



**HUMAN RIGHTS EMPOWERED
THROUGH RIGHTS OF ATHLETES**

**ROADMAP FOR THE PROTECTION,
RESPECT AND PROMOTION
OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF
ATHLETES IN SPORT IN EUROPE**



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Human Rights Empowered Through Rights of Athletes (H.E.R.O)
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H.E.R.O project's main objective is to respect, protect and promote athletes' human rights in sport by supporting sport bodies in developing appropriate and effective strategies and mechanisms to prevent athletes' human rights violations on one hand and respond to cases of abuse.

CONSORTIUM

Partner organizations from North Macedonia, France, The Netherlands, and Spain, with extensive experience in safeguarding and advocating for human rights in sports, will collaborate on the project for a duration of 24 months. Amongst us, we have two globally recognized research institutions in the field of human rights.



Coordinator - France



Partner - Spain



Partner - Netherlands



Centre for International & European Law

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Partner - North Macedonia



PREAMBLE

The H.E.R.O. (Human Rights Empowered Through Athletes Rights) project, funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ program, tackles the critical issues of respecting, protecting and promoting human rights of athletes in sports governance. Led by a consortium of experts¹, this document provides a comprehensive roadmap for sport governing bodies² (federations, leagues, professional clubs, etc.) to ensure that the humans rights of athletes are respected.

This roadmap focuses on the main rights risks of athletes. These includes fundamental labor rights (to prevent economic exploitation and ensure fair working conditions), the right to non-discrimination (regardless of gender, origin, sexual orientation, disability, etc.), the right to health (physical and mental, including the psychological well-being of top-level athletes), human dignity and the right to freedom of expression.), the right to health (physical and mental, including the psychological well-being of top-level athletes), human dignity and physical integrity, the right to privacy and data protection, freedom of expression (including athletes' freedom of political participation), right to an effective remedy in the event of abuse, and the specific rights of minor athletes. The aim is to help sports organizations to better prevent, and remedy human rights risks and violations faced by sports people.

It is based on international and European human rights standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the main UN treaties³, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization and the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as on the principles of good sports governance incorporating human rights.

¹ IRIS (France), The Sport Innovation Hub (Spain), EUNIK (Netherlands), Asser Institute (Netherlands), the Olympic Committee of North Macedonia, Sport Social Solutions (North Macedonia)

² Sport governing bodies (SGB'S) are organizations that have the authority to oversee, regulate, and promote a specific sport at the local, national, or international level. They are responsible for setting the rules of the sport, organizing competitions, ensuring fair play, and developing the sport through training, funding, and outreach programs. These bodies may include: International federations, National governing bodies, Regional or local associations. Their roles typically include: Establishing rules and regulations, Organizing tournaments and events, Certifying officials and coaches, Ensuring safety and anti-doping compliance, Promoting development and participation.

³ ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CRC, CRPD, ICERD



Note: This document is designed as a guiding framework for sport organizations and primarily national and international sport governing bodies (SGB's) active in Europe and does not aim to cover other regional human rights systems (e.g. African or Inter-American).

It is important to emphasize that the specificity of sport as a privately regulated domain is taken into consideration. SGB's often operate according to their own internal rules (*lex sportiva*), which can create obstacles to external legal accountability. It is therefore crucial to ensure that sport governance respects the norms and principles enshrined in international human rights law. For their part, states have an obligation to protect human rights and to ensure that sports organizations under their jurisdiction respect athletes' rights. This also means that sport bodies need to understand their human rights responsibilities and act accordingly. It is in this spirit that the present roadmap has been drawn up, the fruit of collaborative work between legal experts, human rights experts, sport specialists and grassroots organizations.

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CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: A PARADIGM SHIFT

In recent years, courts and quasi-judicial bodies across Europe and beyond have issued a growing number of rulings and recommendations that clarify the human rights responsibility of sports organizations. These legal developments mark a turning point: while sports governance was once considered a self-contained domain, it is now increasingly subject to external scrutiny and judicial oversight—particularly when the rights and dignity of athletes are at stake. This shift is reflected in rulings from the European Court of Human Rights (*Ali Riza v. Turkey, 2020*), the Swiss Federal Tribunal (*Claudia Pechstein, 2022*), and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (*Semenya, 2019*). These decisions confirm that SGB's must align their rules and procedures with international human rights standards - especially when they affect athletes' careers, access to justice or protection from discrimination.

