**Contribution of Slovenia**

**to the call for input to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls to the UN General Assembly on violence against women and girls in sport**

**Abbreviations**

**OCS Olympic Committee of Slovenia**

**IOC International Olympic Committee**

1. **What are the different forms of violence that women and girls in sports may experience (e.g. physical, psychological, economic, online violence, coercive control, as well as extreme form of discrimination that amounts to violence)?**

In the last six years, the Ethics Commission of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia (OCS) has dealt with three cases in which physical violence, sexual harassment, bullying, and neglect were ascertained.

Slovenia's Athlete Rights Ombudsman underlines particularly the prevalence of verbal violence (vulgar and derogatory communication). Furthermore, women and girls in sport may experience neglect, inappropriate remarks, comments, and other forms of violence in media coverage, reports, publication of photographs and videos. They may experience similar forms of violence also online and on social media as well as from fans and supporters.

Sport Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia noted that women and girls in sport may experience physical and psychological violence and combination of both in form of sexual abuse and harassment.

In the beginning of 2023, the Ethics Commission of the OCS and OCS conducted a survey at national level on the different types of abuse that female athletes can experience in sport before coming of age. Of 180 female athletes who responded to the survey, 46 reported experience of physical abuse, 38 reported emotional abuse, 20 sexual abuse (contact or no-contact) and 50 reported experiences of neglect. The latter was also noted by the Athlete Rights Ombudsman.

1. **What human rights of women and girls in sports are violated as a result of the exposure of women and girls in sports to violence or the risk of violence?**

The exposure of women and girls in sports to violence violates a range of human rights as defined by international covenants and conventions. As far as national legislation is concerned, we would specify primarily the following rights: equality before the law, prohibition of torture, protection of personal liberty, right to personal dignity and safety, protection of the rights to privacy and personality rights, protection of personal data, rights of the child, freedom of work, rights to social security, rights to health care, expression of national affiliation, right to use one's language and script.

1. **Which actors are responsible for committing acts of violence against women and girls and increasing the risks of violence against women and girls in sports?**

An act of violence can be committed by anyone who participates in the process of sports activities or is in any way directly or indirectly involved in the training process or in the performance at competitions (parents, coaches, support staff, sports officials, responsible persons in sports associations, other athletes, doctors, persons that take care of the athlete's promotion, journalists and media, fans, competition organisers, referees, etc.).

The results from the survey conducted by the OCS reveal that in approximately 50 % of cases the perpetrators are coaches or members of support stuff and another 20 % are co-athletes. In the case of coaches and co-athletes, around 85 % of the perpetrators were men. It should be pointed out, however, that to a large extent, the turning of a blind eye and the failure to react to indications of violence in sport also make sports organisations and their leading officials complicit.

1. **What are the principal causes of the violence that women and girls experience in sports, including the structural causes of such violence?**

Women and girls (and male athletes also) in sport are exposed to mostly psychological violence during training and competitions. Psychological violence can come from coaches’ and/or parents’ high expectations. Cause of other forms of violence such as sexual abuse and harassment can be associated with blurred boundaries due to extensive periods of time spent together.

Assuming that deviancy is excluded, there is often a lack of awareness of violence in sport and a neglect of the risk factors that create the basis for violence. In addition to awareness-raising for female athletes, this also applies to awareness-raising and education of coaches, support staff and sports officials. To a large extent, the conditions for the occurrence of violence can be attributed to the poor leadership by sports officials/organisations and their failure to react immediately and efficiently.

1. **Which groups of women and girls in sports are more exposed to violence and on what grounds?**

Younger women and girls in sports can be more exposed to violence. When parents and guardians are not heavily invested in activities that their children participate in, or they are not supportive of their child participating in specific sport, this may result in young girls being in extremely subordinate position. Considering the time component (i.e. the time the female athlete spends with the coach, support staff and sports officials), female athletes oriented to elite sport and elite female athletes are much more exposed to different forms of violence than female athletes involved in leisure sport programmes.

