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# EU GUIDELINES

For the prevention of youth  
radicalization and violent  
extremism in sport





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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *The SAFE ZONE project*

“SAFE ZONE. Empowering coaches and trainers in sports to prevent youth radicalization and violent extremism” is a project funded by the Internal Security Fund - Police, DG Home, European Commission, aimed at reducing radicalization and violent extremism among adolescents participating in sports. This was pursued by increasing the awareness of sport coaches and other youth workers and enhance their capacity to identify early warning signs as well as the ability to follow-up with appropriate actions in a multi-agency framework. The project activities were carried out by a Consortium of seven partners in four European countries - Germany, Italy, Portugal and Slovenia – between January 2020 and March 2022.

Sports play a relevant role in the life of many young people - both practically and symbolically – and has the potential to counteract the attractiveness of radical groups by providing responses to the youth needs through inclusiveness, trust, and respect for the rules. That is why it is important for the sport coaches to become fully aware of the potentials of their educational role and responsibility. SAFE ZONE project has addressed the need to empower coaches and educators in sports in order to strengthen their educational relationship with young people and contribute to the prevention of youth radicalization and violent extremism. To this end, SAFE ZONE regarded sport coaches as key-actors in the education of children and adolescents and developed and tested transferable educational tools and a training methodology aimed at the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism for use with coaches and youth educators in EU Member States. The SAFE ZONE project has also worked on a transnational level in order to contribute to practice exchange and awareness raising as well as allow for the adoption of shared knowledge and possibly approaches and measures when tackling youth radicalization and extremism.

These EU Guidelines are meant to contribute to the development of a European strategy to address youth radicalization and violent extremism by providing findings based on primary source data and lessons learnt throughout the implementation of project activities. A set of EU and country-specific policy recommendations is included for all major actors at stake with the intent to stimulate further debate and possibly lead to multiply exchange opportunities and cooperation networks across Europe.

***Visit the SAFE ZONE project website to learn more about the project activities, results and outputs:***

***<https://www.safezoneproject.eu/>***

### *What is radicalization?*

Youth radicalization and violent extremism may take on various manifestations across European countries, whether tied to Islamic radicalization, racism, right wing extremism, or other forms of extremist violence<sup>1</sup>. Radicalization is described as a growing willingness or increasing readiness to pursue and support extremist changes in society, going against existing norms. It is therefore broadly understood as a development towards acceptance, a process involving the adoption of values and attitudes that contrast with prevailing standards and practices. Within the SAFE ZONE project, **radicalization** was understood essentially as the process by which an individual is 'hooked' by some other individual or group and persuaded to embrace an ideology and behaviour that promotes violence and is against the norms of society, in exchange for recognition, appreciation, and sense of belonging. There can therefore be radicalization of a religious, but also political, racial, etc. matrix. The emphasis here is on the process of radicalization, which entails the ability to persuade/manipulate, on the one hand, and a condition of isolation, marginality, and overall vulnerability, on the other.

**Violent extremism** is considered to be the process of “promoting, supporting or committing acts of terrorism aimed at defending a political ideology which advocates racial, national, ethnic or religious supremacy and which opposes the core democratic principles and values of a given society”<sup>2</sup>.

### *Why sports?*

Sport plays a relevant role in the life of many young people - both practically and symbolically – and has the potential to countervail the attractiveness of radical groups by providing responses to the youth needs through inclusiveness, trust, and respect for the rules. General crime prevention efforts recognize the power of sports, viewing sports as a means to build resilience and increase life skills, especially amongst at-risk youth, pointing to the power of sports to promote peace, community empowerment, and social inclusion. Comprehensively, existing knowledge and literature points to the potential for sport as a tool for radicalization prevention among youth whereas relatively little has been done in the area. SAFE ZONE has set out to address this gap.

There are many reasons for regarding sport as a privileged area for the prevention of youth radicalization and violent extremism. Firstly, sport is a valuable tool for personal growth and has the potential to influence physical and mental health and overall development, increase self-esteem, and help shape the personality and skills, in particular of children and adolescents, by teaching them how to deal with emotions such as failure, anger, fear and conflict. Sport is widespread and can reach out to many young people and families and, through them, the overall community.

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<sup>1</sup> see European Agenda on Security (2015).

