

## **PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE IN GRASSROOT SPORT IN SCHOOL AND SPORTS CLUBS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of the study is to clarify the various national contexts and characteristics in the manifestations of violence, racism and discrimination in grassroots sport in schools and sport clubs. It aims to identify good practices and innovative approaches that are applied at regional, national and international levels that will help the PE teachers and coaches to deal effectively with violence, racism, lack of tolerance. The research was conducted during June - September 2015 through a focus-group discussion and interview with key experts in physical education and sport. The interviews outline that the poverty and other kinds of differences like the ethnicity, race and culture are risky factors provoking discrimination in sport should be approbated. In summary, the needs of the teachers and the coaches refer to possibilities and conditions to have institutional mechanisms, which can provide them professional support, and cooperative social measures for dealing with discrimination.*

**KEY WORDS:** Discrimination, Violence, School, Grassroots sports, PE teachers, Coaches

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In order to build a society providing equal opportunities for all its members no matter what differences they have, we have to make some efforts for the sake of popularization of the equality. It refers to all areas in the social life. Despite the fact that the last years we are living in a multicultural Europe where everyone has a guaranteed right to freedom of expression and to self-determination, however, discrimination still exists and is forcefully present in sports. Therefore, we need to implement specific law measures for prevention of discrimination and to develop policies aiming social inclusion.

The policies and activities in the field of sport related to the principle of gender equality and prevention of discrimination date back to the mid-sixties of the past century. The initiatives of the Council of Europe in the field of sports policy adopt the common motto "sport for all" which today is a widely known formula based on the sports policy of many countries, including outside Europe. Over the years, the EU has taken several measures related to discrimination; many of its rules, policies and programmes have an impact on sport or are interested in it. Anti-discrimination as a fundamental principle of the Olympic Movement, defined in the Olympic Charter. In a similar way, the Council of Europe's European Sports Charter, adopted in 1992, states in Article 4.1 that "no discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, shall be permitted in the access to sports facilities or to sports activities." The Sports Charter aims to provide an opportunity for everyone to play sport in a secure and healthy environment. It provides the basic directions for the establishment and

maintenance of new democratic sports systems. In 2007, the European Commission acknowledged the essential role of sport for social inclusion in its White Paper on Sport.

There are many strict rules and sanctions for dealing with such incidents in the area of professional sport referring to athletes and spectators, but it is no less important to pay attention to the same problems in the earlier stage of grassroots sport in schools and sport clubs. The sport is a resource for the sake of development, fun, enjoyment and communication of the children and have a significant influence on them and their life. Many researches had focused on how different forms of sexism and discrimination in the sport interact to reduce equity and justice among children and negatively impact positive developmental outcomes (Brown, C. S. & E. Stone 2016), (Mongeon, K. 2013).

The analysis of state of the manifestations of violence, racism and discrimination in grassroots sport in school and in sport club in Bulgaria shows that there are higher values related to the manifestations of psychological violence in comparison with the manifestations of physical violence. Among the characteristics that are evaluated with a higher degree are the manifestations of racial, ethnic discrimination and discrimination in physical appearance. All of the evaluated characteristics are higher for the country and are lowering when the survey's participants refer to the place where they live, the neighborhood, the school or the sports club. There are higher values of discrimination against people with different sexual and gender orientation (LGTS) within the country. The negative attitudes towards people with special educational needs (SEN) and the discrimination associated with motor skills are rising in school environment and in sports club. The age group of 15-18 years old is the group where violence and discrimination are observed most often. Higher values of violence and discrimination are observed among the students and the spectators. Teachers and organizers of sports events exhibit most often psychological violence. (Yordanova, N, P. Kozhuharova, et al. 2016).

Actually, a society can change the attitudes of its youth applying new approaches that allow it to tackle with the violence, racism and intolerance and to appreciate them as unacceptable processes. If the acts of violence and racism are frustrated or restricted in the early age, it will be less likely to have them later in life. Therefore, the mainstream schools and the amateur sport clubs are the appropriate setting and environment where preventive measures can be used because the initiative and the basic forms of sport activities are organised there.

The analysis conducted on the status of sport in the Republic of Bulgaria, within the National Programme for the Development of Physical Education and Sport 2013-2016, clearly outlines the problematic aspects of sport and physical activity of the Bulgarian citizens.

