

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

European Olympic Committees

As approved by the EOC Executive Committee on 9th February 2025





CONTENTS

1. SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT	3
2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES	5
2.1. Legal Framework and Compliance	5
2.2. Guiding Principles	6
3. ROLE OF THE EOC	6
4. SAFEGUARDING MEASURES FOR EOC ACTIVITIES	8
4.1 General Safeguarding Measures	8
4.2 Protection and Welfare	10
4.3 Prevention and Risk Management	10
4.3 Reporting and Response Mechanisms	11
4.6 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability	12
5. RESOURCE ALLOCATION	13
TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS	14



1. SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

The European Olympic Committees (EOC) recognises its role as a continental organisation in encouraging the welfare, safety, and well-being of all individuals involved in sports across Europe, with a particular emphasis on children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Accordingly, it acknowledges that neglecting safeguarding responsibilities and failing to meet related legal and ethical requirements not only leads to legal repercussions but also erodes trust and damages the organisation's reputation, resulting in lasting negative impacts.

The EOC Safeguarding Policy outlines the EOC's jurisdiction and duties in encouraging safeguarding principles across European sports; accordingly, it aligns with various international safeguarding standards, among which the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Safeguards for Children in Sport, and the IOC Framework on Safeguarding Athletes from Harassment and Abuse. The EOC holds jurisdiction over investigating cases involving its Bureau members, Executive Committee members, staff, and affiliated personnel. It is also committed to implementing appropriate measures for addressing safeguarding concerns, whether arising during EOC-sanctioned events or related to historic cases where the Organising Committee may no longer exist. This responsibility encompasses establishing and enforcing comprehensive safeguarding policies, monitoring stakeholder compliance with these standards, and ensuring effective collaboration among all involved stakeholders.

Aligned with the aforementioned, the EOC is committed to address safeguarding in all its operations and to support its members the European National Olympic Committees (NOCs) by providing guidance, oversight, and resources to identify shortages in the partner NOCs and relevant national stakeholders for case handling. Furthermore, the EOC aims to clarify the respective responsibilities of NOCs and other stakeholders (*e.g., law enforcement, independent bodies*) across Europe and to promote the implementation of safeguarding standards continent-wide, in alignment with the EOC Strategic Agenda 2030 and international best practices.



Therefore, EOC Safeguarding Policy should be understood as a testament to the organisation's understanding of safeguarding as a shared responsibility and commitment to encourage a culture where the welfare of personnel, athletes and entourage is paramount, and where any forms of harm and abuse are addressed. Accordingly, it is acknowledged that it sets the tone to minimise the risk of harm and re-traumatisation of individuals, whilst avoiding unrealistic expectations about being the panacea solution to safeguarding concerns and violations in sport in Europe.

The EOC Safeguarding Policy is enriched by complementary documents and resources, among which, the EOC Safeguarding Policy for European NOCs and the EOC Safeguarding Policy for Sport Events (*European Games - EG, European Youth Olympic Festivals - EYOF, and Games of the Small States of Europe - GSSE*). Besides, the Erasmus+ project "Strengthening Response Mechanisms for Safeguarding in European Sports - SAFE HARBOUR" is expected to complement the EOC's Safeguarding Policies and activities.



2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1. Legal Framework and Compliance

International Standards Alignment. The EOC promotes alignment with international safeguarding standards in sport, including those set by the IOC (*Olympic Charter, Olympic Agenda 2020+5...*), and the European Union (*EU Work Plan for Sport, EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, EU Gender Equality Strategy...*), as well as others such as the European Convention on Human Rights. It is also aligned with the EOC Code of Ethics, ensuring safeguarding measures support the broader principles of respect, dignity and integrity.

Compliance with National and International Laws. The EOC ensures that all its activities align with Italian legislation and relevant international legal frameworks, including child protection laws, human rights conventions, and the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). Cases that should be appealed to CAS under the jurisdiction of the EOC may include allegations of serious misconduct, such as abuse, harassment, or other severe violations involving athletes, coaches, officials, or other stakeholders within the EOC framework. This also applies to disputes over sanctions imposed by the EOC or its affiliated bodies following investigations, as well as appeals from parties dissatisfied with decisions made by the EOC or European NOCs. Furthermore, CAS may be involved in cases requiring urgency and confidentiality; thus, offering expedited hearings and safeguarding the sensitivity of the matter.