<sup>2</sup> RAN P&P, 2016

Sport conveys a sense of belonging - to a group, a team, a sports club, a territory, an overall community – and in so doing it has the potential to provide an alternative to the attractiveness of radical groups. Finally, sport is an area of informal education and as such it can be particularly effective for children and adolescents.

#### *Main actors involved*

Youth radicalization in sport stands at the intersection between three topical areas: youth education, sport, and justice. Therefore, a preventive action leads necessarily to embrace a multi-agency approach and should ideally include representatives from the key-agencies in the mentioned three areas – e.g., schools and universities; sport clubs, along with less formal educational and socializing settings; Juvenile Justice, social services and possibly mental health agencies, along with law enforcement, local authorities and policy-makers.

#### *The pandemic factor*

The global COVID-19 pandemic has become a significant threat to the safety, health and well-being of societies and communities worldwide. Although the measures taken by most world's governments have contributed to the suspension of the activities of violent extremist groups, these groups have taken advantage of some wounds. Social distance, isolation, home schooling and over-exposure to the web, have added to unemployment, increase of social inequalities, uncertainty and fear about the future, to increase a condition of vulnerability especially among adolescents and create grounds for emotional, social, economic, and political weaknesses. Consequently, the risk of radicalization has increased too. The circumstances created by the pandemic have allowed extremist groups from across the ideological spectrum to see the pandemic itself as an opportunity for expansion. It is a crisis of values that makes the young individual particularly vulnerable to the search for a “mission” that - combined with the higher presence on social networks - opens an even greater gap for the proliferation of extremist ideas that promote polarization.

## 2. YOUTH SPORT AND PREVENTION OF RADICALIZATION

*“Sport is union, because its rules are the same for every human being and because sport speaks a unique, universal language.”*

Violent radicalization represents an increasingly complex challenge in Europe, in relation to which new knowledge and skills must be acquired. Responding to such challenge requires a hands on approach that engages teachers and educators in schools and other group settings - such as sporting groups and clubs - that have the potential to offer strong protective factors against radicalisation. Within this area, the Council of Europe outlines the growing concerns and potential of youth work, especially for prevention, pointing to the critical role of actions that focus on empowerment, providing support to young people dealing with challenges in their lives, and strengthening resilience to violent ideologies. The SAFE ZONE project recognizes the importance of youth sport as a preventive tool with focus on the need to educate sport coaches about what is and is not extremism in order to facilitate early warning and reduce labelling and categorization. Ultimately, youth sport workers are uniquely situated to engage in general prevention as sports represent an ideal context to reach out to a broad population of youth and families.

Addressing sport as an area of prevention of youth radicalization, however, does not suffice to an effective prevention strategy. Youth radicalization and extremism are growing – with full complicity of the recent pandemic – and there is an urgent need for adequately sensitized and responsible actors and overall community in order to address the issue. In particular, all key-actors involved in the education of children and adolescents should be sensitized to the issue of youth radicalization and extremism.

Based on the SAFE ZONE findings, a comprehensive prevention strategy in this area should thus foresee the cooperation of all actors involved in youth education, on one hand, and with expertise on radicalization (e.g., juvenile justice, law enforcement) on the other. In order to start developing national strategic plans aimed at radicalization prevention, the “educational community” should be regarded as a privileged area, and educational agencies, both formal and informal, as a privileged stakeholders. Sport actors should be included among the educational agencies based on the sport key strengths outlined above (cfr. Paragraph: “Why sport?”).

Below are described a number of key-issues that were most frequently pointed out by the participants in the training workshops, national meetings with sport managers, and multi.-agency meetings, carried out in the partner countries of SAFE ZONE. Based on such issues, it has been possible to develop some recommendations and guide-lines for sport coaches and workers; other key-actors; and policy-makers.

### 3. KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNT

*“The message everyone said to me was  
‘You go there to win, not to have fun!’”*

