

Funded by
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Safeguarding Youth Sport (SYS)

www.safeguardingyouthsport.eu

EU Sport Forum 2016

The Hague

SYS: Project Lead

- International Centre Ethics in Sport (ICES)
- Ghent - Belgium
- An expert centre, recognised by the Flemish ministry of Sport, to inform, sensitize and support sport organisations in all their activities concerning ethical issues in sport
- More info: <http://www.ethicsandsport.com/english>

SYS: Project Partners

- 5 universities: BE, DE, DK, LT, RO
- 2 National Olympic Committees: NL, HR
- 2 umbrella organisations: ENGSO Youth, Panathlon International
- 1 expert centre: Child Protection in Sport Unit (UK)



Deutsche
Sporthochschule Köln
German Sport University Cologne



LITHUANIAN
SPORTS
UNIVERSITY



Vrije
Universiteit
Brussel



SYS: Project Consortium





SYS: The Aims

- **What**
 - Build and share knowledge and expertise on **integrity** threats in **elite youth** sport, stimulating individual **empowerment** of athletes and promoting a conducive **ethical climate**, by means of:
- **How**
 - Collecting theoretical insights;
 - Gathering existing relevant practices;
 - Analyzing those insights and practices in terms of ‘translatability’ within a European context.

SYS: Project Work

- 4 Internal Meetings + 1 Final Conference
- 2 Literature Reviews on
 - Integrity threats in elite sport
 - Individual athlete empowerment + ethical climate in elite sport
- 12 Good Practices
- Status-quo Reports from 8 EU countries
- Focus Groups with elite athletes/coaches
- Youth Involvement



SYS: Setting the Challenge

- **Three areas** of integrity threats
- 1) Threats related to organised crime:
 - match-fixing, illegal trafficking, (gene)-doping ...
- 2) Violence against elite young athletes:
 - Psychological and physical violence, sexual harassment and abuse, neglect, bullying ...
- 3) Related health and well-being issues
 - Body image, eating disorders, self harm ...
- **SYS focused on areas 2 and 3**

SYS: Setting the Challenge

- Increased risk for athletes as they progress up the sporting talent ladder
- Elite sport risk factors, among others:
 - Win-at-all-cost
 - Status confusion
 - Coach-athlete relationship
 - Self-image



“ Child athletes are
children first:
Let them play! ”

Gella Vandecaveye, Olympic silver and bronze medallist

SYS: Setting the Challenge

Examples of **violence** against elite young athletes:

- Overtraining as deliberate training practice 'to toughening them up'
- Requiring young athletes to play when injured
- Use of physical exercise as a punishment
- Humiliation or bullying based on gender, body, shape, performance ...
- Undue mental pressure from too high expectations
- Requiring sex as a prerequisite for team selection or privileges



SYS: Setting the Challenge

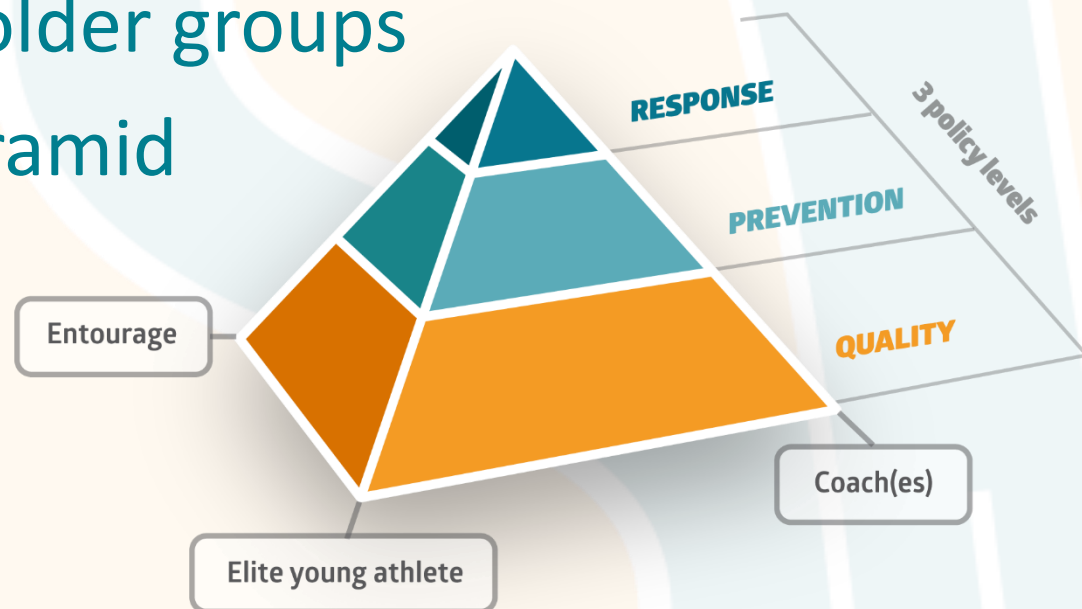
Examples of **related health and well-being issues**:

- Nutrition and weight loss regimes leading to eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimiea
- Mental health issues linked to coping with pressure from media intrusion
- Self-harm, linked to preceived poor performances (exacerbated by coach/peers)

SYS: Tackling the Challenge

- Holistic and solution-focused approach
- Three levels of policy
- Three key stakeholder groups

→ Safeguarding Pyramid



SYS: The Recommendations

- 5 target groups:
 - policy-makers
 - coaches
 - **athletes! → empowerment**
 - event and competition organisers
 - developers/providers of educational programmes



SYS: The Recommendations

- Key message = change of culture needed
- Embed required values in organisational culture and policy (codes of ethics AND conduct)
- Need for 'ethics education'
- No-blame and positive message

Safeguarding does serve winning!

SYS: The Legacy

- Tangible
 - **Print + digital booklet** for elite sport stakeholders
 - Final **conference** (13 May 2015)
 - **Website** for stakeholders with info during *and* after the project
- Intangible
 - Development of a **European network** relationships with a focus on improving training and competition conditions in youth sport
 - Increased **awareness** and **knowledge** of the importance of empowerment and ethical climate in elite sport contexts
 - Clear mapping of **future opportunities**



More info

- Project website:
www.safeguardingyouthsport.eu
- Our centre:
<http://www.ethicsandsport.com/english>