2.2. Guiding Principles

The EOC's Safeguarding Policy is based on the following principles:

Zero Tolerance. The EOC maintains a zero-tolerance policy for any form of abuse, harassment, or neglect, and expects the same from European NOCs.

Duty of Care. The EOC recognises its responsibility to uphold the welfare and dignity of all participants, particularly vulnerable groups such as children and persons with disabilities.

Empowerment. The EOC encourages a culture where individuals feel empowered to report safeguarding concerns, certain of confidentiality and prompt action.

Collective Responsibility. Safeguarding is a collective responsibility across the Olympic Movement in Europe, requiring coordination between the EOC, NOCs, sports organisations, and other stakeholders.

3.ROLE OF THE EOC

As a continental sports body, the EOC has all-time distinct jurisdiction over investigating cases involving EOC Bureau members, Executive Committee members, staff, and affiliated personnel, particularly when concerns are raised regarding EOC activities and events. Thus, the EOC has a distinct role in encouraging an inclusive and safe environment, which includes:

Setting Standards. Provide overarching guidance and develop safeguarding frameworks that align with international best practices. Accordingly, EOC Safeguarding policy will include a clear definition of harassment and abuse consistent with applicable laws, which will apply to all persons affiliated with the EOC, including athletes, coaches, officials, and staff. The EOC Safeguarding Officer, in collaboration with relevant EOC stakeholders, will oversee both the broad application of policy and the regular review of its definitions to ensure compliance and relevance.

Involvement of Athletes. Athletes will be actively involved in the development and review of safeguarding policies and procedures, ensuring that their perspectives are considered. Accordingly, the EOC Athletes' Commission will play a key role in ensuring that athletes' perspectives are considered by having a representative appointed in the EOC Safeguarding Cross-Commission Working Group.

Establishing Partnerships. Create partnerships with relevant national and international organisations to encourage a unanimous, coordinated and effective approach to safeguarding in sport. Accordingly, the EOC is expected to cooperate with complementary stakeholders such as IOC, Federations, child protection agencies, safeguarding experts, legal advisors, medical practitioners, and mental health professionals.

Case Management and Investigations. Management of concerns or reported incidents through a detailed, fair, impartial and structured process following established safeguarding protocols. This involves overseeing the investigation of safeguarding issues, ensuring due process, and providing support to those involved, including ensuring appropriate outcomes and follow-up actions. In this context, it is recommended that a Disciplinary Commission at the EOC level be established to implement unbiased disciplinary procedures for addressing reported incidents of abuse, harassment, or other forms of misconduct.

Supporting NOCs and their compliance with safeguarding standards. Offer of signpost resources, tailored advice, educational training, capacity-building, and knowledge-sharing opportunities for European NOCs to implement effective safeguarding policies at the national level (*e.g. educational and capacity-building programmes*). Accordingly, to encourage European NOCs to comply with safeguarding standards and best practices through evaluations and reporting mechanisms (*e.g. coordinated reporting mechanisms, and incident response team*).



4. SAFEGUARDING MEASURES FOR EOC ACTIVITIES

The EOC is expected to implement and encourage the following safeguarding measures during its activities while completing the ad-hoc complementary safeguarding policies for the EOC sports events and for European NOCs.

4.1 General Safeguarding Measures

EOC Safeguarding Officer (SO). The EOC should appoint an SO to facilitate effective coordination and oversight of all safeguarding activities; accordingly, the SO should be seen as the primary point of contact for safeguarding matters within the EOC and among European NOCs.

The SO should have educational background in relevant fields (*e.g. psychology, law, and/or sports management*), professional experience in safeguarding in sport (*e.g. at least 5 years*) and up-to-date safeguarding certifications with skills in trauma-informed practices, investigative procedures, and stakeholders' communication. The SO will be line managed against set key performance indicators, and objectives by the EOC leadership. Accordingly, it should be responsible for the following tasks:

- drafting, implementing, and reviewing safeguarding policies.
- developing and delivering education and training and fostering knowledge-sharing among ENOCs.
- providing tailored guidance to ENOCs for the implementation of safeguarding protocols.
- managing cases and reporting safeguarding incidents aligned with confidentiality and trauma-informed approaches.
- liaise with the Safeguarding Cross-Commission Working Group regarding the evaluations of safeguarding practices and areas for improvement.
- present regular updates and findings to the Safeguarding Cross-Commission Working Group, Disciplinary Commission, Ethics Commission, or EOC Executive Committee, when necessary, who will have the authority to escalate recommendations or intervention.