- ✓ The Safe Zone project was generally met with great interest in all partner countries and the participants highlighted the urgent need to catch up on radicalization prevention within sports and showed interest in the implementation of the Safe Zone training toolkit. Based on their experience and with slight differences from country to country, most coaches reported at least one case related to radicalization based on their own experience.
- ✓ The participants stressed the importance to focus also on other sports workers in addition to sport coaches – e.g., sport managers - given the transversality of the topic of radicalization prevention urging to reach out to other actors and disciplines. The participating coaches emphasized the need to provide ideas on concrete steps and pathways in order to achieve a multi-agency coordination and intervention on radicalization prevention through sports.
- ✓ The need for capacity building processes involving all sports workers but also including families was also addressed.
- ✓ Participants also stressed the key-role of sports managers as the ones who have the power to set the priorities within each club and can hence decide whether the clubs should prioritize education or performance. It was suggested that sport managers attend mandatory training on topics such as violence and radicalization, ethics, human rights education, etc.
- ✓ The issue of radicalization will become an even greater problem in the future due to the consequences of COVID-19 restrictions on adolescents and young people. The tendency to spend more time on the web, in addition to isolation, and the absence of sport and socializing opportunities, have exposed a great number of young people across Europe at a higher risk of radicalization. Awareness-raising and training in this area are of great importance to detect radicalization at an early stage and try to prevent it.
- ✓ One of the major problems detected is that sport coaches not only have no appropriate training to detect radicalization in early stage but they also lack knowledge on how to act once radicalization is already in progress. They are also very concerned about how to practically and emotionally approach the youngsters on their way to radicalization and whom else to involve in this process.
- ✓ The coaches and sport workers agreed that there should be training available on this topic and it should be included in regular training for coaches and sport workers. The contents on radicalization and deradicalization should also have to be available on-line. The coaches should get used to observe the behavior changes of youngsters and detect early enough if it comes to unusual changes that might indicate radicalization in progress. They should approach the youngster with empathy and do everything not to

exclude them from the group and sport club. If they cannot solve the problem through conversation with youngster, they should reach out to other stakeholders - like families, school teachers, psychologists and social workers, and the police if necessary. In many countries, such as Slovenia, police has a number of experts working with radical youth in sport, so the coaches and sport workers can benefit from the police experience as an added value.

✓ Sport workers and coaches should also have to acquire a license as ethical educators, promoting good values of sport and not violence. This is extremely important for coaches in sports such as martial arts and football.

✓ All participants of meetings and in-depth interviews agreed that the issue of radicalization will become an even greater problem in the future due to the consequences that the COVID-19 restrictions have left among young people. Consequently, training on this topic will become of key relevance within a strategy to prevent and detect radicalization in its early stage. In all partner countries, the coaches attending the SAFE ZONE training workshops agreed that the training units and methodology developed by the project should be held periodically for all sport workers.

✓ In regards to sport educational dimension, some sport managers expressed their concern about the distance between their common view – which entails the educational role of sport as outstanding and essentially as a vehicle to countervail social disease - and many sport coaches, whose direct practice with young people is mostly oriented to improving performance and less to the educational dimension.

✓ In Germany, a variety of initiatives on radicalization prevention exist already in the German Football Association (DFB), the state and regional associations, and various education-oriented initiatives and institutions. However, radicalization prevention is usually negotiated under the comprehensive terms of *democracy promotion, discrimination prevention or fair play*. In this form, it also finds its way into licensing areas for trainers in both basic and advanced training for sport coaches.

✓ It should be noted that the terminology often diverges and is handled differently even within one same country. In Germany, Federal structures are often perceived as working predominantly autonomously with no connection to the State sports associations. Particularly in the areas of prevention of radicalization and promotion of democracy, no standardized, nationwide procedures are in place.

✓ In Portugal, the existing gap between sports in schools and sports in clubs was also addressed: such division does not make sense at younger ages since the focus should be on education and on the recreational dimension both in school and in the clubs. Municipalities should have the responsibility to promote cooperation between schools and sport clubs since they deal with both.

✓ One of the major constraints reported in all countries relates to the heterogeneous background of sport coaches. In Italy and Germany, many coaches who train children and adolescents – in particular in sports such as football – are volunteers and have received no specific training to do so.

- ✓ The need for sport coaches to cooperate and network with professionals from backgrounds other than sport (e.g., justice, social services, education agencies) has emerged in Italy as a need for future inclusion in the training of skilled coaches.
- ✓ Sport is too often viewed as a complementary activity rather than as a priority for children's and adolescents' development. The Italian school system is insufficiently equipped in this sense, thus leaving the economic weight of sport practice on the families' shoulders. Consequently, many children and teenagers who belong to the most marginalized social sectors are excluded from sports too thus reinforcing these children's exposure to the risks connected to isolation.