1. **What are the responsibilities of State and non-State actors in preventing acts of violence against women and girls in sport, including in adopting measures to investigate it, and to hold those responsible for it accountable, and to provide assistance and protection to survivors of violence?**

In accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) the responsibilities of State and non-State actors in preventing acts of violence against women and girls are prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies. It requires developing laws, policies and support services to end violence against women.

The Slovenian Penal Code does not contain any specific articles dealing with offences related to violence in sport. If violence in sport is categorized in the investigation as one of the offences dealt with in Chapter 15 "Criminal Offences Against Life and Body", Chapter 19 "Crimes Against Sexual Integrity" and Chapter 20 "Crimes Against Public Health", the offence shall be investigated and prosecuted.

If there are indications of violence and abuse, the police is responsible for investigating the situation. If State actors come across indications of a criminal act, it is their official duty to inform the police. It is the duty of the police, in accordance with their powers and pursuant to the legislation, to investigate every report of such an incident and to take all measures to protect the victim and to provide evidence against the perpetrator of the violence. It is also important to take an appropriate approach in the event of media disclosure, to encourage the victims who have not yet reported the violence to do so.

Women and girls – victims of violence in sport are entitled, according to the Law on Social Services, to professional support and professional advice (provided by the social services centers). This includes recognition of the beneficiary's plight, information, and guidance.

While ensuring criminal protection, it is necessary to provide legal basis for cases that do not meet the elements of a criminal offence or a sufficient level for prosecution. Non-state actors can have an important role by organising effective protection on different levels, providing disciplinary proceedings, sanctions, and assistance to victims. In the civil field of sport, it is primarily the duty of the umbrella sports organisations and national sports federations in the Republic of Slovenia (Articles 40, 41 and 42 of the Sports Act), as holders of public status, to implement human rights and other legal bases within the regulatory role of the autonomy of sport, to create conditions for a safe sporting environment and the protection of individuals, in this case women, within the framework of the activities of the sports organisations.

Slovenia's Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport is currently preparing a 10-year strategy National Programme for Sport which will also focus on actively guaranteeing human rights and safeguarding public goods and the public interest in the field of sport by providing the legal basis and financial conditions to raise awareness, investigate and sanction forms of violence where individual acts or practices do not meet the elements of a criminal offence or do not meet the standard of proof of 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

1. **What measures do State and non-State actors have in place to ensure that incidents of violence against women and girls in sports can be effectively reported, and that they are thoroughly investigated and sanctioned?**

The most effective measure is to report it to the law enforcement authorities, i.e. the police. The police have several channels through which violence can be reported. The most common are the 113 intervention number, directly to the police station, the police anonymous reporting line or through electronic channels (anonymous e-report, electronic crime report, social networks....). The police also respond to disclosures presented in the media.

According to the article 148 of Criminal Procedure Act “If grounds exist for the suspicion that a criminal offence prosecutable *ex officio* has been committed, the police shall take the necessary steps to trace the perpetrator of the criminal offence, to prevent the perpetrator or participant in the criminal offence going into hiding or fleeing, to detect and secure the traces of the criminal offence and objects which may be of value as evidence, and to collect all information that might be useful for the successful conduct of criminal proceedings.”. The police take a proactive approach by contacting the victim and providing all support, and by gathering all necessary information to inform the competent state prosecutor. The police also inform the victim of his/her rights in accordance with the law.

Slovenia does not have the legal basis to prosecute and sanction violence in sport that falls below the criminal standard. Assistance, protection, and awareness-raising on violence is partly provided by the Athlete Rights Ombudsman. Incidents may be reported to the branch sports federation and appropriate disciplinary measures can be proposed. Furthermore, several non-state actors are ensuring platforms allowing the effective reports of violence (e.g. the Ethics Commission of the OCS). There is also a whistleblower platform “Žvižgavka” which provides possibility for anonymous or non-anonymous reports of violations in sport.