According to Eurobarometer (2015) the level of physical activity of Bulgarians takes the last place among the EU member states, with only 9 % of the people that regularly practice sports and 78% that never participate in the sport activities for everybody. There is unfavorable trend for immobilization of the young generation – 51.0% are highly immobile. The level of physical development and physical abilities of children and students is substantially lowered compared to their peers from previous generations. The effectiveness of the various forms of sport activity is insufficient. According to the data from the report of National Statistical Institut (2015), only 7% of students have very good physical capabilities, and over 40% are weak and inadequate.

There is a lack of advertising campaigns for sports during the free time and awareness of the people about the benefits and the opportunities for practicing of physical exercises and sport during their free time. The sport activity outside schools that is carried out by sport clubs, united

children complexes, centers for work with children and other municipal structures is lowered to minimum. The opportunities for students to practice sport activities in these organizations are reduced.

In the recent years, the sports infrastructure is in constant decrease. The maintenance and renovation of sports facilities is overlooked, in parallel with the reduction of the social importance of sport. There is an insufficient number of specialized sport playgrounds in the neighborhood, the cycling paths and other sports facilities that provide the opportunity for individual or organized participation sports. There is no legislation to regulate their conformity with international and national standards.

A significant number of the existing sports facilities are not accessible for people with disabilities. The lack of adapted sports facilities and insufficient number of specialists in adapted physical activity /APA/substantially hinder the development of sports for people with disabilities. The students with disabilities that are integrated in the mainstream schools are deprived of the opportunity to engage in PE. Joint sports activities for children and students with disability and without disability has serious educational impact (Belousov L. 2016).

The significant part of the mission of the Ministry of Education and Science is prevention in the fight against violence and discrimination during sports competitions and compliance with the “rules of fair play”.

In the recent years, in the fight against these negative trends, the Ministry of Education and Science directs its efforts to work on a broad front with the adolescent athletes. The high achievements of the competitors, coaches, judges and activists should be disseminated as good practices to motivate the activity of the citizens to occupy themselves through sports as a prerequisite for the development of sport for all and sport for high achievements.

The researchers found, that the participants in sport competitions and non-participants differ while significant differences were found in levels of interracial contact and views on race relations. In a review of these findings, they make some general conclusions about the social influence of sport in the lives of the youth (Hartmann, D., Sullivan, J., Nelson, T 2012).

Sport scholars and public commentators have long held both positive and critical opinions about the influence of athletic involvement on participants and their perceptions of the social world.

Sport is a resource for development, fun, enjoyment and also communication for most of the children, hence the professional support and the teachers' attitudes and relations have a significant influence on them and their lives. The situation is similar in sport clubs where the trainers provide expertly coached activities for the young athletes. In this way, they present important behaviour models that children could easily imitate.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**The purpose of the survey is** to systematize the information related to policies, strategies, good practices and problematic aspects at local level with respect to the manifestations of violence and discrimination in grassroots sport in school and sports clubs.

This study presents the results of interviews with key experts in physical education and sports. The interviews were conducted in 2015. They include 9 experts in the area of sport. One of them is an official in the Ministry of Youth and Sport, four of them are experts in the area of physical education and sport in the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education in Northeast Bulgaria. These inspectorates are located in the following towns – Shumen, Silistra, Targovishte, Razgrad. Three of the Bulgarian experts, who are included in the interviews, work in the Municipality of Varna in the Directorate of Youth Activities and Sport. One of the interviewees has the same position in Municipality of Shumen.

**Indicators:** the interview is half-structured. The questions are related to the following criteria:

1. Policies, strategies, plans and programmes for prevention of violence and discrimination in grassroots sport in school and in sports clubs – current status;
2. State of manifestations of violence, racism and discrimination in grassroots sport in school and in sports clubs:
  - *level and manifestation of violence and discrimination in grassroots sport in schools and in sports clubs;*
  - *risk and protective conditions and factors.*
3. Good practices related to policies, programs, activities, events, forums, initiatives, etc.
  - *good practices and partnerships, problematic aspects.*
4. Professional qualification of pedagogical specialists and experts for prevention of violence, racism and discrimination in sport:
  - *guidelines for qualification of specialists in the field of prevention of violence and discrimination in sport in school and sports clubs.*
5. Sustainability and dissemination of information:
  - *an inter-institutional mechanism for interacting with the prevention and management of incidents, databases.*

Questions and statements are evaluated through selection or through free response.