## 4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### a. Recommendations for sport workers

- ✓ In light of the research findings emerging from the involved countries, any training aimed at the prevention of youth radicalization and violent extremism in sport should seek to respond to the following needs: i) The need to restore the centrality of the educational and pedagogical role of sports coaches, in order for sport coaches to recognize youth risky behavior at an early stage and to be empowered to take action; ii) The need to raise awareness on the potential relationship between sports and violence, in particular when it comes to performance and competitiveness; and iii) The need to embrace different training methodologies, possibly through a multi-disciplinary approach, in order to better meet the different training needs and the diverse educational background of the sports trainers and coaches (professionals; semi-professionals; non-professional volunteers).
- ✓ Workshops and training courses for trainers around radicalization prevention should be tailored to the needs of coaches first but should also seek to include other key sports workers, such as referees. Some of the interviewed sport managers proposed the creation of training modules and educational seminars in regards to youth radicalization for all sport workers, in order to increase the awareness of the pedagogical value of sports as a tool to prevent such phenomenon. The modules and seminars should be drafted and organized with the help of experts in these issues (e.g., sociologists, pedagogists, psychologists).
- ✓ Trainings for *professional* coaches, aimed at the capacity building with regards to the capacity to observe and manage relational dynamics in order to prevent sport itself from becoming a vehicle of violence. Through the proposal of *ad hoc* trainings on the topic of radicalization, extremism and violence among young people, it would be possible to increase the awareness of sports coaches on the matter, allowing them to grasp any “alarm bells” or risky behavior. At the same time, the training should also aim at increasing the coaches’ awareness of their educational role and providing adequate and effective tools to respond to potential risk cases.
- ✓ An effective strategy could be to encourage coaches to keep track and report what happens in the athletic practice by means of a questionnaire. Such practice, according to the sport managers interviewed, should increase their awareness with respect to the dynamics of social relations.
- ✓ Trainings for *non-professional volunteer* coaches, who are often employed in the most informal youth sports clubs. It is necessary to extend the scope of the training for professional coaches to include also non-professional volunteer coaches, maybe in a reduced form.
- ✓ In order for sport coaches to better identify at-risk behaviors, it is recommendable to promote the establishment of a regular collaboration between sport coaches, school teachers, and sports psychologists and pedagogues. This would also contribute to enrich the periodical training of coaches.

- ✓ It is also recommendable to extend the culture and values of sport to young people who do not practice any sports. It is necessary for sport clubs to find effective ways to interact with young people at risk. This could be achieved through actions aimed at promoting sports activities both in schools and in marginalized neighborhoods. Sports offer to young people should strive to be appealing to young people and include training methodologies that teach how to actively engage young people regardless their sports achievements. In this sense, it was suggested to promote “informal” sport disciplines - such as parkour - within sports centers, due to the great appeal they exert on young people. In order to gain followers in the community such projects should have a relevant social component.
- ✓ The topic of early detection and prevention of youth radicalization in sport should be included in the ordinary coaches’ and sport workers’ training. Additionally, they should be trained on how to promote sports healthy values; once licensed, they should have to prove that they are able to be good role models for youngsters and are skilled to work with them.
- ✓ After trying to solve the problem within their sport society first, the coaches and sport workers should know how to reach out to other stakeholders to address radicalization. There should be a list of institutions and experts available to sport workers, so they would know exactly who and in what order to call if they cannot cope with the identified cases by themselves.
- ✓ Seminars and workshops for sport workers should be organized yearly, so they could exchange their experiences with youth radicalization experts and learn about new good practices from experts and other sport workers. Such workshops could be organized by the Olympic committee or by other national sport organizations.

#### Training for sport coaches: key issues

- ✓ Raising awareness on educational role and responsibility
- ✓ Awareness and knowledge of youth radicalization
- ✓ Role-model and potential influence on adolescents (negative-positive)
- ✓ Strengthen capacity to promote inclusion and sport values
- ✓ Strengthen capacity to identify risk cases
- ✓ Bridging with families as a priority

## **b. Recommendations for other key agencies (multi-agency)**

- ✓ In order to adequately empower the sport coaches, stimulate the pedagogical value of sports, and respond to the youth specific needs and problems in a more effective way, it is urgent in all countries to establish local cooperation networks that include expertise and skills other than the merely athletic ones.
- ✓ Sport should be embedded in the national educational system in a more consistent way In all EU countries. Sport should be regarded as relevant as any other school subjects by virtue of its strong educational and inclusive potential, in addition to its many benefits for the overall development and well-being of children and adolescents, starting from primary school. Professional sport teachers should be enrolled in all schools and grades, starting from primary school, and should be specifically trained to teach to adolescents.
- ✓ To promote exchange with, and adopt tools from, other educational and re-educational areas and in particular from juvenile justice. In particular, Restorative Justice – generally regarded as very effective in resolving conflicts between offenders and victims - could be very helpful in the informal area of sport, provided that a shared culture of the pedagogical and educational value of sport is in place and shared by all involved actors.

