

A large background image showing the silhouettes of several children playing sports in a field. They are reaching up towards a ball in the air. The scene is set against a sunset sky with clouds, and the foreground is a grassy field with some flowers. The entire image has a warm, orange-gold color cast.

# BEST PRACTICES GUIDE ON KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN SPORTS



**Terre des hommes**

Helping children worldwide.



This publication was produced within the European project "Keeping Children Safe in Sports", cofunded by the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program (REC 2014-2020).

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Terre des hommes (Tdh) is the leading Swiss organisation for children's aid, founded in 1960. Through our health, protection and emergency relief programmes, we provide assistance to over four million children and their families in around 40 countries each year. We aspire to a world in which the rights of children, as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are always respected.

A world in which children can thrive in safe environments and become the agents of change they wish to see in their lives. Terre des hommes is an independent, neutral and impartial organisation committed to bringing meaningful and lasting change to the lives of children and youth, especially to those most exposed to risks. We strive to improve their well-being and ensure the effective application of their rights as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights instruments.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 What is Child Safeguarding in sports and recreational activities and why is it important?

Every year, thousands of children choose to join a sports club or to participate in recreational activities such as day camps and summer camps. Participation in these activities promotes healthy child develop-

ment. However, one should also be aware that children may face risks and dangers in sports and recreational activities.



### DEFINITION OF SAFEGUARDING

"Child Safeguarding is the responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children`s safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities". (Keeping Children Safe Coalition - [www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk))

Premises which are inappropriate or inadequate for children may increase the risk for accidents and injuries. Personnel untrained to work with children of different ages may cause unintentional psychological harm through inappropriate forms of communication, such as provision of verbal instructions in an age-insensitive manner or usage of diminishing language to prompt better performance in sports. Worldwide, cases of child sexual abuse have also been reported in sports and recreational activities provoking long-term adverse effects in child socioemotional and cognitive development. Organizations without defined procedures on how to prevent and/or respond timely and effectively to possible risks or alleged cases of child abuse may provoke further harm to affected children.

All children must be protected from any form of violence and exploitation that may occur in the context of sports and recreational activities such as day and

summer camps. For this reason, it is paramount that all stakeholders involved in the provision of sport and recreational services to children take appropriate actions to foresee the risks and develop preventative remedies in order to eliminate the likelihood of any harm occurring to children in those contexts.

A **Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP)** is a [document](#) that includes all preventative and responsive measures that a specific organization shall take to preserve children's safety and well-being in its dependencies and activities. A CSP must be aligned with National Laws on child protection, and at the same time consider the specificities of individual Organizations such as a sports club or a summer camp. Child protection is the State's responsibility to keep children safe in the national territory. The development of a CSP explicitly defines the manner in which individual Organizations contribute to keeping children safe.



The right of children to protection is defined by Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child protection is the States' responsibility. Child safeguarding refers to the responsibility of individual organizations in keeping children safe in their dependencies and activities. The concept of Child Safeguarding is also linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which foresee that children's protection indicators must be responded to in order for the SDGs to be fully met.

## 1.2 Keeping Children Safe in Sport: Programme overview

**Keeping Children Safe in Sports (KCSS)** is a project funded by the European Commission (Directorate-General Justice and Consumers) and it aims at promoting child safeguarding policies in sports settings in Romania and Greece.

Its specific objectives were:

- to ensure children are protected in sports clubs and summer-camp settings through dedicated safeguarding policies;
- to build capacities of professionals in contact with children;
- to empower children;
- to encourage multi-country exchange and cooperation regarding child safeguarding in sports and recreational settings.

The objectives were met through the implementation of **activities** such as the establishment of a Children Advisory Board to provide feedback throughout the project's activities, capacity building on child protection and child safeguarding for the staff of sports clubs and summer camps, the empowerment of children to enhance their self-protective behaviours, and the creation of the Quality Label "Child Safe Environment"

label, which was awarded to sports clubs and summer camps that effectively developed a Child Safeguarding Policy.

The capacity building activities provided to sports clubs and summer camps were organized in three stages:

- awareness-raising sessions and training on child protection and child safeguarding to organizations and enterprises' managers;
- training to sports clubs and summer camps representatives who would assume themselves the training of their colleagues (train-the-trainer workshops);
- training provided by trained sports clubs and summer camps' staff to their colleagues (replication training).

Within the project, several **resources** were developed with the aim to support sports clubs and summer camps in keeping children safe in their context. It is important to mention the Child Safeguarding Policy template, the "Coloured Shields" Manual and the Quality Label "Child Safe Environment". All the resources may be accessed [here](#)

## 1.3 Methodological note: How were the best practices identified?

A joint **qualitative research design** was used in order to document the good practices in the field of Child Safeguarding from Romania and Greece. Data were collected mainly through on-line **Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**

with the relevant **stakeholders** of the project. In the rare cases when some of our key informants had limited availability for participating in a discussion, a short on-line survey with open-ended questions was used instead.

All data were collected between November and December 2021. During the interviews, respondents were asked to take a reflexive stance towards the project activities and their implementation, and to express freely their feedback for improving similar interventions in the future (See **Annex 1** for a detailed list of the research instruments used for collecting the findings).

**Stakeholders** interviewed for the collection of good practices:

- representatives of the sports federations and summer camps association;
- the experts involved in the development of training curriculum and the Child Safeguarding Policy;
- permanent staff of football clubs, gymnastics clubs and summer camps (i.e., coaches, summer

camp managers and summer camp staff). Taking into account the specific implementation of the project, we grouped the KIIs and FGDs with staff in two distinct categories: participants in the training of trainers and participants in the replication training.