**Analysis and Summary:** the data from the interview will be analyzed through quality analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Policies, strategies programmes for prevention of violence and discrimination in grassroots sport in school and in sports clubs**

Summing up the opinions given in the expert's cards on current policies, strategies and programs related to the prevention of discrimination in sport in school and sports clubs in the observed regions, all refer to the Education Act, the Law on Physical Education and Sport; Rules for the Application of the Law on Physical Education and Sport; National Strategy for the Development of Physical Education and Sport in the Republic of Bulgaria 2012-2022; National Programme for the Development of Physical Education and Sport 2013 -2016.

The vision of the National programme for development of the physical education and sports 2013-2016 is establishment of a functioning system of physical education and sport in the Republic of Bulgaria, promotion of the physical activity and practice of sports and social tourism among the citizens. One of the main objectives set in the programme is to promote the practice of physical education and sport by all citizens regardless of their social status, gender, age and ethnic origin, religion, etc.

Among all priorities, measures and activities for implementation of the objectives set by the programme we can pay attention to the following:

- Social inclusion through sport – integration of the different communities and creation of equal opportunities for participation in sport activities;
- Gender equality in all aspects of sport policies;
- Provision of accessible environment and adapted programmes for physical activity of special groups – providing conditions for work of specialists in the adaptive physical activity and curricula for different sports for disabled and disadvantaged people;
- Involvement of sports organization for the development of sport for all – provision of high-quality sport services to all social groups;
- Optimization of the conditions for development of skills and habits of children from the kindergartens, students, university students, disabled people and children at risk of active exercises, practicing sport and sport performance, healthy lifestyle and successful inclusion in the society;
- Provision of the opportunity for access and options for learners of different age to practice physical exercises and sport;
- Adaptation of public and educational sports infrastructure towards the needs of the pupils and students with disabilities;
- Using the opportunities of the new generation of operative programmes in the country for the period 2014-2020.

The following documents should be added to the above mentioned: Strategy for Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, National strategy for Children (2008-2018), National Program to Ensure the Rights of children with Disabilities, National plan for the prevention of Violence against Children 2012-2014.

The programs of the Department of Physical Education and Sport, which are realized during the free time of the children such as:

- The programs of the Department of Physical Education and Sport which are realized during the free time of the children such as: „Programme for Development of Sport for All”, with main objective – “to help the public social activity of licensed sport organization through project financing with the view for sustainable development of the activities in the field of sport for all and social tourism” ;
- „Programme for Development of Sport Clubs”, with main objective of “creating conditions for realization of effective training and competitive process for athletes, large-scale sport activities for different age groups and improvement of the management system of the training process”;
- Programme “Sport for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Children at Risk”, with main the objective “support of social integration, adaptation and adequate realization in the social life of children and youth with disabilities and children at risk through establishment of conditions and opportunities for their inclusion in free sport activities, with the aim to improve their quality of life, physical and psychological suitability” ;
- Programme “Holiday and Sport” – the primary purpose of the programme is the promotion of physical education and sport and active support of students during holiday days, and improvement of their physical capacity, diversification and rationalization of their free time. The organizational partners comprise the municipal and regional administrations, sports organizations and the regional educational inspectorates.

- School games for students from the general education school are established as a main activity in the field of school sport, as well as a part of the state policy for organization of out of school activities during students' free time that develop their individual sports abilities. All of them are designed in accordance with the Physical Education and Sport Act and the objectives and tasks defined by the National Strategy for Development of Physical Education and Sport in the Republic of Bulgaria 2012 - 2022.

### **State of the manifestations of violence, racism and discrimination in grassroots sport in school and in sports clubs:**

The opinion of experts for more frequent acts of violence among students and athletes and lower levels of discrimination is common. This may be related to the fact that in the cases of psychological violence and bullying, the manifestations of discrimination are not always recognized by teachers and coaches, and in other cases they remain hidden due to downgrading of these events from classmates and peers.

The specialists who studied the municipalities think that the basic problems related to the prevention of violence and discrimination in sport in schools and sports clubs are as follows: bad and aggressive domestic education; replacement of the value system; lack of information on events relating to discrimination; the apathy and indifference of society towards such negative phenomena; legislation on the issues that is not good enough; poor communication between the parents and the institutions, insufficient theoretical and practical training and skills of professionals who work in the educational system related to sports activities and sport clubs.

The interviewee's opinion is that to a very large extent the family, the school, the friends, the social and cultural environment are risky for the manifestations of violence and discrimination in schools and sports clubs, is unanimous.