### **Multi-agency cooperation: key-issues**

- ✓ Raise awareness on youth radicalization and violent extremism
- ✓ Promote awareness on sport educational role
- ✓ Regard sport actors as key stakeholders of the educational community
- ✓ Establish monitoring networks and periodical meetings
- ✓ Promote prevention plans and initiatives

## **c. Recommendations for policy-makers**

- ✓ Sport should be embedded in national economic and social development strategies and sport clubs and agencies should be included as key-interlocutors among the major educational agencies as well as prevention networks.

- ✓ In order to shift the focus from performance to education in child and youth sports, there is a need for legislative changes including mandatory certifications for sports managers on issues related to the role of sports in education as well as reversely, the educational responsibility of sport.
- ✓ There is a need for national strategic plans for radicalization prevention that include concrete actions and policies to implement in the different contexts that are relevant to children's development - such as the family, the school, and the overall community, in addition to the sport settings. Such plan could be part of a broader plan addressing hate speech as well.
- ✓ For an effective prevention strategy, it is necessary to include evaluation and follow-up of radicalization prevention programmes. As reported in Portugal, some projects developed locally have not been properly tested in order to prove their efficacy and sustainability on a national basis.
- ✓ It is strongly recommended that the topics related to radicalization prevention are established within the national licensing system for sport coaches in place within each country. The licensing should include the teaching of sport values and should be carried out and accompanied by qualified educational institutions, possibly at national level.
- ✓ In Germany, the federal structure of the regional and state sport associations makes it highly recommendable that regular exchange formats take place regarding value-oriented prevention work.
- ✓ In Italy, sport teachers in primary school are not required to have any skills nor expertise in sport and sport is mostly taught by teachers of any other subjects. This can have detrimental effects on children especially on the most disadvantaged ones whose families have no economic resources to enroll their children in private sport clubs after school. The new Law 523, Article 109, provides for the gradual introduction of the teaching of "Physical education" in primary school by professional teachers with appropriate qualifications, in the fifth grades, starting from the school year 2022/2023. This will gradually introduce the teaching of Physical Education with professional teachers for the entire cycle of primary school.
- ✓ Portugal's roadmap for effective child safeguarding in sport policies brings comprehensive guidelines and action plans that may be applied to prevent and respond to all forms of violence in sport. The Child Safeguarding in Sport entails as an expected outcome the creation of Child Safeguarding Officer roles in sport. A child or a youngster in a process of radicalization is at risk and is a victim – of self-harm and of negative influence of extremists but also at risk of becoming a perpetrator of violent extremism. Consequently, we strongly recommend that the training for Child Safeguarding Officer include the topic of radicalization and violent extremism within sports.

#### d. EU policy recommendations

- ✓ In general, there is a need to build a *shared culture of sport as a pedagogical tool* as well as a powerful means of inclusion. The non-agonistic dimension of sport practice should be promoted in all sport disciplines and at all levels.
- ✓ A discourse on terminology – starting from “radicalization” - should be conducted as a very first step towards the adoption of a European prevention strategy to youth radicalization.
- ✓ Transnational projects should address volunteer sport coaches in particular and provide value-based education to trainers in a way that is as accessible as possible. The value of volunteers and low-threshold access to trainer licensing should be focussed on.
- ✓ As part of an effective EU strategy, there is the need for a European platform dealing with radicalization and de-radicalization (such as RAN) specialized in radicalization in sport and deradicalization through sports. Additionally, EU seminars on the topic of radicalization and deradicalization in sports and through sports should be organized annually where experts and professionals could share good practices from different EU countries.