Case law has emphasized that sport is not exempt from international legal standards, especially when it involves minors, vulnerable individuals, or questions of discrimination, health, and freedom of expression. Several rulings have recognized that sport's governing bodies (SGB's), although privately constituted, perform public interest functions and must therefore ensure that their rules, procedures, and practices align with universally recognized human rights norms.

This growing body of jurisprudence reinforces the idea that respecting athletes' rights is not only a matter of ethics or best practice—it is also a legal necessity. For SGB's, understanding this legal landscape is key to mitigating institutional risk, anticipating external demands (from regulators, courts, or funders), and proactively reinforcing their legitimacy. In jurisdictions such as France⁴, Germany⁵, and Norway⁶, public authorities have begun to condition funding or recognition on compliance with

⁴ *Loi sur le devoir de vigilance* (2017), or Duty of Vigilance Law, requiring large entities—and public grant recipients—to implement human rights due diligence measures. Applied indirectly to sports bodies receiving state funding.

⁵ *Lieferkettengesetz* (2023), or Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, obliges companies to implement and report on human rights due diligence measures.

⁶ Transparency Act, (2022) mandates companies of a certain size to assess and disclose human rights risks throughout their operations and supply chains.



human rights due diligence (HRDD) standards⁷—either through sector-specific regulations or broader national laws. These developments underscore the operational importance of such frameworks for sports bodies receiving public or institutional support.

By translating these frameworks into operational guidance, this roadmap aims to support SGB's in addressing both the risks and the opportunities presented by a shifting legal environment. It serves as both a reminder and a resource: a reminder that compliance is not optional, and a resource to help organizations meet these expectations in a concrete, scalable, and sustainable way.

⁷ "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework" :
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf



PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ROADMAP

The aim of this roadmap is to provide SGB's with a starting point as well as key steps towards integrating respect for athletes' human rights into their daily operations and culture through the introduction of a human rights' due diligence process. More specifically, it aims to help sport bodies with:

- **Elaborating concrete strategies:** help SGB's design action plans and policies that integrate human rights into all aspects of their activities (governance, sports regulations, personnel management, competitions, etc.). Integration must include a clear commitment to respect human rights throughout the activities of SGB's aiming at both preventing adverse human rights impacts and remedying any violations.
- **Understanding their responsibilities:** support SGB's by recognizing their human rights responsibilities towards athletes and establishing clear accountability mechanisms at all levels, from the executive committee to field operations. Everyone involved - leaders, management, coaches, medical staff, officials - needs to know what their role is in implementing human rights commitments. We recommend setting up independent monitoring and control systems, free from political or organizational influence, to guarantee impartial monitoring.
- **Strengthening skills and training:** help SGB's with promoting the development of knowledge and capacity in the field of human rights of athletes. This involves organizing regular training courses for staff and coaches, raising athletes' awareness of their rights (and of the redress mechanisms available to them), and disseminating accessible educational material on the risks and good practices relating to rights in sport.



- **Engaging stakeholders:** support SGB's with establishing a regular transparent dialogue with all stakeholders to identify risks of adverse human rights impacts and devise potential actions to tackle them - athletes and their representatives, coaches, support staff, sponsors, supporters, civil society organizations active in the field, public authorities. This commitment makes it easier to identify problems, co-construct solutions, and ensure greater support for the measures taken. Particular attention should be paid to voices that are often marginalized or barely heard, such as those of athletes who have experienced abuse, whistle-blowers, or independent experts in ethics and dispute resolution.
- **Monitoring and continuous improvement:** from the outset, plan mechanisms for periodic assessment of progress made and obstacles encountered. One of the objectives is to set up a continuous improvement process in which the policies and measures adopted are regularly reviewed, updated and reinforced in the light of feedback, changes in the sporting context and the results of external assessments of the measures introduced.

Building on these axes, the roadmap attempts to provide actionable steps to help SGB's build a culture where athletes' human rights are not an afterthought, but a fundamental principle guiding every decision. The proposed framework is closely aligned with the Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) process defined by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The adoption of this process by sports organizations aims to identify the risks of violations upstream, prevent abuses, and put in place effective responses when breaches are observed.



MAKING A CHANGE TOWARDS BETTER PROTECTION OF ATHLETES' HUMAN RIGHTS

In the following, this roadmap presents four key tasks that every sports organization is encouraged to follow to integrate the respect for athletes' human rights into relevant policies and practices.