As in any research endeavour, the predefined resources and time allocated for the task imposed certain limitations. In this case, the **only major limitation** was that no data collection activities were conducted with the children participating in the project. Nevertheless, Terre des hommes is an organisation that advocates strongly for child participation in all their activities, child-friendly data collection methods and child-led research. It is worth noting that the Child Advisory Board provided feedback throughout the project in reference to all planned activities.

## 1.4 Who is this Guide for?

This Best Practices Guidance addresses sports federations/associations and sports clubs, as well as institutions, organizations and enterprises running day and summer camps for children and/or providing other recreational activities to minors. Sports professionals

and professionals working for organizations that provide recreational activities to children, and parents of young athletes and children that make use of day and summer camps may also find this Guide useful for the prevention of any harm to children.

## 1.5 Structure

The remainder of the document is structured in four distinct chapters. Based on the experience of implementing the KCSS project in Romania and Greece, **Chapter II** provides a detailed account of the steps that any organization should consider when committing to the principles and practices of Child Safeguarding. **Chapter III** presents some of the benefits that your organisation, your staff, and most importantly, children, could experience in the first few months after adopting a Child Safeguarding Policy. These positive effects reflect the behavioural and attitudinal changes associated with implementing

safeguarding procedures. Taken together, **Chapters II and III** present both the arguments in favour and the practical steps you need to take in order to adopt and implement a Child Safeguarding Policy in your organization. In **Chapter IV** we discuss some further steps that your organization could take in order to enhance its commitment to child safeguarding. This chapter is especially useful for organisations that have already adopted a Child Safeguarding Policy and want to increase the sustainability of the recent organizational change. **Chapter V** presents the conclusions of this guidance.



## II. OPTIMAL PATHWAY FOR CHILD SAFEGUARDING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Ensuring a safe and child-friendly environment within the sports clubs, summer camps and other recreational settings can be seen as a **two-stage process**. First, the organizations should adopt a context-specific **Child Safeguarding Policy** and commit to the institutional changes required by the new procedural standards. Second, a **mechanism for reporting and addressing concerns** should be developed and/or become functional, meaning that all the relevant stakeholders (staff & management, children, parents, volunteers, etc.) know how to raise a concern, and on the other hand, they feel confident that it would be properly addressed.

While the KCSS project addressed both of these stages, the limited time frame of the project does not allow to explore how the reporting mechanisms are working in practice. Similar to the experience of other countries that have made institutional commitments towards Child Safeguarding in sports (e.g. United Kingdom, Germany), the results for this second stage should be-

come visible after several years. Therefore, **the present document focuses mostly on the first stage of the process**.

Despite the fact that the project was implemented in different geographical and site-specific settings (gymnastics and football clubs in Romania and summer camps in Greece), we have identified similar best practices that lead to the successful implementation of a Child Safeguarding Policy. This finding emphasizes that with a strong organizational commitment, Child Safeguarding policies and practices can be adopted relatively easily in a diversity of contexts.

The steps towards developing and effectively implementing a Child Safeguarding Policy for your organization are described in **Figure 1**. These steps could be used both by small-scale organizations (e.g., a sports club, a summer camp), and organizations with national coverage (e.g., sports federations, summer camp associations).

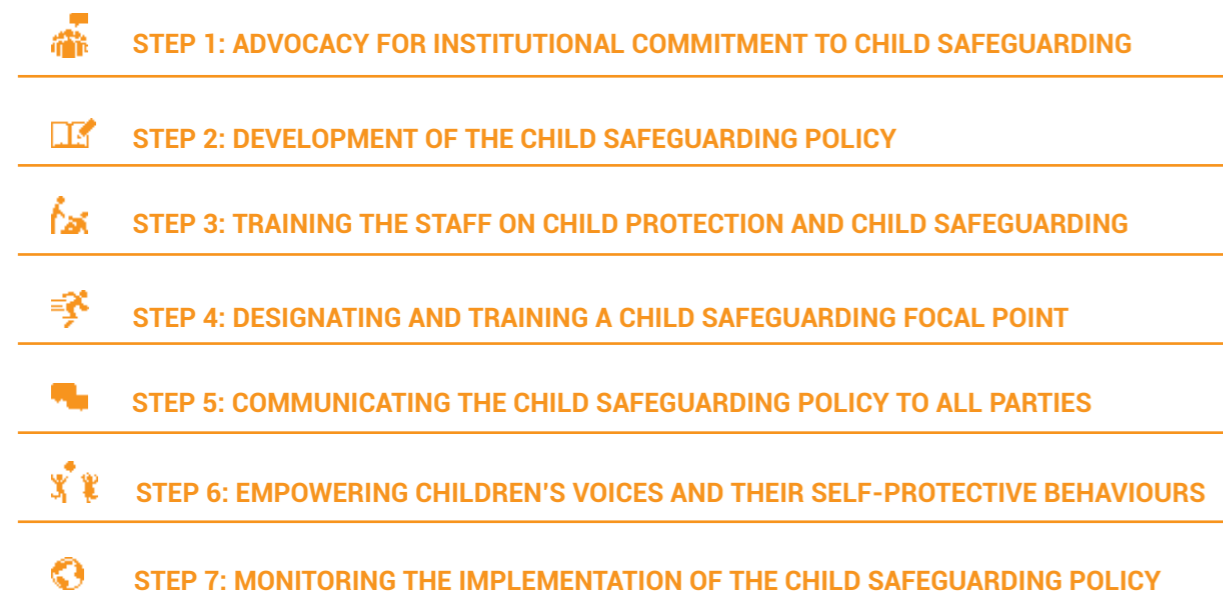


Figure 1.

### STEP 1

#### Advocacy for institutional commitment to Child Safeguarding

To create a sustainable and meaningful impact, the adoption of Child Safeguarding policies should benefit from institutional support at the highest hierarchical level (e.g., sports federations and associations). This support can vary from a mere formal recognition of the importance to address the issue of Child Safeguarding (i.e., a public letter of support), to a full institutional commitment (i.e., allocating resources for training the staff and implementing the new procedures).