1. **To what extent are women and girls in sport, as well as the associations that represent them being effectively involved and consulted in the design and implementation of policies that are meant to end severe discrimination and violence against women and girls in sport at the national, regional, and international level?**

Female athletes are actively participating in the work of Athletes Commission (Chair is a former female Olympian) and the Commission for Gender Equality of the OCS. They also participate in the educational system, which also tackles the problem of violence in sport. Their representatives collaborate in the work of Executive Board of the National Olympic Committee. Women are strongly represented also in other associations and commissions in Slovenian sport (e.g., in the Ethical Commission and in the Association of Sports Psychologists women are in majority). Within the Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport, a working group is being set up on the topic of ensuring a safe sporting environment, which also includes the prevention of violence in sport.

1. **Please provide examples of good practice that have been adopted by State and non-State actors with regards to ending violence against women and girls in sports?**

State actors:

* the Athlete Rights Ombudsman is available to female athletes on a 24/7 phone number; conducts proceedings confidentially and offers professional support, free legal advice, guidance, assistance, etc; and is also certified as an IOC Safeguarding Officer;
* Sport Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia.

Non state actors:

* the whistleblower platform “Žvižgavka”;
* implementation of the rules of Ethics Code in sports organisations;
* work with coaches and trainers during different seminars organised by the OCS focused on the protection of athletes’ rights.

1. **What are the lessons learned from policies and legislations that have been adopted and implemented with regards to women and girls in sports and their implications on the safety, security, dignity, equality and participation of women and girls in sports?**

It is important to promote public debate on violence in sport, to raise awareness among female athletes about their rights and to offer them adequate support and protection. In addition to prevention, we aim to set up a system to protect whistleblowers, to provide legal basis for the effective conduct of procedures to investigate and sanction potential offenders. According to OCS, the awareness of rights of female athletes is progressing, there are also more cases being reported (also for violations that happened in the past) which means that the stigmatization is slowly disappearing.

1. **Please provide recommendations as to how violence against women and girls in sport can be prevented and what needs to be done to better respond to the needs of survivors of such violence?**

The individual sport branches latter should clearly define in their statutes what is and is not allowed (including the prohibition of violence). They should also adopt internal codes of ethics. In addition, employees of sports organisations should receive training on topics relating to violence and its consequences, including how to recognize it (violence can also take place outside sports activities), and on how to react to it (establish protocols in the event of perceived violence). They should take disciplinary action against the perpetrator of violence (including alleged violence) and prevent him/her from continuing to work, in accordance with their internal rules. Individual sport branches should have peer counsellors available, with whom victims and female athletes in general can speak. It is important to work with female athletes and inform them of the codes of ethics in place, peer counsellors available in the event of a report, their rights and, in the case of younger female athletes, of the so-called "unlawful touching". In the event of a report of violence, it is essential to cooperate with the law enforcement authorities (the police) in order to protect the victim and provide evidence, as well as to increase trust in sports institutions. In the case of minors, it is important that parents/guardians also be involved in the process. It makes sense to introduce training on the prevention and recognition of violent acts and awareness-raising on the importance of immediate reporting of violent acts. This can be done through workshops, posters and other similar content.

The violence against women and girls in sport should be discussed and addressed through:

* media campaigns to raise awareness of violence in sport,
* mandatory and voluntary education on violence in sport (for athletes, coaches, supporting staff, parents, etc.),
* sustained multidisciplinary and interagency training of professionals working directly and indirectly for and with women and girls in sport to develop knowledge, skills and cooperation among agencies (i.e. sport and health) on how to recognize and respond to violence,
* adoption of standards/rules to protect against violence in sport,
* professionals, sports officials and others working in sports should sign a declaration stating that they accept the rules,
* provision of free psychological support for trauma and post-traumatic stress management,
* further cooperation with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders which deal with violence,
* development of a safeguarding policy for all sports organisations by the national Olympic Committees.

The latter is being developed by the OCS. Also, a commission for integration in sport is being set up at state level (Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sport) in cooperation with the police, judiciary and non-governmental associations.