1

Formal commitment and strategy

SGB's must begin by anchoring a formal commitment to respecting the human rights of athletes. This commitment must be reflected in the statutes, regulations and codes of conduct: for example, by introducing in the fundamental statutes of the federation or club a commitment to respecting human rights and zero tolerance of abuse. Secondly, an athlete rights risk assessment should be carried out to identify, in consultation with athletes and their representatives, the relevant human rights risks affecting them (potential discrimination, training overload threatening health, violence, invasion of privacy, etc.). This risk assessment stage will enable SGB's to develop a strategy aimed at tackling the most salient risks.

2

Allocation of responsibilities

Each SGB must designate high-level officials responsible for overseeing respect for human rights (for example, a human rights referent on the board of directors). Similarly, at operational level, contact points must be identified at coach, medical department or ethics commissions to implement measures in the field and report incidents. Internal control systems must be strengthened, with procedures for reporting abuse, confidential whistle-blowing mechanisms, impartial investigations and follow-up of recommendations. It is strongly recommended to back up this internal governance with an independent control body or external third party, to periodically audit practices and objectively verify compliance with commitments. For example, a federation could set up an external committee of experts (lawyers, athletes' representatives, members of



specialized NGOs) to assess progress and make recommendations. The independence of these monitoring mechanisms is crucial to building trust and avoiding conflicts of interest. Finally, the responsibilities and mechanisms defined must be regularly reviewed: feedback from the field, the evolution of identified risks and the results of audits will make it possible to adjust everyone's role and improve the effectiveness of human rights governance.

3

Training and capacity-building

The promotion of human rights must be accompanied by ongoing training and awareness-raising efforts. Mandatory training courses can be set up, covering for example the prevention of harassment, the fight against discrimination, the protection of personal data, or the prevention of injury and overtraining. Athletes themselves should benefit from workshops or information sessions on their rights and possible remedies in the event of a problem (helpline, athletes' commission, sports ombudsman, etc.). Emphasis should be placed on the intersectional and integrated nature of discrimination issues: instead of treating racism, sexism or homophobia separately, training courses should show how these factors intersect and accumulate for certain athletes, leading to increased vulnerabilities. For example, an athlete from an ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ background may face specific obstacles that can only be understood by adopting this intersectional approach. Accessible teaching aids (brochures, online modules, posters) can complete the package to widely disseminate a culture of respect for rights.

4

Stakeholder engagement and consultation

An effective strategy cannot be designed and implemented without consulting those affected by it. Sports organizations are encouraged to establish regular consultation forums with athletes and their representatives, coaches, officials, sponsors, supporters' associations, advocacy organizations, public authorities and other stakeholders. Consultations with athletes can take the form of including athletes' representatives in the executive bodies of the organizations, periodic meetings, anonymous surveys, round tables or annual athletes' rights conferences. The aim is twofold: on the one hand, to gather information from the athletes to identify salient human rights risks or deficiencies in



the HRDD process of a specific organization (for example, a malfunction in the complaints procedure, or a new form of abuse linked to the use of technology); on the other, to involve athletes and their representatives in the choice of actions to be taken to tackle the risks identified. It is vital to include in these exchanges the voices of the most vulnerable or marginalized athletes - those who have suffered abuse or discrimination, those from underprivileged backgrounds or playing in less publicized disciplines - as they are often the ones who can bear witness to systemic failings and suggest concrete avenues for improvement. In addition, collaboration with expert human rights organizations (NGOs, international institutions, children's advocates, etc.) is encouraged to align with international best practice and benefit from an outside perspective on action plans. It may be advisable to formalize this participation via multi-party bodies integrated into the governance structure of SGB's (ethics commissions including members of civil society, working groups associating athlete representatives and independent experts, etc.), so that dialogue does not depend solely on ad hoc goodwill, but is institutionalized.

By engaging with these four tasks diligently and consistently, SGB's can develop a more proactive approach to preventing athletes' human rights violations and mitigating risks. Effective redress mechanisms must also be in place when abuses do occur victims' access to fair and prompt remedies (impartial disciplinary investigations, appropriate sanctions, psychological support, recourse to competent national or international bodies) is an integral part of a fair and responsible sporting environment.



BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

To guarantee effective implementation of these tasks and maximum impact, it is also essential to set it within a broader institutional and legal framework. This requires several mechanisms and legal frameworks to be considered:

- **Independent supervision:** As mentioned, sport has long operated on the principle of autonomy (private regulation/governance exercised by associations or corporations), which has sometimes led to a lack of external control. It is recommended that independent supervisory bodies, i.e. free from the direct influence of sports organizations, be set up to monitor respect for human rights. For example, a sports ombudsman or an athletes' rights observatory could be set up at national or European level. These bodies would be tasked with receiving complaints, monitoring the application of procedures (via regular compliance audits), and reporting publicly on progress and shortcomings. Their composition should include a plurality of actors (athletes' representatives, legal experts, members of civil society, medical experts, etc.) to ensure a credible, multi-stakeholder approach.
- **Transnational appeal mechanisms:** SGB's should not bear sole responsibility for safeguarding athletes' rights, particularly as many states continue to delegate on this issue. Under international law, states have a duty to ensure that all entities under their jurisdiction or effective control respect human rights. This evolving legal and institutional landscape increasingly shapes how SGB's must operate. In several countries, public authorities are adopting laws that impose minimum standards on sports organizations—such as fair disciplinary procedures, mandatory training on abuse prevention, and formal commitments to international human rights norms. These developments may also affect access to public funding, as ministries introduce human rights due diligence (HRDD) requirements or link subsidies to measurable



compliance indicators. In this context, SGB's are encouraged to proactively align with emerging legal expectations. Taking such steps reinforces legal coherence, enhances institutional credibility, and strengthens preparedness for cross-border accountability mechanisms.

- **Aligning sports governance with human rights law:** A fundamental challenge is to overcome the legal immunities or exceptions sometimes enjoyed by the sporting world. The principle of sporting autonomy has historically been invoked to escape certain legal constraints, resulting in a form of legal pluralism where sports governance is perceived as immune from national or international law. The roadmap calls for a thorough examination of these legal grey areas and encourages reforms that ensure that sporting rules and decisions comply with internationally recognized human rights. For example, if an internal sports regulation excessively restricts athletes' freedom of expression, it should be reviewed to bring it into line with international standards. Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, which restricts political demonstrations by athletes during the Games, thus deserves to be analyzed from a human rights perspective, to strike a balance between the neutrality of sport and respect for athletes' right to peacefully express their convictions. Similarly, any contractual or regulatory clause limiting an athlete's right to recourse (e.g. a ban on ordinary legal proceedings) must be assessed to ensure that it does not unduly hinder access to justice. The aim is to create an environment where the law fully protects athletes, with no areas of extraterritoriality or lawlessness, and where sporting bodies cooperate with public authorities rather than evade them.
- **Structural reforms:** Finally, the roadmap stresses the need for clear structural reforms within sport governance. Beyond one-off measures, this means institutionalizing the consideration of human rights. This can include the creation of permanent commissions dedicated to athletes' rights within sports organizations, the establishment of independent dispute resolution mechanism easily available to for athletes at a low cost, and the systematic integration of athlete representatives, civil society and independent experts into key decision-making bodies. Recent examples of



good practice can inspire these reforms: some national federations (in Germany, Norway...) have set up sports ombudsmen or strengthened ethics committees, while at international level, players such as FIFA or the IOC are beginning to integrate human rights requirements into their statutes and create specific positions to deal with these issues. These initiatives point the way forward, but a greater effort is needed to ensure that these structures are not merely symbolic but have real power to control and drive change.

Considering these frameworks and mechanisms ensures that the roadmap does not remain a list of good intentions internal to sports organizations, but that it is supported by a solid basis: an ecosystem where independent controls, legal obligations and collaboration with public authorities consolidate and lend credibility to the commitments made by the world of sport.



RECOGNIZING CHALLENGES AND FINDING SOLUTIONS

There are many practical and systemic difficulties which could hamper the implementation of this roadmap. Identifying these challenges is essential if we are to respond appropriately. Here are the main issues identified, along with possible solutions.

Reconciling the rights of athletes and the interests of organizations

SGB's pursue objectives linked primarily to performance, economic success, and media reputation. These objectives can conflict with the protection of athletes' rights. For example, a club might be tempted to play an injured athlete in a match, to maximize its chances of victory and revenue. Similarly, publicly exposing cases of internal abuse could be perceived as damaging to the organization's image, prompting a cover-up.