EOC Safeguarding Cross-Commission Working Group (CCWG). It is recommended to establish an EOC CCWG, encompassing representatives from the relevant EOC Commissions (*e.g. Athletes, Ethics, EU and International Relations, GEDI, and event-specific ones*). Accordingly, the CCWG will be responsible for:

- guiding the strategic vision and implementation of the EOC safeguarding strategy.
- conducting regular audits to monitor and ensure compliance with safeguarding protocols, and their effectiveness.
- addressing areas for improvement in ongoing safeguarding practices and procedures.
- devising educational needs and knowledge-sharing initiatives among ENOCs.
- defining and prioritising new projects in the realm of safeguarding.
- sharing recommendations with the EOC Leadership (*including the EOC ExCom*) regarding the required resources for the implementation of the activities related to safeguarding.
- submitting recommendations to the EOC SO and EOC leadership (*including the EOC ExCom*) based on findings.

However, it will not be involved in conducting investigations, as investigative responsibilities fall solely under the purview of the EOC SO and EOC Disciplinary Commission.

EOC Disciplinary Commission. It is recommended to establish, an Independent Disciplinary Board to handle escalated safeguarding cases and ensure accountability. This Commission should be composed of 5-7 representatives - including a representative of the EOC Ethics Commission - who independently evaluate complex or high-profile safeguarding concerns referred by the SO or CCWG. Accordingly, its responsibilities include:

- review investigations conducted by the SO for procedural integrity
- ensure disciplinary measures align with safeguarding policies and the EOC Code of Ethics
- refer criminal cases to public authorities or the CAS, when necessary.
- share periodic feedback on lessons learnt and good practices with the EOC SO and CCWG, to improve existing policies based on findings.

Should not be feasible to establish an EOC Disciplinary Commission, the aforementioned responsibilities should be covered by the EOC Ethics Commission.



4.2 Protection and Welfare

Vulnerable Groups. The EOC will ensure that its safeguarding policies provide enhanced protections for vulnerable groups, including children, young people, and athletes with disabilities, during the EOC continental activities and events (*EG, EYOF, GSSE*).

EOC Code of Conduct. The EOC will maintain and enforce the EOC Code of Ethics which already sets clear behavioural expectations for all participants in EOC events, including athletes, coaches, staff, volunteers, and spectators. Accordingly, the Code of Conduct should be understood as a complementary document that outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and includes disciplinary procedures and measures for any violations, with oversight by the CCWG.

4.3 Prevention and Risk Management

Safer Recruitment and Vetting. The EOC will use its best endeavour to enforce appropriate vetting procedures for all individuals directly involved in EOC activities. This may include criminal record checks and reference verification to prevent the involvement of known offenders and to ensure that individuals working with children and vulnerable adults are suitably qualified and safe especially where roles will involve direct contact with children or vulnerable persons, in line with applicable legislation.

Training and Education on Safeguarding. All EOC staff, volunteers, and relevant stakeholders will receive mandatory safeguarding training to recognise signs of abuse and understand the protocols for reporting concerns. The EOC SO will lead these activities under the guidance of the CCWG.

Awareness Campaigns. The EOC will promote safeguarding awareness through campaigns, educational materials, and workshops during its events and within its member NOCs. Accordingly, the EOC Seminar and General Assemblies will be used as platforms to provide updates, promote learning opportunities, and encourage knowledge-sharing. The awareness campaign will be aligned with the other relevant EOC documentation and recommendations.

Risk Assessment Procedures. The EOC SO and CCWG will regularly conduct risk assessments for EOC events and activities, ensuring all potential safeguarding risks are identified and mitigated. This includes evaluating the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of participants.



4.3 Reporting and Response Mechanisms

Response Mechanisms. The EOC SO will take immediate action upon receiving any safeguarding reports, to ensure concerns are promptly and appropriately addressed.

Accessible Reporting and Protection Mechanisms. Reporting mechanisms will be available and clearly signposted. Accordingly, adequate platforms for reporting and protection mechanisms will be implemented. In this regard, ad-hoc complementary safeguarding policies will apply during the EOC events, as well as to protect whistleblowers, ensuring that individuals can report concerns without fear of adverse consequences (*e.g. EOC Safeguarding Policy for Sport Events and documents related to whistle-blowers*).