In order to ensure the initial 'buy-in' from the decision-makers in your organization, some lobbying activities might be required. For example, you could organize meetings and/or workshops on child protection and child safeguarding for decision-makers (e.g., presidents of the sports federations, sports clubs, and summer camps managers, State child protection authorities), to increase their awareness of the topic and advocate for the need to create a protective safety-net for children in sports, summer camps, and other recreational activities. Involving a Child Protection organisation or expert as a facilitator for these meetings and workshops is an idea that should be considered, since they could bring in significant expertise and be perceived as impartial actors.

- **In Romania**, the Football Federation and the Gymnastics Federation supported the idea and the implementation of the KCSS project from its very beginning. Both organizations were familiar with the principles of Child Safeguarding in sports and considered the project to be highly relevant for them, since developing a Child Safeguarding Policy was one of the important issues on their agenda. Moreover, the Romanian Gymnastics Federations considers Safeguarding as their "priority-zero" in the following years.
- **In Greece**, The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is responsible for the legislative framework for summer camps, demonstrated interest in the project and noted that important components of a Child Safeguarding Policy were being discussed as prerequisites for the operation of public and private institutions and enterprises involving children in their activities. Actually, relevant provisions were included in the Law 4837/2021 voted by the Greek Parliament in October 2021. According to this Law, many institutions collaborating with children including summer camps have to appoint a Focal Point for child protection and safeguarding. Also, the recruitment of persons condemned for sexual crimes has been prohibited in most organizations and enterprises providing services to children.

## STEP 2

### Development of the Child Safeguarding Policy

The development of the Child Safeguarding Policy is perhaps the most important step in your journey towards creating a safe and child-friendly environment within your organisation. For this reason, it is usually expected to have a longer duration compared to the other steps we included in this Guide and you should allocate more time and human resources for it. Below are a set of aspects that you should consider when developing your Child Safeguarding Policy:

- Thoroughly study the national legislation on child protection and create your Child Safeguarding Policy template accordingly. You should try to collaborate with the relevant national/regional Child Protection authorities and ask for their support/feedback in the development of the Policy. This initial aspect is important because it increases the likelihood that authorities will endorse the idea of a Child Safeguarding Policy in the long term. Also, it strengthens the cultural validity of the Policy and ensures its effective implementation, especially regarding the reporting mechanism.
- **In Greece**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs responded positively to the proposed development of a Child Safeguarding Policy for all summer camps, and collaborated with Terre des Hommes Hellas towards this end. The Municipality of Athens has asked for support to develop a Child Safeguarding Policy for all Municipal summer camps attending around 4000 children every summer.
- **In Romania**, the national child protection authorities (ANDPDCA) worked closely with Terre des hommes Romania to develop the general template for the Child Safeguarding Policy, ensuring that the document follows the national legal provision in the field of child protection and preventing violence against children.
- Collaborate with a child protection organisation/expert for the development of the Safeguarding Policy. They could provide valuable mentorship on how to proceed with overall endeavour or on how to deal with certain safeguarding issues. The experience in Romania and Greece has shown that two or three mentoring sessions tend to be sufficient, and that they shorten significantly the time needed to develop the Policy.
- Consider whether your organization already has an internal policy that foresees measures for the safeguarding of children. Those measures can be a good starting point for the new Safeguarding Policy and you only need to review them and to add or to amend what is missing.

## STEP 2

- **In Greece**, many summer camps worked upon their existing Internal Organizational Policy, saving them considerable time in the development of their Child Safeguarding Policy
- **In Romania**, the sports clubs already have clear sets of instructions and procedures for preventing injuries during practice training, or for the general conduct on the club's premises. But in order to adopt a comprehensive perspective on Child Safeguarding, their recently developed policies included a variety of new topics: bullying and cyberbullying, emotional abuse, the pressure to perform, intimacy and accessing the facilities etc.
- Include in the Child Safeguarding Policy the voices of the children you are working with. By doing so, you will ensure that the Policy captures any major safeguarding concern that children might already have. The level of children's participation for such an activity can vary from a fully child-led initiative to a series of child-consultations. In the context of the KCSS project, children's ideas and suggestions regarding the Safeguarding Policies were captured through a series of Child Advisory Board meetings, organised in Romania and Greece.

## STEP 3

### Training the staff on child protection and child safeguarding

Based on the size of your organisation and your available resources, the training on child protection and child safeguarding could be provided to all members of the staff, or only to one or two people in your organisation. In the context of the KCSS project, the training had two stages: a training for trainers delivered by Tdh experts and attended by one person from each club/summer camp, and a series of replication training, delivered by the newly formed trainers to their colleagues.

- Both in **Romania and Greece**, the peer-to-peer approach for the training was highly appreciated by most of the participants. However, in the context of competitive sports (Romania) some other voices expressed their preference towards receiving the training from external experts (i.e., Tdh staff).

## STEP 4

### Designating and training a Child Safeguarding Focal Point

An institutional commitment towards safeguarding also means that the Child Safeguarding Policy is actually implemented and leads to visible changes in terms of procedures and organizational practices. For this purpose, we strongly recommend to appoint one member of your organisation as a **Child Safeguarding Focal Point**.

- A **Child Safeguarding Focal Point** is the person responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of your Child Safeguarding Policy, providing training to the staff, proposing its review when necessary, and managing concerns related to child safeguarding in your organization.