Accordingly we need to promote a change of culture within SGB's, where the success of an organization is no longer measured solely in terms of medals or financial revenue, but also in terms of its ability to ensure the well-being and rights of its members. Leaders need to be made aware that protecting athletes is a long-term investment: an athlete who is respected and supported will be more likely to perform in the long term. Advocacy initiatives and exemplary leadership can help change attitudes. For example, presidents of federations or well-known coaches taking a public stand in favor of athletes' rights sends out a strong signal that these issues are inseparable from sporting success. Integrating well-being objectives into the evaluation criteria of clubs and federations (through labels, awards, sporting ethics rankings) can also concretely encourage this rebalancing between sporting demands and respect for individuals.



European diversity and resistance to change

European sport is highly heterogeneous, there are major differences in legal, cultural and economic contexts between European countries, as well as between sporting disciplines themselves. Moreover, many SGB's have well-established traditional practices and may lack awareness of human rights issues. Some may perceive these new requirements as unjustified external interference or constraints.

Consequently, the roadmap needs to be applied with flexibility and dialogue, considering each SGB's level of development and awareness. This means adapting the tools and language used to suit the target audience. Specific awareness-raising and training campaigns need to be carried out in areas or sectors where athletes' rights are little known or recognized, in order to gradually create awareness. Finally, involving local players from the outset in the development of solutions (as mentioned in the consultation section) will help to overcome some of the resistance by co-constructing the changes.

Resource constraints, especially for small organizations

The effective implementation of human rights protection measures can require financial and human resources that not all organizations possess. Large international federations or professional leagues generally have legal departments and substantial budgets, enabling them to dedicate staff and finance specific programs (training, hotlines, external audits, etc.). Conversely, many local clubs, small national federations and amateur structures operate with volunteers and limited budgets.

Thus, it is crucial to take into account the size and means of each entity, in order to suggest proportionate and scalable solutions. The roadmap encourages the introduction of targeted support for SGB's with the least resources: specific subsidies (for example, a national fund to help small clubs train on the issue of sexual violence), partnerships (twinning between a professional club and an amateur club to share best practices), and scalable "turnkey" training programs. In addition,



certain measures can be pooled: a national federation can set up a centralized abuse-reporting platform accessible to all its affiliated clubs. Similarly, standard tools (guides, e-learning modules, model codes of conduct) can be developed at national or European level and made available to smaller structures. It should also be emphasized that respect for human rights does not have to be costly: it is above all a question of priority and will. Many actions (e.g. listening to athletes, not discriminating, respecting privacy) can be carried out without additional financial resources, simply by adjusting internal rules and behaviors. However, public bodies and major sporting bodies must assume their share of solidarity by providing technical and financial support to small structures during this transition.

Scope and specificity of protection offered

This roadmap embraces a wide range of issues - working conditions, anti-discrimination, health, privacy, freedom of expression, child protection, and so on. - because the risks faced by athletes are manifold. However, there is a risk of generalization.: lin trying to cover all subjects, we may fail to address in detail certain issues specific to a particular sport, level of practice or group of athletes.

To ensure the inclusiveness and relevance of the roadmap, it is recommended to develop complementary guides targeted to identified needs. For example, develop a detailed action plan for the prevention of abuse and the support of underage athletes, another for the promotion of gender equality in a given discipline, or a specific protocol for the management of athletes' biometric data. These additional guidelines will make it possible to go into greater detail where necessary, without weighing down the main document. Above all, these developments must adopt an intersectional and integrated approach: not compartmentalizing issues but rather analyzing how they intersect. Discriminations must not be treated independently of one another - an athlete may simultaneously suffer from racism and sexism or be a victim of both economic insecurity and cultural marginalization. The experts consulted stress that an intersectional methodology is essential to understanding stratified vulnerabilities and responding to them appropriately. This is the case for athletes' mental health or economic exploitation (very low salaries for some athletes, misappropriation of bonuses, etc.), which must be recognized as human



rights issues on a par with physical health. Putting these issues back at the center of the debate allows us to allocate the necessary resources and send out the message that no aspect of athlete well-being is considered optional.

Protection against reprisals

An athlete who speaks out against abuse (harassment, cheating, unfair treatment or other violation) often exposes herself to reprisals. This can take the form of being dropped from the team, non-renewed selection, demotion, harassment, or even direct threats to her professional career (for example, no team wants to recruit her after she speaks out). Fear of reprisals is one of the main reasons why victims and witnesses remain silent in sport.