Confidentiality. The EOC Confidentiality Policy will set out how information is disclosed aligned with the principles of confidentiality and transparency. Accordingly, this policy will ensure a shared understanding of the importance of confidentiality and related consequences for breaching confidentiality. Therefore, this should align with Article 15 of the EOC Code of Ethics to ensure confidentiality and integrity throughout the reporting procedures.

Investigative Process. The EOC SO will investigate alleged incidents of harassment and abuse using trauma-informed approaches. Where necessary, concerns will be referred to the appropriate authorities, including the EOC Disciplinary Board, the CCWG and the Executive Committee.

Involvement of Public Authorities and CAS. In compliance with applicable laws, the EOC will work with relevant public authorities - including CAS - on potential criminal cases; thus, ensuring legal compliance.

Victim Support. In cases of abuse or safeguarding violations, the EOC SO will liaise with the relevant stakeholders to identify adequate support for victims, including access to counselling and medical care, under the supervision of the CCWG.

Emotional and Psychological Support. The EOC SO will ensure that parties to an investigation have their well-being prioritised; accordingly, they will be given access to mental health and psychological support services, wherever possible, under the supervision of the CCWG.



4.6 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

Regular Audits and Data Collection. The CCWG will conduct regular safeguarding audits of EOC safeguarding activities to ensure compliance with safeguarding protocols. The EOC SO will collect and analyse safeguarding data from EOC activities to identify trends and address potential risks to be duly reported to CCWG and the EOC Executive Committee when necessary. The policy will be reviewed at least every two years by following a major case to ensure any lessons learnt are incorporated appropriately.

EOC Oversight. The EOC will hold itself and its staff accountable for ensuring that all safeguarding measures are followed. Failure to adhere to safeguarding responsibilities may result in disciplinary action.



5. RESOURCE ALLOCATION.

The EOC allocates financial resources to ensure the effective implementation and sustainability of safeguarding policies and initiatives. Accordingly, regular audits will ensure that resources are used effectively and transparently, with adjustments foreseen based on feedback and evolving safeguarding requirements.

Thus, the EOC commits to allocating funds for the appointment of a dedicated SO with the necessary qualifications and experience, who is expected to be supported by ad-hoc independent experts, members of the CCWG, and additional staff, when necessary. Additionally, it will allocate adequate financial resources for educational programmes, capacity building and awareness campaigns, independent safeguarding experts and legal advisors, as well as for victim support and tools to streamline the collection, storage, and analysis of safeguarding data.



TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

The EOC uses the 2024 IOC Consensus Statement on Interpersonal Violence and Safeguarding in Sport definitions.

INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE. The intentional use of physical force or power, whether threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or have a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. Interpersonal violence involves the intentional use of physical force or power against other persons by an individual or a small group of individuals. It can occur online, be perpetrated by different actors, and take different forms.

Related terminology. *Violence, harm, abuse, harassment, maltreatment, unethical behaviours, mobbing, non-accidental violence, human rights violation, abusive leader behaviours, gender-based violence, gender-based harassment, violence against women, homophobia, microaggressions, transgressive behaviours.*

Example. An Executive Committee member physically or verbally threatens another member during a meeting, leading to psychological harm and humiliation. This could also occur online, such as in group chats where threatening messages are sent.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE and HARASSMENT. A type of interpersonal violence in sport, which refers to any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including, but not limited to home and work. The different forms of sexual violence can occur both online and in person.

Related terminology. *Sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, online misogyny, gender harassment.*

Example. A member of an EOC Commission persistently makes unwanted sexual advances towards another member of an EOC Commission, including suggestive comments and inappropriate touching at EOC events.



PHYSICAL VIOLENCE. A type of interpersonal violence in sport, which refers to an act attempting to cause, or result in pain and/or physical injury. Physical violence includes among others beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming, killing, use of objects or weapons.

Related terminology. *Physical abuse, physical aggression.*

Example. An EOC Executive Committee member throws a notepad at another member in frustration at an EOC meeting or event, causing physical injury.

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE (or ABUSE). A type of interpersonal violence in sport which involves the regular and deliberate use of a range of words and non-physical actions used to manipulate, hurt, weaken or frighten a person mentally and emotionally, and/or distort, confuse or influence a person's thoughts and actions within their everyday lives, changing their sense of self and harming their well-being. It could occur online or in person.

