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SAFE PARA SPORT ALLIES

# Intervention report

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## About this report

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*Project information:* The research is part of the 'Safe Para Sport Allies' project, which is carried out by the Safe Para Sport Allies consortium with researchers From Thomas More University of Applied Sciences and practitioners from G-sport Flanders and the LFB.

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# 1. Background

Research shows that sport participants with disabilities experience difficulties in accessing sports and that if they play sports, they are more likely to experience harassment and abuse compared to sport participants without disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Harassment and abuse is defined by the Centre for Ethics in Sport (ICES) as "all behaviour that crosses the boundaries of another person and damages the integrity of that person".<sup>2</sup> In the current IOC consensus statement, a distinction is made between four forms of harassment and abuse in sport: psychological, physical, and sexual harassment and abuse, and neglect.<sup>3</sup>

The role of the coach is crucial in creating safe sports environments. Coaches spend a lot of time with sport participants and often have a relationship of trust with them. By educating coaches of sport participants with disabilities on the theme of harassment and abuse, they can make an important contribution to creating a safe sports climate.<sup>4</sup>

The Safe Para Sport Allies (SPSA) project focuses on stimulating positive bystander behaviour. A **positive bystander** is someone who intervenes during and/or after the signals or event and who supports the victim.<sup>5</sup> Positive bystander behaviour can prevent harassment and abuse, detect it at an early stage, limit the negative impact and prevent its recurrence.

In this project, we will continue to work on the knowledge gained from the previous "[Safe Sport Allies](#)" project. The previously developed materials do not sufficiently take into account the specific needs and context of coaches who work with sport participants with intellectual disability (ID) and/or cerebral palsy (CP).

The three objectives of the project are: (1) to develop and translate an evidence-based bystander intervention for coaches of sport participants with disabilities; (2) test the bystander intervention with 45 coaches of sport participants with disabilities; (3) evaluating the bystander intervention. The present report focuses on the last objective and describes the evaluation of the facilitators of the workshops and the participants which was conducted using a questionnaire.

## 2. Research method

### 2.1. Participants

#### 2.1.1. SPSA facilitators

To implement and test the workshops, SPSA facilitators were trained. At the start of the recruitment process, 11 people showed interest in the role of facilitator. This group of interested parties came from the existing teaching pool of the Centre for Ethics in Sport or had a link with G-sport Flanders. Of this group, eight teachers (7 women, 1 man) followed the training of training. This was a training for all SPSA facilitators so that they received the same background information required to deliver the workshop. The facilitators came from different provinces in Belgium (Flemish Brabant, East Flanders, Limburg and Antwerp). A total of 10 workshops were delivered.

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<sup>1</sup> Tuakli-Wosornu et al. (2020). Non-accidental harms ('abuse') in sport participants with impairment ('para sport participants'): a state-of-the-art review. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, vol. 54, pp. 129-138: doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2018-099854.

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Ethics in Sport: Harassment and abuse'. [Online]. Available on: <https://www.ethischsporten.be/themas/#grensoverschrijdend-gedrag>

<sup>3</sup> Mountjoy et al. (2016). The IOC Consensus Statement: Harassment and abuse (non-accidental violence) in sport. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, vol. 50, pp. 1019-1029: doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2016-096121.

<sup>4</sup> Verhelle et al. (2024). What would you do? Developing, implementing and evaluating a coach bystander intervention to prevent sexual violence in youth sports clubs. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, pp. 1-22: 10.1080/10413200.2024.2331212

<sup>5</sup> Banyard et al. (2009). 'Sexual Violence Prevention: The Role of Stages of Change', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 25, pp. 111-35: doi: 10.1177/0886260508329123.

## 2.1.2. Participants

A total of 88 participants participated in the first session of the workshop, 69 participants participated in the second online session (see Table 1). Of this group, 56 participants completed the evaluation questionnaire after the second session. The average age of the participants was 43.9 years (range 17-77 years). The majority of the participants were coaches of sport participants with disabilities (83%), however, a portion of participants fulfilled other roles beyond coaching (17%; supervisor, chairman,...) or combined roles (36%).