### **Good practices related to policies, programs, activities, events, forums, initiatives, etc.**

Experts are united in their *indication of good practices related to the prevention of violence and discrimination in sport in schools and sports clubs* and list the annual implementation of the programmes of the Ministry of Youth and Sport: Sport for Children during Free Time"; "Learn to swim"; " Program for the development of children's football "; "Learn to ski"; Sport for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Children at Risk"; Sport for Children from Kindergartens "and" Development of Sport for Students".

The programme "Initial Training in Sports" is unique for Bulgaria. The Programme is organized by the Municipality of Varna via the Municipal enterprise "Sport-Varna" and the Sport Directorate in partnership with sport clubs that use the sport facilities for free. The initial training in sports include children of different age who are suitable for the training in the following sports: swimming, athletics, figure gymnastics and acrobatics, handball, basketball, volleyball, tennis, box, wrestling, karate, kio-ku-shin, dzu-dzi-tzu, kick box, chess, and ice-skating. The programme is running on an annual basis and has social orientation. The participation in different sport clubs and competitions is free for the children. Qualified coaches carry out the training.

During the last years, many surveys that study the opportunity for prevention of aggression with the help of the classes in physical education and sport have been conducted. „Sport Against Aggression “- held by Secondary school “Urii Gagarin” in Bourgas; „Pedagogical Technique for Transforming and Releasing of Students Aggression in the PE classes” – held in Secondary school “St. Cyril and Methodius” in Gabrovo. Physical Education and Sport in School – prevention against aggressive behavior in Secondary school “G. Benkovski” and Secondary school “K. Preslavski” in Bourgas, "The Joy to Be Accepted", realized by the municipality of Silistra.

There are a number of programmes and activities for integration of children and youths with SEN through sport, which are realized on regional and municipal level. Some of the good practices include the following: Sport Holiday for Children with SEN organized in Shumen Park “Studentski”, May 2015 by the Resource center. The event is organized by resource teachers, psychologists and parents of participating children. It is conducted under the slogan “Equal Chance in Games”. Students of different age groups (7-15 years old) with SEN participated in it.

Summer Academy "My Choice" was organized in June 2014, in Tryavna for 40 children and young people with intellectual disabilities from a Day Care Center for Children and Adults with Disabilities "Slanchev Lach" in Shumen, RALIZ associations, Ruse and “Hope for a Good Future", Silistra. A sport studio is a part of its varied programme of activities during the camp. The activities in the Studio include daily morning gymnastics, sports and recreational games with relay nature outings, talk and quiz.

The conducting of this thematic camp can be defined as a good tradition which provide valuable experiences for all participants in the process of communication and joint sport activities, mutual knowledge and acceptance, social inclusion and overcoming the barriers and prejudices related to the differences between the participants.

The chess clubs “Shumen 2005” and "Shumen" organize a chain of traditional chess tournaments involving athletes of different age, sex, ethnicity and social status. There are also performances of individuals with special educational needs (with impaired sight and chronic diseases), for which are provided the appropriate conditions. This tradition is a shining example of joint participation in competitions among people having different characteristics and needs as well as good social interaction and integration, due to sport initiatives and traditions.

Studies that survey the opportunity for integration of children and youths with SEN through sport were conducted:

- „Level diagnostics and Analysis of the Relation between Intelligence Quotients (IQ), physical condition and motor ability of students with mental retardation in the auxiliary school” – performed in 2009-2010, by primary training at auxiliary school “P. R. Slaveykov”.
- „Effects of Physical Exercises and Sport on Student with SEN“ – held in Secondary school “G. S. Rakovski”, Varna, 2008 – 2011.

The project activities implemented by the Youth in Action Programme of the EU, Structural funds of the EU, Lifelong Learning Programme, the Programme for the Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities at the Ministry of Education, the Programme for Introduction of Intercultural Education and Educational Integration of Roma children at the

Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "AMALIPE " are important for the integration of ethnic minorities through sport. These are realized in the context of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2020.

### **Professional qualification of pedagogical specialists and experts for prevention of violence, racism and discrimination in sport**

According to the opinion of the interviewed experts, there is a need for training of teaching professionals and coaches about the prevention of discrimination and violence in sport in schools and sports clubs. Teachers and coaches indicate the following aspects as significant and to be complemented to their knowledge: innovative technologies for the presentation of topics related to violence and discrimination in front of children and adolescents, skills for dealing with incidents, forms of partnership and interaction with parents. It is necessary to develop policies, to update plans and system for the prevention of violence and discrimination in sport. The programs for prevention, partnerships with institutions and organizations on issues related to violence and discrimination in sport should be approved.