## 5. ANNEX

### BEST PRACTICES TO PREVENT RADICALIZATION IN SPORTS: EUROPEAN EXAMPLES

#### Germany

1. *Rheinflanke* is a non-profit company that is active throughout Germany as a provider of sports-related youth and integration work. The organization was founded in 2006 from the idea of supporting disadvantaged youth through sports. Since then, they have been particularly present in educational and youth work as well as in the school context. As part of their educational work, they offer training for multipliers in youth and refugee work, for example, to establish their approach of sports-based youth work within the structures. Rheinflanke uses sports in particular as a low-threshold point of contact within the social environment of the children and young people in order to lay a foundation for further support. Exemplary projects are "HOPE Football", in which heterogeneous teams are coached within the framework of a sports-related integration approach; the project "Spiel dich frei", which uses a playful-creative combination of music, theatre and sports to prevent radicalization; or "football3 for all" as a methodical examination of the topic. In its form and structure, Rheinflanke is a prime example of successful integrative work with children and young people, both with and without a migration biography. By conveying value-based content in educational and youth work, Rheinflanke is doing work to prevent radicalization.

2. *Football3 for all* is a method that combines the classic game of soccer with a value-based approach, focusing on the principles of fair play, equality, team spirit and respect. Football3 works in three different steps. In the first step (1), a discussion takes place within the teams, which are as heterogeneous and mixed-gender as possible, in which the rules of the subsequent football game are formulated. For example, rules such as fair play scores or double counting of goals scored by the younger players could be considered. This is followed by the football game (2), which usually takes place on smaller fields and in a shorter time. The game takes place without a referee, so that the players themselves decide on the interpretation of the rules. After the game, the players come together (3) and review the game. The teams now have the opportunity to earn fair play points by following the rules in addition to the goals scored. Football3 is always accompanied by a mediator. The main goal, however, is a self-sufficient discussion of the players among themselves and a common approach and mediation of values. It is not so much about performance, but about the common naming of values and rules, which are observed among each other and accompanied by respect and fair play. In the end, players internalize a radicalization-prevention view and carry it out into their social groups, into their friendships, into their classes and out into the world.

## Italy

As confirmed throughout the implementation of the SAFE ZONE activities in Italy, the prevention of youth radicalization in sport is a rather new topic in the country and practices or initiatives specifically focusing on this topic are not easy to find. However, sport actors in Italy are gradually acquiring awareness of their key role and function in addressing the area of prevention of youth marginalization, racism, and delinquency. The practices in place demonstrate that there are many commonalities with the purposes of preventing radicalization and violent extremism, namely: acknowledgement of the educational/pedagogical role of sport and the need to empower coaches; the prevention of youth exclusion and marginalization as a first step and the promotion of values of peace, solidarity, respect for rules and fair-play; the capacity to respond to the adolescents' needs for acceptance within a group, thus allowing for their sense of belonging and self-identity; and lastly, the relevance of multi-agency cooperation. The practices presented below are examples of this.

1. The project "*TraSPORTami*" (literally "Take me away") was promoted by the local branch of Italian Sport Centre-CSI- in Bergamo, Northern Italy, in collaboration with a network of six local NGOs with the intent to prevent and reduce educational deprivation by increasing opportunities for adolescents to grow, interact, and socialize. Funded by both public and private bodies, the project contributed to the establishment of a multi-agency working group that involves educational and community services and juvenile justice services along with NGOs. Sport actors act as mediators between sport clubs, local authorities, and families, establishing a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary cooperation network for prevention initiatives that address young athletes at risk of juvenile delinquency and anti-social behaviors. In this multi-agency setting, the project provides sport internships for adolescents with behavioral problems and who are at risk of delinquency. Sport apprenticeships allow adolescents to become part of the peer group with well-defined roles, such as the coach assistant, with a view to making adolescents feel recognized as part of their social community. Educational and social services cooperate with sport clubs to adopt shared languages and practices in the "best interest of the child". This is where the process of inclusion and prevention start.

2. The project "*I SPORT – Inclusive Sport Project Opposed to Radicalization Tenets*"<sup>3</sup>, funded by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Sport Policy and Program, aimed at fighting radicalization and delinquency in deprived areas of the city of Palermo in Sicily. The project was implemented through a multi-agency approach that entailed a coordinated action by both public and private bodies – e.g., University, Juvenile Justice, Center for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Sport organization, and the coordinating NGO Ceipes. Sport practice was promoted as a valuable tool for inclusion, integration and appreciation of cultural differences. Young inmates, refugees and migrants, and young inhabitants were involved in sport activities led by professional sport educators, in order to experience the values of solidarity and team-working and encourage group belonging regardless the social, cultural or religious backgrounds of its members. The

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<sup>3</sup>More information can be found on CEIPES website <https://ceipes.org/it/?s=i+sport&lang=it>

project aimed at overcoming the prejudice-induced physical and cultural barriers; decreasing the risk of radicalization among young inmates and provide valuable and alternative ways out from isolation and/or violent behavior; and finally, promoting the European community's values - such as gender equality, fair play, social inclusion - through active sport practice.

