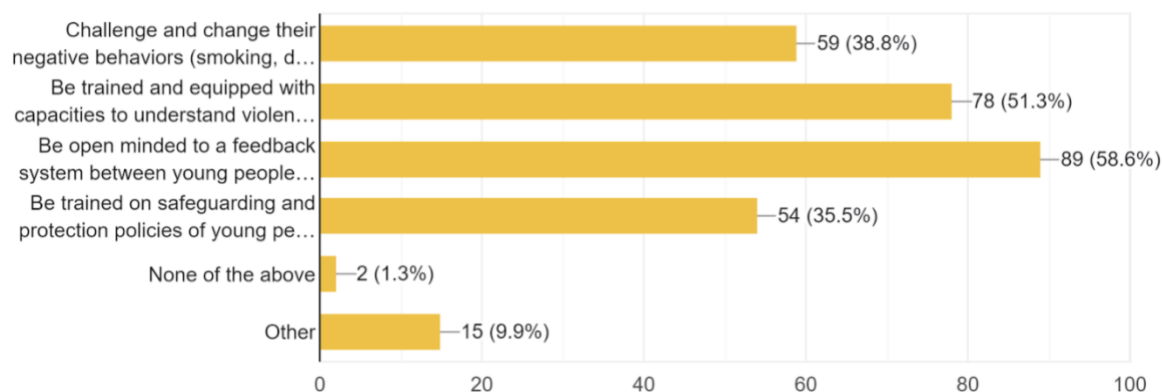
18. How relevant for you are following measures for preventing and stopping the violence against youth in sport activities - rank them based on the importance (1 is the least important and 5 is the highest importance)



Graph 9 shows the ranking that the respondents selected regarding the importance of different measures for preventing and stopping the violence against youth in sport. The measure “*training and capacity building for young people on understanding all types of violence in sport towards youth*” has been ranked by the biggest number of respondents, 54 times, indicating the importance of working with young people on the matter. Both measures “*training and capacity building for coaches on understanding all types of violence in sport towards youth*” and “*mechanism for reporting violent cases to national authorities (police, federations etc.)*”, have been ranked 47

times each as the highest importance. One important note is that the measure of “*developing safeguarding policy and guidelines for preventing and fighting violence in sport towards young people*” has been ranked 44 times with the highest importance of measure, indicating the need for initiating the process of safeguarding policy development. “*Training and capacity building for parents on understanding all types of violence in sport towards youth*” has also been ranked as an important measure by 38 times, indicating the need for all actions to jointly take place to ensure a safe environment for every young person in sport.

Graph 10- Actions that sport coaches should take to prevent or fight violence against young people

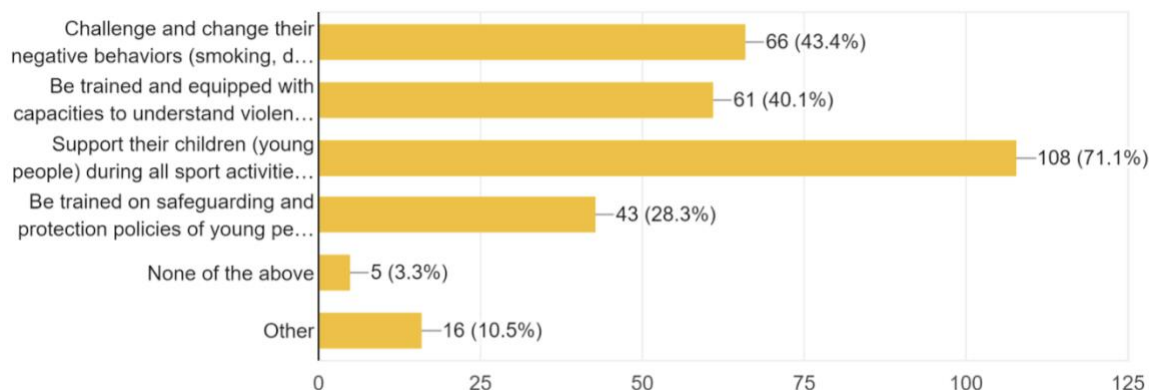


Based on *graph 10*- young people have indicated that sport coaches can take different actions to prevent or fight violence against young people in sport. The respondents have indicated as below:

- Be open minded to a feedback system between young people and coaches – **58.6%**
- Be trained and equipped with capacities to understand violence towards youth in sports- **51.3%**
- Challenge and change their negative behaviors (smoking, drinking, swearing) – **38.8%**
- Be trained on safeguarding and protection policies of young people in sport – **35.5%**

Comparing the data between the two countries, there is no difference on how the respondents have responded, as in both of the countries the priorities have been the same as the data in the graph 10.