In recent years, many project were organized and carried out to improve the qualification of teachers of mainstream schools to work with children with special educational needs. According to the various objectives, tasks and methodology of these training courses, the focus is on problems of adaptation of children with SEN in social environment and small group, their socialization, activation and development of their cognitive potential, formation of different skills and creation of appropriate conditions of training environment.

In the context of these questions, of course, a close attention is paid to sports and sports activities as an important means to stimulate the development and the integration of these children into society. The following list presents different projects – national and university (internal for Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen) realized in different periods and with different duration as follows:

- National Project "Improvement of Pedagogical Specialists' Qualification to Work with Children with SEN", 2013;
- Project "Come to My World", realized under Operational Program "Development of Human Resources" and realized by Secondary School "Stefan Karadzha" and "Karin Dom", Varna – 2012;
- Project "Integration without Borders" Operational program "Development of Human Resources", training support for children and students with SEN, Veliko Tarnovo, 2012;
- Operational program "Development of Human Resources", training support for children and students with SEN in the Municipality of Kazanlak, 2012;
- National Project "Inclusive Training of Children with SEN in the public educational system, 2008;
- Integration of children of different ethnicity through sports and prevention of discrimination 2015.

The Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, established in 2005, continues to fund projects in schools, kindergartens and communities, designed to provide equal access to quality education for children from ethnic minority, and also to preserve and develop their cultural identity. Over the past few years, around 80 projects were funded, including those related to the reduction of leaving school, training for teachers on

the culture and traditions of ethnic minorities, and integration of Roma parents in the boards of schools and kindergartens. The responsibility for the educational desegregation is transferred to the local authorities and had some success in moving from isolated Roma pupils into ordinary schools.

### **Sustainability and dissemination of information**

The respondents indicate that for the the evaluation of the efficiency of interaction between the institutions for prevention and dealing with incidents of violence in sport in schools and sports clubs are created and functioning the following:

- National Board for Child Protection at the Council of Ministers with representatives of all institutions and nationally presented NGOs;
- Interagency expert working group on the prevention of violence and child abuse to the National Council for child welfare, with representatives of all institutions and nationally presented NGOs;
- Measures to prevent discrimination and violence are included in the National Programme of Child Protection.
- National Plan for Prevention of Violence against Children.

There is good cooperation between the institutions related to violence in schools and sports clubs. There are committees for the control of nuisance in schools and municipal divisions of the regional inspectorate to the Ministry of education, the Ministry of Interior, the Agency for the Protection of Children Rights, etc. The experts evaluate the efficiency of the interaction between institutions in preventing and dealing with incidents related to discrimination in the northeast region as good. The institutions in this field react quickly and adequately to the problems about discrimination in school and sports clubs.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The interviewees outline that the preventive measures against violence and discrimination in the area of grassroots sport in the schools and the sport clubs are set into the national policies, strategies and plans for the sport development.

The poverty and other kinds of differences like the ethnicity, race and culture are risky factors provoking discrimination and violence in sport. According to the opinions of some experts the incidents, connected to violence and discrimination in grassroots sport take place more often in comparison to the incidents in the area of professional sports but such cases are not too transparent and visible to noticed by the society and mass media. The society has to be aware to the prerequisites and the prejudices which provoke risks of discrimination.

In the context of the above presented information and summarizing the opinion of the interviewed experts, a need for further training of teaching professionals and coaches for the recognition, prevention and management of causes related to discrimination and violence in sport in school and sports clubs is indicated.

It is necessary to carry out periodic monitoring and development of the policies, programs, and the system for prevention of violence and discrimination in sport. Programs and best practices for interacting with parents, partnership with institutions and organizations on the problems related to violence and discrimination in sport should be approbated.

The results indicated the need for realization of program for qualification of pedagogical specialists and common platform where they can share their experiences and views on the topic, to use and enrich their educational methods and techniques, to apply and integrate innovative approaches in their daily school sports and club activities.

### **FURTHER RESEARCH**

Many effective programmes in the area of grassroots sport are realized, but the experts state that these programmes predominantly are directed to the primary prevention. Actually the specialists still need such kind of programmes, connected to indicative prevention regarding to specific acts of discrimination – for example racial and ethnic discrimination during the sport events, violent fan's acts, discrimination against people with homosexual orientation or against children with special educational needs.

In summary, the needs of the teachers and the coaches refer to possibilities and conditions to have institutional mechanisms, which can provide them professional support, and cooperative social measures for dealing with violence, racism and discrimination in grassroots sport in school and in sports clubs.

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