In order to make sure that the designation of the Focal Point is not just a formal appointment, you should consider the following aspects:

- The person selected as a Focal Point should have a genuine interest in the topic of Child Safeguarding, as well as good communication skills to clearly explain the new procedures and raise awareness on Safeguarding across all the different members and collaborators of your organisation (children, parents, staff, volunteers etc.);
- It is mandatory that the Focal Point receives appropriate **initial training** on the topic of Child Safeguarding. Moreover, it is recommended to enrich his/her area of expertise, by attending complementary training in the field of Child Protection. This would also prove extremely beneficial for extending the network of child protection professionals and developing collaboration agreements between your organisation and the local child protection authorities (see also section 4.3 of this guidance);
- Have in place a job description for the Focal Point, with clear roles and responsibilities. This should be beneficial both for the Focal Point, but also for your organisation (so that it is clear what can and what cannot be expected from the Focal Point, as well as developing an institutional memory for this new role).

In the context of the KCSS project, most of the Child Safeguarding Focal Points for the sports clubs and summer camps were appointed from the group of people who participated in the training of trainers (ToT). Their initial curiosity towards the topic of safeguarding was amplified by the learning experience provided in the context of ToTs and, for most of them, it felt only natural that they should take the additional responsibility of becoming the Child Safeguarding Focal Point in their organisation.

## STEP 5

### Communicating the Child Safeguarding Policy to all parties

- Make sure that all current employees and new staff are aware of your Child Safeguarding Policy and sign a document of agreement with it before having any contact with the children from your organization. Ideally, the signing of the document should be made before their employment contract is initiated.
- Organize child protection and child safeguarding workshops for your staff, based on the measures foreseen by your Child Safeguarding Policy to keep children safe. Such workshops should be offered at least once per year, or otherwise according to your organization's calendar of activities.
- When recruiting new participants in your activities, communicate your Child Safeguarding Policy beforehand to all children and families that express their interest to collaborate with you and ask for their active agreement. Even if parents might sometimes feel sceptical regarding the need to sign that they agree to the Child Safeguarding Policy, you should always try to emphasize that the purpose of the document is to provide a safer environment for their children.

For the activities organised in 2021, **summer camps in Greece** communicated their Child Safeguarding Policy through their website beforehand and asked families to bring a signed copy of their child's registration.



## Empowering children's voices and their self-protective behaviours

While the responsibility for creating a safe environment for the children you are working with lies with the staff in your organisation, one of the final goals of any Child Safeguarding Policy is to also empower children to understand the different dimensions of safeguarding and report any concern that they might have.

For this reason, within the KCSS project, a specific peer-to-peer methodological approach for empowering children's voices was developed ([the "Coloured Shields" manual](#)), as well as a [child-friendly guide](#) for introducing the concept of safeguarding to children. Both resources should be extremely useful to any organisation that wants to adopt the principles and practices of child safeguarding.

A simple information session might not be enough for children to fully understand and put into practice the measures included in your child safeguarding policy. Children need to trust your organization's commitment towards implementing new procedures and feel safe to report their concerns, without any fear of retaliation or reprisal. For this purpose, we recommend that multiple initial awareness-raising sessions are organised and that the process is repeated each year for the new children joining your club or summer camp.

- **In Romania**, the awareness sessions with children were expected to face the challenge of being organised across different sport settings (football and gymnastic clubs) and with different age groups. However, the piloting of the peer-to-peer methodology showed that the approach can be quite flexible in terms of its implementation, and that the proposed activities were engaging and well-received by the participants. The only downside was related to the time availability, since the safeguarding awareness sessions overlapped with the regular practice sessions of the sports clubs, and children did not want to fully miss one of their workouts. This finding emphasises once again the advantage of dividing the content of the awareness sessions across multiple meetings.

## Monitor the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy

Adopting a Child Safeguarding policy should not be a one-time initiative, but rather a sustained and long-term organizational commitment. For this reason, the implementation of the policy should be monitored and adjusted on a yearly basis.

The [Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for Children in Sports](#) elaborated in the KCSS already contains two forms that can help your organisation in this endeavour: a Self-Assessment Form regarding the stage of implementation of all the Safeguarding measures taken by your organisation; and an Action and Monitoring Plan which details the concrete steps your organisation should take in the next year for improving its safeguarding procedures.

# III. SAFEGUARDING'S VICTORIES: ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

Despite the fact that the sport clubs and summer camps that participated in the project have only implemented their Child Safeguarding Policy for a few months, our findings suggest that some significant

attitudinal and behavioural changes can already be reported among the staff and managers of the sport clubs/summer camps.

## 3.1. Understanding that children need to be safeguarded in all contexts

In Greece, several participants admitted that before the initial workshop on child protection and child safeguarding, they maintained attitudes such as "child abuse and neglect will never happen on my premises", or "I cannot scare away my clients talking about child safety and measures against child abuse and neglect". Following the workshop, the development of a Child Safeguarding Policy and its initial implementation, the same participants underlined that their understanding and attitudes towards children's safety has changed markedly. A camp manager noted that her new motto is "it is better to lose an employee or a client who does not accept my safeguarding policy, than being awake every single night worrying". A camp supervisor underlined "Now that I understand and see the utility of the Child Safeguarding Policy, I do not want to

remember that all these years we were operating without having one!".

In Romania, the training sessions and the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy have led to a more comprehensive perspective on child safety. For example, several respondents mentioned that their clubs have improved their safeguarding procedures for traveling to competitions or for taking the children to the doctor.

It is worth mentioning that in both cases, the club managers had already signed the Child Safeguarding Policy. This helped the staff make their case and be able to actually enforce the required procedural change.