Table 1 Participant Demographics

	Participants
<b>Total sample (N)</b>	88
Physical session (n)	88
Online session (n)	69
<b>Mean age (M, SD)</b>	44 (16.9)
<b>Role in the club (n, %)</b>	
Coach	72 (83%)
Role other than coach	15 (17%)
Coach + other role	31 (36%)

## 2.2. Measurement tool

### 2.2.1. SPSA facilitators

After facilitating the 2-part workshop (in-person and online session), the facilitators completed a short questionnaire to evaluate their experience. This questionnaire evaluated several aspects of both session 1 and session 2 including: the interaction between the participants, the quality of the interaction, the time schedule and the recognizability of the examples and cases. These elements were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all good, 5 = very good). In addition, an open-ended question was provided to allow facilitators to give additional in-depth comments/suggestions. Finally, the format of the project was also evaluated, including: the communication about the workshop, the usability of the handbook, the usability of the example slides and the ratio of the fee to the time spent.

### 2.2.2. Participants

To evaluate the experience of the participants, a short questionnaire was administered after attending the 2-part workshop. The questionnaire was used to evaluate various aspects, namely whether participants found the workshop interesting, the level of difficulty of the workshop, whether they would recommend the workshop to colleagues, whether they had learned anything and finally whether the content of the workshop was useful. They then assessed how valuable they found the parts of the workshop using a 10-point scale (1 = not at all valuable, 10 = very valuable). In the last two questions of the questionnaire, the coaches rated the duration of the workshop using three answer options (too long, just right or too short), and they were able to indicate whether they feel more empowered after attending the workshop using three answer options (yes, I'm not sure, no).

## 2.3. Analyses

The results of the survey were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and mean).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Results of SPSA facilitators

The 2-part workshop was evaluated by the SPSA facilitators per session. The SPSA facilitators generally evaluated the in-person workshop (session 1) as good to very good, see Table 2. The interaction between the participants and the quality of this during the 10 workshops was positively assessed. However, one of the facilitators indicated that when the participants did not know each other, they were more reserved at the start of the session. However, this is not immediately noticeable in the evaluation of the amount of interaction between coaches. Opinions were more divided when it came to the time schedule. Three facilitators gave a neutral answer, the others rated it as good to very good. One of the facilitators indicated that the timing was sometimes a bit restricted, especially in groups where there was a lot of interaction between the participants. As a result, the facilitators sometimes had to make choices not to discuss certain topics in-depth. According to the facilitators (n = 7), the participants found the cases and examples recognizable. In the open question, the facilitators described that session 1 had gone well and that the workshop contained a lot of useful information. One facilitator recounted how, at the start of session 2, the coaches indicated that the first session was very helpful.

Table 2 evaluation session 1 SPSA lecturers

Session 1	Not good at all	Not good	Neutral	Good	Very good
Interaction participants				2	8
Quality interaction				3	7
Time schedule			3	2	5
Recognizability of cases and examples				6	4

In contrast to the first session, the second session was assessed less positively by the facilitators (see Table 3). There is a clear contrast between session 1 and session 2 that the facilitators attribute to the online environment. The assessment of the amount of interaction in the online session between the participants is very divided from not at all good to very good. In addition, the time allocation was not feasible for every facilitator (n = 3). In several online sessions, the content could not be fully covered. According to one of the facilitators, this was similar in session 1. One facilitator indicated that an online format for a theoretical lesson would be feasible, but that it is too difficult for this practical and interactive lesson. A Mentimeter<sup>6</sup> was provided in the online sessions, however most facilitators did not use it because it was too complex. The interaction in the online session was much more difficult than in the physical session. Despite the fact that one of the facilitators said that the cases were a bit too easy, there is a good to very good rating in terms of recognizability. For example, one facilitator said that a group of participants had experienced a similar situation in their club, and this was therefore very relatable to them.