Graph 11- Actions that the parents should take to prevent or fight violence against young people



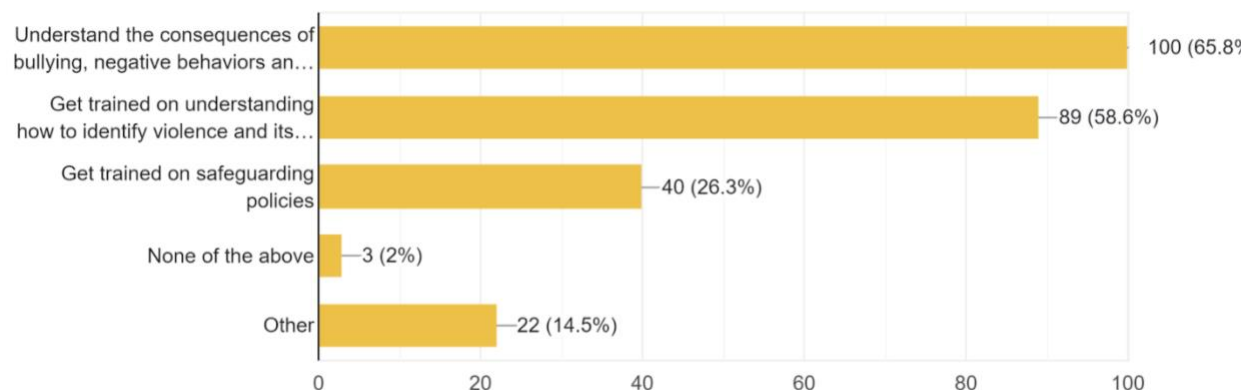
Graph 11 indicates that the respondents have selected parents as well as actors who can take actions to prevent or fight violence against young people in sport. The respondents have indicated as below:

- Support their children (young people) during all sport activities with positive attitudes, considering the mental health of the young people – **71.1%**
- Challenge and change their negative behaviors (smoking, drinking, and swearing) in front of the children- **43.4%**
- Be trained and equipped with capacities to understand violence towards youth in sport– **40.1%**
- Be trained on safeguarding and protection policies of young people in sport – **28.3%**



Comparing the data between the two countries, there is no difference on how the respondents have responded, as in both of the countries the priorities have been the same as the data in the graph 11.

Graph 12- Actions that young people should take to prevent or fight violence against young people



Graph 12 indicates that the respondents understand the role that young people can also have in preventing or fighting violence against young people in sport. The respondents have indicated as below:

- Understand the consequences of bullying, negative behaviors and attitude towards each other during sport activities – **65.8%**
- Get trained on understanding how to identify violence and its reporting mechanism- **58.6%**
- Get trained on safeguarding policies – **26.3%**



GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The aim of research “Youth experiences on violence and abuse in grassroots sport in North Macedonia and in Serbia” was to collect data on the existing violence in sport against youth in both countries, as well as the understanding of existing mechanisms for reporting violence and protection of young people in sports. The result analysis indicated that young people from both of the countries have a clear understanding on how violence against young people in sports include the physical, verbal, sexual and overtraining abuse as part of the definition. This can be a direct result of the fact that 57.9% of them have witnessed some type of abuse against young people in sport, assisting them in understanding in a clearer way how violence against young people in sport is defined. Small percentage of the respondents have indicated different responses on their definitions of violence against youth in sport, which can be a result of different understanding or the fact that they have not witnessed violence or abuse towards youth in sport. As one of the tasks of the research was to identify the type of violence against young people, emotional abuse and bullying have been identified both as most witnessed and most experienced types of abuse against young people in sport, however physical and sexual abuse, and discrimination have been also witnessed and experienced in sport by the young people of both countries, indicating that young people experience multiple types of violence in sport. Important finding is the fact that young people have identified mostly the sport coaches as the biggest witnessed “abuser”, but peer-to-peer violence was indicated as the second biggest “abuser”. When trying to identify the abuser, parents and sport clubs’ members have also been identified as “abusers” by the young people, which concludes on the big need to have programs and internal policies to firstly recognize the fact that abuse and violence is taking place against youth in sport, and secondly to address all types of abuse that young people are experiencing. In addition, the work towards preventing and fighting violence needs to be done also with young people, who have been identified as well as “abusers” towards sport clubs’ members, which can be a direct result of lacking the space to discuss, recognize or taking actions to address different types of abuses towards youth in sport. Although it is identified that young people experience multiple types of violence in sport, it is a noticeable percentage of the frequency of the violence taking place more than once and on weekly bases urging the need to act in fighting violence against youth in sport. The fact that 78.9% of the young people have never reported any type of abuse or violence that they have experienced or witnessed indicates why violence against young people in sport is rarely discussed and the lack of actions toward the matter, in both countries. Even the ones who decided to report it, have mostly used parents, friends or sport club staff to discuss it, and only a small group of young people have addressed their claims to the police or other responsible institutions.