Therefore, it is imperative to put in place solid guarantees of non-reprisal to encourage free speech. These includes the establishment of confidential reporting channels (anonymous online platform, external referent who can collect complaints securely), the possibility of reporting to an independent body and statutory protection for whistle-blowers (for example, incorporating into disciplinary regulations that no adverse action can be taken against an athlete for having made a complaint in good faith). In the event of a breach of this protection, exemplary sanctions must be imposed on the perpetrator (coach, manager, or other). Internal campaigns can be run to explain to all members of an SGB that whistleblowing is legitimate and protected. Finally, promoting a culture of transparency and fairness within the team - where the courage of those who stand up for ethics is valued - will help to reduce this phenomenon in the long term. Ultimately, athletes should be able to speak out about wrongdoing without fear, confident in the protection system in place.



Protection of underage athletes

Children and teenagers in sport are both essential and particularly vulnerable. Their specific rights (as defined in particular in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child) must be scrupulously respected. However, the recent history of sport has revealed numerous cases of abuse of minors - sexual abuse by coaches, psychological abuse in training centers, overtraining that endangers health or schooling, exploitation of young talent by crooked agents, etc. Young athletes may not be in a position to take full advantage of their rights. Young athletes may not be in a position to recognize or verbalize such abuse, and their dependence on the authority of the coach or club makes them less inclined to denounce it.

Thus, the roadmap calls for a proactive, multidisciplinary approach to protecting under-age athletes. On the one hand, SGB's should train supervisory staff (youth coaches, trainers, school sports staff) in children's rights and in detecting signs of abuse. Secondly, SGB's should involve external child protection experts in the development of junior sports programs - for example, the regulations of sports academy should be developed in consultation with child protection associations to ensure they incorporate appropriate safeguards. Training and schooling must also be balanced: child athletes have the right to education, rest and leisure, and the quest for performance must never sacrifice these essential elements of their development. Unannounced control mechanisms can be introduced (external audits of training centers, surprise visits by inspectors or former athletes charged with assessing the compliance with the regulations) to check that standards are being respected on the ground and not just on paper. Finally, freeing up young people to speak out is crucial: federations should encourage critical feedback and facilitate complaints by guaranteeing young people that they will be listened to and protected. The stories of athletes who have lived through such abuse and escaped can serve as an electroshock and a source of learning. For example, Gloria Viseras, a former Spanish Olympic gymnast, revealed that it took her more than 30 years to be able to talk about the sexual abuse she suffered in her sporting youth - a too long silence, which she is now working to break by campaigning for safe sporting environments. Testimonies such as these underline the importance of strong preventive measures (to prevent such tragedies from happening in the first place) and accessible



remedies (to ensure that, if they do occur, they are quickly detected and dealt with, and that victims obtain justice and support).

Technological challenges and privacy protection

The rise of digital technologies and data in sport brings its share of opportunities (better performance monitoring, innovative training tools, increased interaction with the public) but also new risks for athletes' rights. These include the massive collection of athletes' personal and sensitive data (medical, biometric, GPS location, etc.), which can lead to breaches of privacy if inadequately protected or misused. We are also witnessing the emergence of surveillance or algorithmic analysis tools, which we must ensure do not violate the athlete's privacy or freedom. On social networks, athletes are also exposed to online harassment campaigns or the non-consensual dissemination of private information.

Accordingly, in order to remain effective in this changing landscape, the roadmap will need to be scalable and informed by technology experts. It is advisable to include data protection and cybersecurity specialists in policy development (for example, establish an ethical charter for the use of performance data, with clear rules on athlete's consent, data retention periods, etc.). Regular updates of protocols will be required to keep pace with the state of the art in privacy protection. In terms of social networks and digital reputation, organizations can train athletes in best practices (privacy settings, how to react to cyberbullying) and set up a monitoring system to react quickly in the event of online attacks (for example, filing a complaint on behalf of an athlete targeted by online threats, requesting the removal of defamatory content, etc.). Finally, while taking advantage of the benefits of digital technology, the athlete must be able to retain a degree of control: he or she must be able to refuse certain intrusions, such as the publication of personal data without his or her consent). In short, the digital transformation of sport must be accompanied by robust guarantees to ensure that fundamental rights - and in particular the right to privacy - are not sacrificed on the altar of innovation.



MEASURING AND REFLECTING ON PROGRESS

Ongoing reflection and evaluation are essential to ensure that implementation of the roadmap is bearing fruit. The following monitoring and accountability tools are proposed.