*"We travelled to a competition, a concrete example [...] and the driver was about to sleep in the same room with the children. And then I opposed it, I said <<Stop!>>. Then one of my colleagues called me and said that one of us (the coaches) would have to stay with the children. And I opposed it again. I said that in the Child Safeguarding Policy that we had just signed [...] we clearly specified this thing would not happen, and that was what I had learned and that was what I would put into practice, since it was the right thing to do."*

*"I recently discussed with one of my colleagues, a coach, and he told me that one of the girls was at kinesiotherapy for recovery [...] and as we talked, I asked <<But what is she doing, is she alone? You know we have discussed that this should not happen>>. And he realised I was right and said that he would also go to the doctor's office."*

## 3.2 Effective identification of signs of child abuse and neglect

The provision of training to the staff of sports clubs and summer camps enhanced their ability to identify worrying signs and to report cases to their organization's Focal Point. The template of "Case Registration" included in the Child Safeguarding Policy was effectively used to register worrisome cases and to communicate those worries to relevant

child protection services, a practice not upheld before the specialized training on child protection and child safeguarding and the development of the Policy.

The relevance of the KCSS project was emphasized by one of the participants from Greece:

*"Many of the signs were present in front of our eyes, all these years; but we had no words to name them, nor knowledge to deal with child protection and child safeguarding cases. Our participation in the project, and especially the access to specialized training and the development of a Child Safeguarding Policy specifying all procedures to be followed, enhanced our ability to recognize worrying signs and to respond appropriately to them".*

The relevance of the training for identifying signs of child abuse and neglect was also highlighted by the participants in the training in Romania. Their increased

concern for a child's wellbeing also takes into account the new procedure regarding the presence of at least another adult during the practice.

*"It made me - much more attentive to the children, and I am trying to observe them, to see how they behave in certain situations. Because children have different reactions, and I try to discuss with them. At the same time, I try not to be alone when I discuss with a child, to have another adult at least in the proximity. [...] Before the training I would discuss with a child about his/her issues, but I was not paying attention to being in the presence of another adult. I was only focused on making the child talk openly."*

## 3.3. Communication with and among children and adults

In the baseline assessment conducted at the beginning of the KCSS project, one of the important findings was that the competitive nature of the football and gymnastics clubs often leads to the situation where coaches put too much pressure on the children,

leaving them exposed to verbal and emotional abuse. While eliminating such deeply rooted norms will most likely require a generational shift, it is good to see that after only a few days of training, several coaches reported significant changes in their daily practices.

*"I have been more aware and paid more attention (to the way I interact with children). Maybe sometimes, when I was irritated, I used a higher pitch, not bad language or anything, but still, maybe I put pressure on the children [...] and I realised that maybe sometimes I had the wrong attitude. [...] I am more aware that if I arrive tired or irritated at the practice, I will pass on my mood to the children. And children are so responsive, they sense adults' emotions, all the non-verbal communication is so easily transmitted."*

*"I changed my mentality. I tried to be fairer with myself and the children [...]. I consider their opinion more often, I listen to them, in order to understand them and to try to solve the problems together. This is how it changed me."*

*"I observe some of my colleagues and I am much more aware and I realize that they still make some huge mistakes. People with a lot of experience, that we respect, since they have won several medals with the children, they train (...). But we observe that they still use the old pedagogical methods."*

Additional findings were reported in **Greece**:

- Camp managers stated that after the staff's training on child protection and child safeguarding, the members of the staff demonstrated a more respectful form of communication among themselves. It was noted that this change in the staff's behaviour affected children positively, as it demonstrated in practice the desired behaviours specified in the Policy.
- A summer camp manager noted that after the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy observed fewer cases of conflicts between

children. They thought that this may be related with the fact that children were made aware of the Policy and the standards of desired behaviours specified in it beforehand.

- Summer camp managers and staff related that they observed changes in their everyday communication with children after their training on child protection and child safeguarding. They were more careful with their verbal and overall behaviour towards children, as they had clearer in mind why and how their behaviour affects children's well-being and safety.

## IV. ENHANCING CHILD SAFEGUARDING IN YOUR ORGANISATION

Complementary to the good practices of establishing and implementing a Child Safeguarding Policy presented in the previous chapter, our findings suggest that sports clubs and summer camps could enhance their commitment to Child Safeguarding by taking an

active stance in the five areas described below. Failure to proactively support these changes may compromise the successful establishment and implementation of a Child Safeguarding Policy.

### 4.1 Changing mentalities and attitudes of all staff

When a Child Safeguarding Policy is adopted for the first time within a sports club or a summer camp, a limited number of people from the staff (i.e. the child safeguarding focal point) will usually play an active and pivotal role in producing meaningful institutional changes. Our findings based on interviews with professionals working for sport clubs and summer camps holding different roles in their organization suggest that other members of the staff might be sceptical or even reluctant at first towards the new regulations and practices brought forward by the Child Safeguarding Policy. Therefore, additional institutional efforts are needed for achieving the desired attitudinal shift for all staff members, besides the club/summer camp manager's visible affirmation of support for the Policy. These might include activities such as information sessions on safeguarding organised periodically, or peer-to-peer training.

**In Romania**, an attitudinal resistance towards the principles and practices of safeguarding was reported especially among the coaches focused on achieving

the highest level of competitive performance. A key message that could be emphasized for this group is that child safeguarding does not refute the idea of competitive sports. It merely states that nothing is more important than children's safety and wellbeing, not even trophies and gold medals.

**In Greece**, the camp owners were initially sceptical and resistant to develop a Child Safeguarding Policy due to their belief that children are already safe in their summer camps and no harm can happen to them while there. They were also concerned that if they recognized the likelihood of risk and spoke out against it, that could scare their clients away. Presenting international good practices and successful case studies that demonstrate the positive impact of such a Policy for private organizations is a good way forward to understanding the importance of foreseeing and preventing any form of harm for children and that a Child Safeguarding Policy would not only safeguard children and families but also the enterprise itself.