Related terminology. *Psychological abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse and virtual maltreatment.*

Example. An EOC senior member of staff continuously humiliates a junior member of staff by yelling derogatory comments about his/her performance in front of colleagues, eroding self-confidence and mental health.

NEGLECT. A type of interpersonal violence in sport which refers to the failure to provide (a vulnerable person) with adequate standards of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health or development of the (vulnerable person) is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk. In other words, neglect occurs when someone is left uncared for over a long time.

Example. The EOC fails to provide an attendee of the EOC General Assembly with adequate medical care after an injury during the event, leading to physical harm, and potentially prolonged recovery time.



BULLYING. Additional forms of aggression related to interpersonal violence in sports that can be defined as intentional and aggressive behaviour occurring repeatedly against a victim where there is a real or perceived power imbalance, and where the victim feels vulnerable and powerless to defend oneself. The unwanted behaviour is hurtful. Bullying can be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, destruction of items...), verbal (e.g. teasing, insulting, threatening) or relational (e.g. gossiping, ghosting), and it can occur in-person or online (e.g. cyberbullying).

Related terminology. *Peer aggression, unethical behaviour, mobbing.*

Example. Members of the Executive Committee repeatedly exclude other members from the EOC activities, spread malicious rumours about them, and insult them during meetings, leading to emotional distress.

GROOMING. Additional forms of aggression related to interpersonal violence in sports include grooming which refers to the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques in different personal and societal settings to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour with the ultimate scope of facilitating exploitation and/or prohibiting exposure. Grooming can be conducted online or in person.

Example. A member of an EOC Commission builds a close and inappropriate relationship with a member of the EOC staff through personal gifts, private communication, and excessive attention, and ultimately exploiting the member of the EOC staff sexually.

HAZING. Additional forms of aggression related to interpersonal violence in sport; particularly, hazing refers to any humiliating, degrading, abusive or dangerous behaviour expected from someone with less power by a more powerful individual, and which does not contribute to the positive development of oneself, but is required to be accepted as a part of the “team” despite one’s willingness to participate. It includes psychological, physical or sexual forms of interpersonal violence.

Example. New EOC staff members are forced to perform humiliating tasks to be “accepted” into the team.



CHILD ABUSE or MALTREATMENT. A term referring to interpersonal violence towards children in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Related terminology. *Abuse, child abuse, maltreatment.*

Example. A young athlete is repeatedly shouted at, demeaned, and excluded by their coach during an EYOF competition, resulting in emotional harm and diminished self-esteem.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE. A term referring to a specific type of interpersonal violence towards children in sports in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Child sexual abuse is defined as the involvement of a child in a sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are - by virtue of their age or stage of development - in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim.

Example without contact. This may include (non-exhaustive list) making sexual comments, sexist jokes or remarks to a child (athlete), forcing a child (athlete) to masturbate, or watching their coach masturbate, exhibitionism towards a child (athlete), filming erotic scenes with a child (athlete) or broadcasting sexual images of a child (athlete), watching a child (athlete) undress, masturbate, touching themselves or touching someone else or asking them to do so (voyeurism). For example, an official makes inappropriate sexual jokes or comments about a young athlete during a competition held within the framework of the EYOF.

Example with contact. This may include (non-exhaustive list) having an intimate or sexual relationship with an athlete under the legal age of consent, kissing a child athlete or trying to touch a child athlete's body inappropriately or sexually, including the chest, breast or crotch (e.g. non-instruction related touching). For example, a coach inappropriately touches a young athlete during a routine medical check under the guise of "instruction" or "training correction."



CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE. A term referring to a specific type of interpersonal violence towards children in sports in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Physical abuse consists of any non-accidental form of injury or serious physical harm inflicted on a child or young person by any person. Physical abuse does not mean reasonable discipline, although it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline.

Physical abuse may include (non-exhaustive list) shaking, slapping, pushing, catching, grabbing, throwing, beating, choking, strangling, poisoning, burning, stubbing, punching, kicking, knocking down or hitting a child (athlete) with a hard object (e.g. including sports equipment).

Related terminology. *Corporal punishment.*

Example. A coach slaps repeatedly a child athlete during an EYOF to "discipline" them for a mistake, leaving bruises and instilling fear.