Important finding of the research is the big percentage of the young people who have never received any information regarding identifying and responding to violence, which indicates the need to equip young people with information on better understanding their actions and adult actions in relation to causing harm to young people. Despite the fact that a small number of young people have received information regarding violence, they have a clear understanding that safeguarding and protection of youth in sport is a combination of different actions to prevent violence from occurring, to fight violence in systematic approach and to create a safe space where positive relationship between peers and youth with coaches is facilitated. Another important finding is that young people are urged to have a protection system in



place at their sport clubs, and they name coaches, parents and themselves (young people) as groups who need to lead the change. They have clearly stated that both parents and coaches need to challenge and change their negative behaviors in front of the children, and create a safe space where young people can share their opinions, feel heard and supported where their mental health is also a priority to all during sport activities. The need to be trained on understating violence against youth in sport and on safeguarding and protection policies have been indicated as important actions to be taken where all parties need to be involved, parents, young people, coaches, sport clubs' members, sport federations.

Considering all results of the analyses, it can be concluded that young people are urging for actions to prevent and fight violence against them, by increasing the capacities of all actors on understanding all types of violence, by developing and establishing internal safeguarding and protection policies and mechanisms, which would facilitate a positive experience for all young people during every day sport activities, by promoting positive values and taking positive examples from the adults. The data collected is proof that violence against youth in sports in North Macedonia and in Serbia, exists and in multiple types of violence, in often frequencies and from different "abusers", therefore in both countries taking actions is stated and urged by young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sport community in North Macedonia and in Serbia, needs to recognize the fact that violence against young people during sport activities exist, thus they need to get informed on the situation and its consequences on young people
- Sport community in North Macedonia and in Serbia should in a systematic approach request and demand protection of every young person while having zero tolerance for harm and abuse against youth in sports
- Sports community should establish a system where the "abusers" are kept accountable, and develop internal mechanisms for reporting and interlinking with the institutions who are responsible by law to take actions
- Sport s community should increase the capacities of all actors involved on understanding and responding to violence against youth in sport
- Sport community needs to develop internal protection and safeguarding policies, to enable systematic actions towards preventing and fighting violence against youth in sport

Sport Clubs and Federations in North Macedonia and Serbia

- Sport clubs and federations should both develop and establish internal protection and safeguarding policies for youth, where parents, coaches, club's members, staff, referees and young people are informed and trained continuously on the content of the policy
- Sport clubs and federations should develop internal procedures for reporting, preventing and fighting any type of abuse and harm against young people during all sports activities



- Sport clubs and federations should develop internal procedures where coaches are encouraged to promote positive values and behaviors in front of young people at all times
- Sport clubs and federations should facilitate programs and platforms where young people and coaches can share feedback to each other in positive environment, where everyone can feel safe from saying their opinions or ideas

Sport Coaches in North Macedonia and Serbia

- Sport coaches should in a systematic approach get information on young people's needs and show interest in creative training approaches that will enable a positive environment during every sport practice
- Sport coaches should challenge their negative values and behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, swearing in front of young people and engage in promoting positive and healthy behaviors
- Sport coaches should have zero tolerance towards abuse and violence against young people in sports, by supporting internal protection and safeguarding policies at the sport clubs
- Sport coaches should establish a safe and positive environment where feedback system is allowed and welcomed, encouraging all young people to speak their opinions, ideas and challenges during all sport activities
- Sport coaches should get information and request trainings on increasing their capacities to understand, identify, prevent and fight any type of violence against youth in sports

Parents of young people active in sports in North Macedonia and Serbia

- Parents should challenge their negative values and behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, swearing in front of young people and engage in promoting positive and healthy behaviors
- Parents should get information and request trainings on increasing their capacities to understand, identify, prevent and fight any type of violence against youth in sports
- Parents should have zero tolerance towards abuse and violence against young people in sports, by getting informed on sport clubs internal protection and safeguarding policies of young people
- Parents should engage in a productive and positive dialogue with young people, focusing on their mental health and enabling their opinions and ideas to be shared and heard

Young people active in sports in North Macedonia and Serbia

- Young people should challenge their negative behaviors towards their peers, coaches, or parents, by realizing how to not engage, promote or support harmful and abusive behaviors
- Young people should get informed on how to understand, identify, prevent and fight violence against young people in sports
- Young people should understand the consequences of their behaviors such as laughing, bullying or name calling their peers, and engage in promoting positive environment and motivating each other by respecting the fair play rules and values.

