



Press Release

Learning from the experiences of survivors

Final Conference of the European Project VOICE on the investigation of sexual violence in sport

Cologne, 6th May 2018

"Your voice - your life - your truth" - with this message of former Irish swimmer Karen Leach the final conference of the project VOICE was titled at the weekend. The EU-funded project "Voices for truth and dignity" is run by the German Sport University Cologne and pursues the goal of scientifically investigating sexual violence in sport. The focus is on the reports and experiences of those affected. 135 people from 16 European countries participated in the conference to learn from the reports of those affected how sexualized violence develops in sport, what support they need and how protective measures should be designed.

At the center of the project is an interview study with people affected by sexual violence in sport, which was conducted in seven European countries. In detailed interviews, a total of 72 people have reported their experiences of violence in sport. The present study is the most extensive of its kind so far. Seven researchers from universities in Europe were involved in the conduct and analysis of the interviews. Central findings were presented at the final conference by Dr. Bettina Rulofs (German Sport University Cologne) and Dr. Mike Hartill (Edge Hill University, UK).

Around 70% of those who took part in the interviews are female, 30% male. The offenders are almost exclusively male and in 90% of the investigated cases they are coaches or responsible persons in sport. The cases come from a variety of sports and contexts, most often from football, accounting for one-fifth of the total. This is due to the high popularity of the sport and the high number of members.

„The conditions for sexual assault are less anchored in individual sports“, says Dr. Bettina Rulofs, German Sport University Cologne, “but rather in general characteristics of sport and the culture of some sports clubs and federations.”

The reports of those affected show that their sporting environment was characterized by a high degree of dependency, trust, high selection pressure and a strict disciplinary treatment of the body. Under these conditions sexualized attacks in sport are sometimes hidden for years. Just under 40% of those involved in the study reported to official agencies in and out of the sport in order to receive help. Sobering is the conclusion that some sufferers never received this help, but the

Stabsstelle

Akademische Planung und Steuerung
Academic Management

Presse und Kommunikation

Public Relations and Communication

Am Sportpark Müngersdorf 6
50933 Köln · Deutschland
Telefon +49(0)221 4982-3850
Telefax +49(0)221 4982-8400
presse@dshs-koeln.de
www.dshs-koeln.de

Contact:

Sabine Maas
Head Public Relations and Communication
Julia Neuburg

Contact:

Dr. Bettina Rulofs
Institute of Sociology & Gender
Studies
rulofs@dshs-koeln.de

Homepage:

<http://voicesfortruthanddignity.eu/de/>



sports clubs or associations continue to conceal the deeds in order not to harm their reputation.

"What hurts deeply, is the silence of the authorities after you report your experience", says Dr Colin Harris, a former UK footballer, who participates in the VOICE project.

A central postulation of the project is therefore that sport organizations investigate cases of sexual violence in a differentiated way and proactively involve those affected as well. Gloria Viseras, a member of the steering committee of the project and former Spanish Olympian in gymnastics concluded: ***"Participating in the VOICE project has helped us to understand how strong our voices are and how much we survivors can help sport to fight sexual violence."*** In total, 24 people affected by sexual violence in sport took part in the conference in order to raise their voice for safe sport in Europe and to actively participate in prevention work, including the Austrian Nicola Werdenigg, who had recently reported publicly on her experiences of violence in the ski sport and is committed to fight the abuse of power in sports.

"Sports organizations need to listen to the victims of sexual violence and then actively involve them in work to prevent violence", concluded Susan Greinig, Medical Programmes Senior Manager at the International Olympic Committee, during the final panel discussion with stakeholders from sport at the conference.

EU funding for the VOICE project expires at the end of June 2018. The participating seven countries – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Slovenia and Spain – are now looking for ways to continue the work with survivors and to learn from their experiences. Universities as well as sports and victim protection organizations work together in all participating countries. In Germany, the project is being carried out at the German Sport University Cologne by Dr. Bettina Rulofs and Gitta Axmann and supported by the German Child Protection Association and the German Sports Youth.