## Portugal

1. "*Achieve, collect and give back*" (AC&GB) is a civic movement that raises awareness and alerts to our role and responsibility in the civic and sports training/education of children and youths. It aims to hold events and programmes that provide sports and civic education to young people at risk. It is a social movement inspired by values of overcoming, self-knowledge and solidarity defended by Nuno Delgado Judo School:

- Jiko No Kansei (search for physical and mental perfection): Achieve - Overcome
- Seiryoku Zenyo (use of physical and mental energy for maximum effect): Collect - Self-knowledge
- Jita Kyoei (mutual prosperity and benefit for all): Give Back – Solidarity

The "Achieve, Collect & Give Back" movement is represented by a rainbow judo belt, the "rainbow belt", which symbolizes hope, unity of opposites, the union of peoples, and social integration, a concept advocated by Nelson Mandela, an ambassador for the concept of social inclusion. To celebrate Mandela Day, AC&GB promoted "The Biggest Judo Class 2021", which aimed to unite all people around the values of judo and its moral code - Respect, Courage, Modesty, Self-Control, Friendship, Sincerity, Honour, Courtesy plus Sustainability - and, through Judo and its benefits, to create a transformative experience of interaction in virtual mode due to the pandemic situation.

2. *Plano Nacional de Ética no Desporto* (PNED) - National Plan for Ethics in Sport – is an initiative promoted by the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ), a SAFE ZONE project partner, and of the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport. It aims to promote ethics and values in sport, providing for awareness-raising actions against violence in sport and ways of prevention among youngsters and their families. PNED involved the implementation of a "Training Actions - Ethics in Sports" programme with sports agents, reinforcing those with competences as multipliers of the actions of this National Plan. Also within the PNED and in partnership with the IPDJ and the Faculty of Human Motricity, the programme Sport without Bullying - is being implemented, which carries out a set of awareness actions among the school and adult population that aims to prevent this problem. Within the content developed, we highlight the television campaign "Move-te por valores" - Move for values, a weekly section on the national radio station Antena 1, which tells a positive story that has occurred in sport as opposed to the negative. The objective of this project is to invest in counter-narratives, demonstrating what can be done positively to combat stereotypes and prejudices associated with bullying situations.

## Slovenia

1. Slovenian partners have learned several good practices on how to prevent radicalization in sport like bringing the youngsters from violent *torcida* groups into the sport clubs where they could transform their aggression in sport practice. Youngsters in that case have learned new manners on how to deal with their aggression tensions and how to transform them into physical performance. They have become the part of sport group instead of the violent group and found new friends within the sport society. Those with more ambition have started to compete, gaining self-esteem and recognition through achievements. Once they felt accepted by peers and coach, they have really turned away from violence and violent groups. Such approach was successful in the case where the sport coach had enough charisma and was perceived as good role model worth to follow and obey. Namely, the youngsters have had to accept also the hierarchy of particular group, and this was possible only through acceptance of the rules and the coach.

2. Another good practice learned through Safe Zone project was related to the early detection of youngsters at risk of violence. The focus was on behavior change during sport practices. In one case, the coach observed a young boy who started to self-isolate and then to avoid the practice. He felt being excluded from the group and started to be violent during the practice. The coach perceived those changes early enough and approached the youngster individually in order to not humiliate him with peers or parents. Through conversations and through his approach he achieved that the youngster was willing to make some changes. This was only possible, because the youngster respected him as a coach and a person.

The above cases remark the outstanding role of sport coaches in relation to the prevention of radicalization and suggest that personal skills can be of great importance for a successful early detection of radicalization. Still, specific training addressing the need to strengthen the coaches' educational and social skills should be promoted throughout the country as part of a valuable strategy to prevent youth violence in sport.

The SAFE ZONE team represents a mix of research centers, universities and sports organizations in Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia.



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