## 4.2 Changing parents' mentalities and attitudes

The Keeping Children Safe in Sport project clearly acknowledged the parents' importance in ensuring that sports clubs and summer camps will become safe and child-friendly spaces. Within the Child Safeguarding Policy, it is stipulated that parents should be directly involved in different preventive measures, such as attending the awareness-raising sessions, signing the code of conduct, or agreeing to their child appearing in photo-video materials. Similar to the members of the staff, some of the parents might be scared or sceptical of the new procedures at first, or ignore them altogether, arguing that, since they are the parents, they know what is best for their child. Such attitudes are somewhat normal, and sports clubs and summer camps staff should not feel discouraged when faced with such resistant attitudes. Instead, they should continue communicating about the principles of safeguarding, organize ad-hoc meetings to address some of the benefits of adopting the Policy, and plan for additional awareness sessions with parents.

**In Romania**, several coaches have reported that parents have unrealistic expectations from their children in terms of their competitive performance.

For football clubs, another wide-spread practice is for parents to offer sport-specific technical advice to their children, contradicting the indications provided by the coach. This can only confuse children and expose them to emotional abuse. Since these attitudes are deeply embedded in the larger societal norms concerning football and competitive sports in general, it will be almost impossible to change them in a single awareness session, and a sustained organizational effort will be required at the club level.

**In Greece**, most parents received the initiative of the summer camps to establish a Child Safeguarding Policy in a positive manner. The public dissemination of the Policy through the summer camps' websites allowed the time for the parents to read it beforehand, communicate with the summer camps to discuss specificities of the Policy, and to prepare the children concerning what is expected from them in behavioural terms (what is allowed, and what is not allowed) during their participation in the summer camp.

## 4.3 Developing and strengthening the collaboration with Child Protection authorities

Both in **Romania and Greece**, the implementation of the KCSS project has shown that the idea of Child Safeguarding in sports and recreational settings is rather new, but at the same time, highly needed. Only some of the staff we interviewed had previously heard about safeguarding, usually from past working experiences abroad, or exchanges and training opportunities provided by organizations from other countries.

In the first stages of adopting and implementing a Child Safeguarding Policy in your sports club or summer camp, awareness-raising activities and changes in the organizational procedures are the required first steps. However, one of the most relevant indicators of a functional safeguarding system at national level is the development of functional reporting mechanisms. For this purpose, your organization should collaborate

closely with the local child protection authorities in your area. In order to establish good inter-institutional cooperation and provide an adequate response when an incident is reported, your organization could take the following steps:

- Review and understand the already established national procedure for reporting incidents, well before the first case occurs;
- Sign a protocol of collaboration with the local child protection agency;
- Attend local events in the field of child protection and create a network of contacts. Sometimes it is reassuring to know that behind formal procedures, there are people similar to you, working for the best interest of the child.

**In Romania**, any suspicion of violence against the children should be reported to the child protection body (DGASPC) from your county or sector. All the procedures (reporting, investigations and case management) will be conducted under the applicable national legislation (Law 272/2004 and [Government Decision 49/2011](#)).

Similarly **in Greece**, all citizens must refer any suspicion of violence against the children (depending on the circumstances, either to the police, the local child protection service of the Prosecutor) as defined in article 40 of the Code of Criminal Procedures and article 232 of the Penal Code, when read together.

## 4.4 Proper allocation of resources and staff for Child Safeguarding

For the sports clubs and summer camps included in the KCSS project, the adoption and implementation of Child Safeguarding policy were possible due to the extraordinary dedication of the safeguarding focal points from each organisation, the institutional support received from the federations/summer camps association, and the budgetary resources specifically allocated for this purpose within the project. However, similar organizations can adhere to the principles of child safeguarding without such ideal conditions.

In this respect, organizations should allocate in their annual budgets some minimal resources in order to be able to commit to the procedural changes required by their own Child Safeguarding Policy. Costs may include:

- organizing information and awareness sessions (with children, parents, staff);
- attending training or exchanges on the topic of child safeguarding (costs for travel, accommodation, participation tax);
- costs associated with the implementation of specific safeguarding procedures (for example, additional accommodation costs so that children do not have to share the room with other adults);
- developing information and awareness-raising material for their own staff, and the collaborating families and children.

## 4.5 Engaging in a community of practice in the field of Safeguarding

The feedback from the training sessions organized within the project clearly demonstrated the relevance of a peer-to-peer approach when learning about Child Safeguarding in sports and recreational settings. Most of the participants from the replication training held in high regard the fact that the information they received was very well adapted to their specific contexts and that it was delivered by their colleagues.

Moreover, some interviewees mentioned that they kept in contact with the trainer or other participants they met during the training, even a few months after, asking for advice or just a second opinion on different issues related to safeguarding. This clearly suggests the

opportunity for Tdh to create a community of practice in the field of Child Safeguarding, that would enhance the learning and the support that practitioners receive.

**In Romania**, the group of coaches who attended the ToT already started to function as a community of practice when preparing for their replication training. For example, they asked for specific support from Tdh's experts when faced with different challenges, and they shared their positive and negative experiences with the wider community of colleagues via electronic communication.

In Greece, the transfer of good practices and experience on establishing and implementing a Child Safeguarding Policy has taken place between the individual private summer camps that participated in the project, possibly because the Association of Private Summer Camps was not involved in the project. However, some of these summer camps have stated that they have already been networked with local child protection services participating

that way in "local safe-net hubs" for children. All participating summer camps, though, stated that they would find it really pertinent and helpful to have a "space" for further development, both by having access to expert advice and to colleagues working with child safeguarding.

