



Funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police

SAFE ZONE PROJECT OVERVIEW

European seminar «Preventing Youth Radicalization in Sports: Lessons Learnt from Covid-19 Pandemic» Zoom Videoconference, 24 November 2021



What is Safe Zone?

A team-based effort to prevent youth radicalization and violent extremism

- Funded by the European Commission – DG Migration and Home Affairs – Internal Security Fund Police (ISFP)
- 24 months duration (Jan 2020 – Dec 2021)
- 7 Partners from 4 EU countries (DE, IT, PT, SI)



Why Safe Zone?



Radicalization and extreme violence particularly amongst teenagers and young people increasingly raise the concern of EU institutions and public opinion

>> Need for a **coordinated effort of prevention** involving all actors that play a role in youth education

>> Sport play a key-role within this framework as:

- 1) It contributes to guaranteeing the well-balanced psycho-social development of the children and young people through an informal educational relationship;
- 2) It has the potential to involve various key-actors at local and national levels

What do we mean by radicalization?



«Radicalisation is a phased and complex process in which an individual or a group embraces a radical ideology or belief that accepts, uses or condones violence, including acts of terrorism, to reach a specific political or ideological purpose». [EU commission]

Why sports ?

- An effective area of **informal education**;
- A means for children/adolescents to develop interpersonal and social skills as well as bonds with role models, to **increase life skills and** build resilience
- An opportunity to reach out to a broad population of youth as well as their families;
- Supporting **social inclusion** and playing a role in identifying risks;
- Sporting **groups** have the potential to offer **strong protective factors** against radicalization



The role of sport coaches and educators

Sport coaches and sport educators are a daily reference for young people and can notice changes in their mood or some behaviors that could hide a problem.

For coaches and sports educators is also very important to be able to recognize situations of discrimination and violent/extremist behavior and to be able to identify the symbols and languages of extremist groups to prevent or take action in time.

- Key position to observe and potentially influence children's development
- Focus on the educational/pedagogical role
- Sentinels of an overall alert system



Much more than sports: Why target coaches?

- Learning to “use” the coaches’ potential to be a positive influence in the lives of young athletes
- Developing the power of positive role models
- Sports is based on the construction of relationships and bonds that go beyond performance or winning – these relationships can be powerful forces in protecting adolescents from radicalization.
- Studies demonstrate that strengthening the coach-athlete relationship results both in terms of performance and the child’s development.



What does Safe Zone do?

- Engages and trains **coaches as prevention agents** in fighting youth radicalization and violent extremism and creates an **e-learning toolkit** and training methodology for use throughout the EU
- Establishes an **early warning monitoring and reporting system** for use within youth sports
- **Increases awareness** amongst local and national stakeholders and policymakers about the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization through sports and seeks to establish multi-agency cooperation networks
- Promotes **EU and national policy development** via exchanges and the development of EU guidelines



Awareness

SAFE ZONE is expected to increase awareness about **radicalization risks and the importance and potential of sports as a prevention tool**, addressing in particular:

1. **Sports coaches, educators and other youth workers (Training)**
2. **Sport managers** and staff with a key role in decision making
3. **Local stakeholders** - such as school teachers, families, youth agencies and the police;
4. **Local and national policymakers** about the need of prevention of violent extremism and radicalization.



Alert system

Raise awareness

Sports
coaches/
educators

Sport
managers

Multi-agency
cooperation

Multi-agency cooperation

- A multi-agency approach is a system in which **information can be shared**, which is crucial for identifying and dealing with violent radicalization amongst young people in the sport field
- Is key to a public protection and safety strategy as it allows to maximize effectiveness of:
Joint risk assessment; Information sharing; Sharing responsibility for decisions;
- Promotes:
 - cooperation between the various actors involved with the education of under 18 youth locally, nationally and transnationally;
 - the development and implementation of common prevention projects and strategies at local level;
 - the inclusion of coaches/youth workers in youth sports into a broader network with law enforcement and other relevant actors.



Main outputs:

- E-learning platform/ training toolkit
- **“Prevention through sports” booklet**
- EU guidelines – key stakeholders and policy-makers



3° EU Seminar

How did the work of sport coaches and educators change, and is changing, in sport practice with adolescents and young people? How does such change affect the educational relationship with their young athletes?





Thank you!

[<https://safezoneproject.eu>]