Performance indicators

From the outset, concrete actions and indicators should be defined to measure progress in the area of athletes' rights. For example, the number of reports of abuse handled and resolved, the percentage of athletes who have undergone rights training, gender parity in governing bodies, the average time taken to handle a disciplinary complaint, etc. These indicators should be monitored over time (every year, or every sporting season) to detect any trends.

Audits and external assessments

As mentioned above, the organization should periodically commission an independent audit of its practices and systems. Such an audit could be carried out by a specialized firm or a public body, to objectively examine whether the roadmap commitments are being met in practice. The audit report should make recommendations and be made public to ensure transparency. In addition to the general audit, thematic assessments can be carried out (e.g. a specific audit on data management, or on the safety of minors in training centers). These independent reviews bring credibility and can bring to light problems that may have gone unnoticed internally.



Annual reporting and communication

Ideally, sports organizations should adopt a practice of reporting annually on their human rights impacts, along the lines of what is required under a HRDD process. Such a report, aimed at licensees, partners and the general public, would present the human rights risks identified, the actions undertaken to prevent them from materializing, the results obtained (based on the indicators mentioned), any adverse impact that occurred and how they were mitigated, as well as the objectives for the following year. Making these accounts public exerts positive pressure to maintain efforts and enables athletes and civil society to monitor progress.

Participatory review mechanism

Monitoring should not just be only quantitative and reserved to expert committees. It is necessary to involve the athletes and their representatives in such evaluations. For example, SGB's could organize annual (or bi-annual) athletes' conference dedicated to human rights, where representatives of athletes from different levels and disciplines come to debate the progress of the roadmap, share their experiences, and formulate proposals for improvement. Similarly, including athletes or outside personalities on steering bodies (boards of directors, commissions) guarantees a fresh perspective. This inclusive supervision can be formalized by the creation of an Athletes' Rights Advisory Committee, which meets regularly to assess the impact of measures and provide advice to decision-makers.

Accountability and sanctions

Finally, the principle of accountability means that in the event of serious or repeated breaches, consequences must be foreseen. If, for example, an external audit reveals that, despite commitments, no training has been carried out, and complaints remain unanswered, there must be consequences. For example, such consequences can range from partial supervision of the body (by a sports or public supervisory



authority) to the suspension of certain public funding, via the dismissal of defaulting managers. Each SGB should incorporate rules sanctioning executives for failing to comply with its human rights commitment (e.g., removal of an executive who has covered up abuses, or loss of a "rights-respecting sport" certification), allow athletes to access an independent tribunal to seek remedy in case of noncompliance and defer to the intervention of higher authorities as a last resort (ministry, national Olympic committee, international federation) if it fails to reform itself.

Rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms are essential to trigger a dynamic continuous improvement. They provide critical feedback to the HRDD process introduced by an SGB and enable it to update its strategy and actions. In this regard, it is particularly important that athletes' feedback be facilitated, be it through whistleblowing, participation in monitoring processes, or access to remedy.



__ CALL FOR ACTION __

This H.E.R.O. project roadmap is a practical guide for European SGB's wishing to place the human rights of athletes at the heart of their action. It combines an ambitious vision - that of a European sport that is exemplary in terms of respect for human dignity - with a concrete approach through tasks, mechanisms and operational solutions. Preserving the benefits of sport while eliminating abuse and injustice is a major challenge, but not a utopian one. The many scandals that have rocked the sporting world in recent years (sexual abuse, corruption, systemic discrimination, etc.) have painfully demonstrated the need for action. Now we need to move from commitments to tangible results.

Implementing this roadmap will require courage on the part of sports decision-makers, cooperation between all stakeholders, and perseverance over the long term. Cultural and structural change won't happen overnight, but every step counts. By following this plan, even a modest sports organization can initiate significant improvements that will benefit its members. And when these efforts are multiplied across an entire continent, they help to positively transform the face of sport. A sport where excellence is measured not just in records, but also in respect for the rights and well-being of athletes, is a sport that wins for all.

Ultimately, protecting, respecting and promoting athletes' human rights is not an external constraint to be endured; it is an intrinsic responsibility of the sporting movement and a condition for its sustainable development. Athletes are the soul of sport: by taking care of them, listening to their voices and defending their rights, we can build a more ethical, safe and inclusive future for sport. This roadmap invites everyone involved in sport in Europe to take part in this progress, so that never again will the quest for victory be at the expense of the human being, and so that respect for the individual becomes a value inseparable from every competition, every training session and every achievement.



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