## V. CONCLUSION

The implementation of a Child Safeguarding Policy at institutional/organizational level is a good practice that has been adopted and promoted by international organizations working with children, the Council of Europe, European National Authorities, and Member States' Sports Authorities. The responsibility of its development lies with individual institutions/organizations that involve children in their activities. The main aim of a Child Safeguarding Policy is to define safeguards that will protect children when implementing activities for or involving them; to ensure full respect for their rights and ensure their best interest; and to prevent the risk of any harm that may be caused to children as a result of actions or neglect by the institution/organization's staff or any third parties contracted by the institution/organization.

The KCSS project has mentored Romanian sports clubs and Greek summer camps to develop their own Child Safeguarding Policy and the initial findings on the results of its implementation are extremely prom-

ising. It was found that the mentored development of a Child Safeguarding Policy, the provision of appropriate training on child protection and child safeguarding to institutions/organizations' authorities and staff, and the children's empowerment to employ self-protective behaviours through structured playful activities resulted in adults and children's attitudinal and behavioural changes towards child safeguarding and protection. More respectful communications were observed among all stakeholders; fewer violent behaviours, initiated either by adults or children, were observed; and adults were significantly more aware of age-appropriate and safe forms of collaborating with children in their everyday encounters with them.

Thus, it is concluded that the development and implementation of a Child Safeguarding Policy must be an immediate priority and the "next big thing to consider" for all institutions and organizations involving children in their activities.



## 1. Key Informant Interview with National Stakeholders

### Introduction

This interview is organised in the framework of the KCSS project. The purpose of our discussion is **to document** some of the important/helpful steps and **practices** taken by the institutions and organisations involved in order to enhance child safeguarding and to create safe and child-friendly spaces. Our findings will be included in a report/**Best Practices Guidance**. As a final result, the report should enable other similar organisations **to replicate** safeguarding practices for themselves.

Our discussion will be strictly **confidential**. In our report, we will not reveal your name or your position in the organisation. As per the standard procedures of qualitative research, if you agree, the discussion will be audio recorded, in order to allow for a more accurate presentation of your responses.

### Previous practices on safeguarding/Relevance of the intervention

- 1) What was your first reaction when you heard about the Keeping Children Safe in Sports project?
- 2) **Were you already familiar with the concept of safeguarding** in sports? Were you or your organization engaged in any previous initiatives that addressed this issue?
- 3) Was enhancing safeguarding in sports a priority for your organisation? What were some limitations that you previously faced?

### Assessment of the project intervention

- 4) What do you think about the **overall approach used by the Tdh in this project?** (ToTs with coaches/staff, replication training for the other coaches in the clubs, peer-to-peer training for children in the sports clubs)?
- 5) What are some of the **strong points/best practices** of this approach?
- 6) What about **some of the weak points?** What should Tdh do differently in order to increase the impact of its intervention?
- 7) **How did most of the clubs react** to the idea of investing time and resources in implementing child safeguarding practices?

*Probes: What were some reasons for concern or for them being reluctant at first? How did you manage to overcome these obstacles?*

8) What is your opinion on the different **training materials/resources/procedures** elaborated within the project? Are these documents easy to use by people in your organisation in order to replicate the safeguarding efforts?

9) What is the **most valuable thing your organisation has gained** by participating in this project?

10) In your opinion, what is **the most significant change** this project has brought to your organisation/in the field of child safeguarding in sports?

### Sustainability of the intervention

11) Do you have any concrete plans for extending the implementation of the child safeguarding policy to other clubs in your organisation? How do you see this process?

12) Do you feel you need additional support in order to scale up the safeguarding approach within your organisation? What kind of support?

13) What are some of the most valuable lessons that you and your organisation have learned by participating in the KCSS project?

## 2. Focus Group Discussion with staff participating in the Training of Trainers

### Introduction

This Focus Group is organised in the framework of the KCSS project. The purpose of our discussion is **to document** some of the important/helpful steps and **practices** taken by the institutions and organisations involved in order to enhance child safeguarding and to create safe and child-friendly spaces. Our findings will be included in a report/**Best Practices Guidance**. As a final result, the report should enable other similar organisations **to replicate** safeguarding practices for themselves.

Our discussion will be strictly **confidential**. In our report, we will not reveal your name or your position in the organisation. As per the standard procedures of qualitative research, if you agree, the discussion will be audio recorded, in order to allow for a more accurate presentation of your responses.

### FGD general rules:

- My role today is just to moderate the discussion. This means that I will bring into discussion some prepared topics and I will ask some follow-up questions, but I would like you all to engage in a lively conversation with your colleagues.
- There are no right or wrong answers. You are encouraged to express your ideas and opinions, even if you disagree with one of the other participants. The only requirement is that you do so in a considerate and polite manner.
- The discussion should last approximately 90 minutes.

## ANNEX 1: DISCUSSION GUIDES

### Round of introductions

I would like to start our discussion by getting to know each other. I would like each of you to state 4 things:

- your **name**
- the **club** you are representing
- **your role** at the club
- and **how/from whom did you hear for the first time about the KCCS project?**

### Previous practices on safeguarding/Relevance of the intervention

- 1) What was your first reaction when you heard about the Keeping Children Safe in Sports project?
- 2) **Were you already familiar with the concept of safeguarding in sports?** Were you or your organization engaged in any previous initiatives that addressed this issue?
- 3) Was enhancing safeguarding in sports a priority for your organisation? What were some limitations that you previously faced?

### Assessment of the project intervention

#### 4) Mentimeter activity: (open answers on post-its)

I saw that in the project, a **shield** was used as a metaphor in order to quickly introduce the idea of safeguarding in sports to children, parents and other stakeholders. And I know that the concept of safeguarding covers multiple dimensions, but I wanted to ask **what does the shield mean to you?** I will now ask you to write on the post-its (on menti.com or in chat) 3 elements that you consider to be the most important for the safeguarding shield.

*The activity concludes by reading all/some of the answers, while displaying their answers on the moderator's screen.*

- 5) What do you think about the **training approach used by the Tdh in this project?** (ToTs with coaches/staff, replication training for the other coaches in the clubs?)
- 6) What are some of the **strong points/best practices** of this approach?
- 7) What about **some of the weak points?** What should Tdh do differently in order to increase the impact of its intervention?
- 8) What about **peer-to-peer training for children** in sports clubs? Do you think this is a good approach in order to introduce the concept of safeguarding to children of different ages?

### Impact of the training/behavioural changes

- 9) Thinking about your personal experience, after attending the ToT organised in the KCCS project, have you observed any **changes in your daily work?** What were some of the first learnings on safeguarding that you were able to put into practice?

## ANNEX 1: DISCUSSION GUIDES

- 10) Have you noticed any **changes in the ways you interact with the children in your club?** (in terms of expectations, communication, listening to their concerns etc.). What about changes in the interaction with the parents?

### Impact at the club level/organisational change

- 11) **How did the leadership of your club/your other colleagues initially react** to the idea of investing time and resources for implementing child safeguarding practices?

*Probes: What were some reasons for concern or for them being reluctant at first? How did you manage to overcome these obstacles?*

- 12) After your colleagues participated in the replication training (*or after you informed them on safeguarding*) have you witnessed any changes in their daily practices?

- 13) **Mentimeter activity:** (open answers on post-its)

What is the **most valuable thing your club has gained** by participating in this project?

*The answers will be written on menti.com (or in chat). The activity concludes by reading all/some of the answers, while displaying their answers on the moderator's screen.*

- 14) In your opinion, what is **the most significant change** this project has brought to you personally and/or your club?

### Sustainability of the intervention

- 15) What is your opinion on the different **training materials/resources/procedures** elaborated within the project? Are these documents easy to use by people in your organisation in order to replicate the safeguarding efforts?
- 16) Do you have any concrete **plans for extending the implementation of the child safeguarding policy in your club?** How do you see this process?
- 17) Do you feel you need **additional support** in order to scale up the safeguarding approach within your club? What kind of support?
- 18) Let's say another club (that was not involved so far in the KCCS project) wants to start implementing a safeguarding policy. What would be some of the **lessons learnt/tips** that you would give to that club's staff in order to successfully improve their safeguarding practices?

### 3. FGD with staff participating in the Replication Trainings

#### Introduction

This Focus Group is organised in the framework of the KCSS project. The purpose of our discussion is **to document** some of the important/helpful steps and **practices** taken by the institutions and organisations involved in order to enhance child safeguarding and to create safe and child-friendly spaces. Our findings will be included in a report/**Best Practices Guidance**. As a final result, the report should enable other similar organisations **to replicate** safeguarding practices for themselves.

Our discussion will be strictly **confidential**. In our report, we will not reveal your name or your position in the organisation. As per the standard procedures of qualitative research, if you agree, the discussion will be audio recorded, in order to allow for a more accurate presentation of your responses.

#### FGD general rules:

- My role today is just to moderate the discussion. This means that I will bring into discussion some prepared topics and I will ask some follow-up questions, but I would like you all to engage in a lively conversation with your colleagues.
- There are no right or wrong answers. You are encouraged to express your ideas and opinions, even if you disagree with one of the other participants. The only requirement is that you do so in a considerate and polite manner.
- The discussion should last approximately 90 minutes.

#### Round of introductions

I would like to start our discussion by getting to know each other. I would like each of you to state 4 things:

- your **name**
- the **club** you are representing
- your **role** at the club
- and **how/from whom did you hear for the first time about the KCSS project?**

#### Previous practices on safeguarding/Relevance of the intervention

- 1) What was your first reaction when you heard about the Keeping Children Safe in Sports project?
- 2) **Were you already familiar with the concept of safeguarding** in sports? Were you or your organization engaged in any previous initiatives that addressed this issue?
- 3) Was enhancing safeguarding in sports a priority for your organisation? What were some limitations that you previously faced?

#### Assessment of the project intervention

##### 4) Mentimeter activity: (open answers on post-its)

I saw that in the project, a **shield** was used as a metaphor in order to quickly introduce the idea of safeguarding in sports to children, parents, and other stakeholders. And I know that the concept of safeguarding covers multiple dimensions, but I wanted to ask **what does the shield mean to you?** I will now ask you to write on the post-its (on menti.com or in chat) 3 elements that you consider to be the most important for the safeguarding shield.

*The activity concludes by reading all/some of the answers, while displaying their answers on the moderator's screen.*

5) One of the main scopes of the project "Keeping children safe in sports" was to support organizations like yours that work with children to raise awareness on the importance of child safeguarding and develop policies and practices to promote and secure child safeguarding. Do you think that TdH applied the appropriate methodology to achieve this objective?

6) What do you think about the **training approach used by the Tdh in this project?** (ToTs with coaches/staff, replication training for the other coaches in the clubs?)

7) What are some of the **strong points/best practices** of this approach?

8) What about **some of the weak points?** What should Tdh do differently in order to increase the impact of its intervention?

9) What about **peer-to-peer training for children** in sports clubs? Do you think this is a good approach in order to introduce the concept of safeguarding to children of different ages?

#### Impact of the training/behavioural changes

10) Thinking about your personal experience, after attending the training organised in the KCSS project, have you observed any **changes in your daily work?** What were some of the first learnings on safeguarding that you were able to put into practice?

11) Have you noticed any **changes in the ways you interact with the children in your club?** (in terms of expectations, communication, listening to their concerns, etc.). What about changes in the interaction with the parents?

#### Impact at the club level/organisational change

12) **How did the leadership of your club/your other colleagues initially react** to the idea of investing time and resources for implementing child safeguarding practices?

*Probes: What were some reasons for concern or for them being reluctant at first? How did you manage to overcome these obstacles?*









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