Table 3 Evaluation session 2 SPSA teachers

Session 2	Not good at all	Not good	Neutral	Good	Very good
Interaction participants	2		1	5	2
Quality interaction		0	2	2	6
Feasibility of time allocation		3	3	2	2
Recognizability of cases and examples				6	4

In terms of the format, we were able to conclude from the evaluations that the interventions went smoothly. The facilitators found it useful to inform the coaches about this topic. SPSA facilitators rated the communication about

<sup>6</sup> Mentimeter is a tool that allows you to ask questions to your participants during workshops. The participants can give answers via different devices and this is displayed on the spot.

the workshop and the usability of the handbook and slides good to very good. The majority of the SPSA facilitators (n = 9) found the ratio of the compensation to the time commitment to be very good (see Table 4).

Table 4 Evaluation of the SPSA facilitators

Format	Not good at all	Not good	Neutral	Good	Very good
Communication about the workshop (practical and expectations)				2	8
Usability of the Handbook				2	8
Usability of the sample slides				3	7
Ratio of compensation to time commitment			1		9

### 3.2. Results of participants

Overall, the various aspects of the workshop were well evaluated by the participants (see Table 5). The participating coaches found the workshop interesting ( $M = 8.12$ ,  $SD = 1.82$ ) and would also recommend the workshop to their fellow coaches ( $M = 8.47$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ). A number of participants commented that everyone should follow a training course on harassment and abuse, some had the opinion that this should even be mandatory. The difficulty level of the workshop was rated as average ( $M = 5.32$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), especially the part where the cases were discussed could be made more challenging. A number of participants rated the workshop overall less well. This group of coaches made more negative comments about elements they believe were missing in the workshop content wise. An example of this was: "For many coaches, this is 'new' material that sometimes receives too little attention. Let this start more from situations that happen in our own clubs".

Table 5 Average scores evaluation participants

Aspect	M (SD)
<b>Interest</b> (1 = very uninteresting, 10 = very interesting)	8.23 (1.82)
<b>Difficulty level</b> (1 = way too easy, 10 = way too hard)	5.32 (1.11)
<b>Recommendation to fellow coaches</b> (1 = absolutely discouraged, 10 = absolutely recommended)	8.47 (1.78)
<b>Learned</b> (1 = learned nothing, 10 = learned a lot)	7.65 (1.67)
<b>Workshop usability</b> (1 = unusable, 10 very usable)	8.36 (1.36)

Participants were then asked to rate the different components of the workshop (see Table 6). Overall, all parts of the workshop were rated as valuable. The online session was rated as less valuable as a whole ( $M = 6.83$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ). For one of the participants, the online session felt strange and awkward because of the online format. The online session was also described as more monotonous than the first session and, according to the participants, contained a lot of repetition of session 1, which meant that the information did not always come across well. The online format also made it more difficult for some participants to communicate and engage in conversation with each other. These results are consistent with those reported by the facilitators.

Table 6 Average score of workshop components according to participants

Workshop components	M (SD)
Ranking behaviours according to severity.	8.17 (1.40)
Practising responses based on the boundary pointing system.	8.22 (1.41)
Discussing cases based on the boundary pointing system.	8.57 (1.35)
The information about the safeguarding officer.	8.09 (1.17)
The interaction with the other participants during the workshop.	8.76 (1.26)
The extra information and tips provided by the facilitator.	8.33 (1.32)
The online session.	6.83 (2.14)

The majority of the participants ( $n = 46$ , 85%) rated the in-person session as 'just right'. The same goes for the online session, 82% of the coaches ( $n = 42$ ) rated the online session as 'just right'. Unlike the in-person session, some of the coaches found the online session 'too short' ( $n = 6$ , 12%).

After attending the workshops, the majority of the participants ( $n = 50$ , 94%) indicated that they felt more empowered to act in a situation of harassment and abuse. Two participants were not sure and one person did not feel better equipped after attending the workshop.

## 4. Discussion

The results and general conclusions of the present report show that the developed Safe Para Sport Allies bystander intervention was positively assessed by both the SPSA facilitators and the participating coaches of sport participants with disabilities. The workshop contained information that was useful and actionable for the participants. For many, it was a wake-up call about how others, and themselves, behave and whether that is the right way. By entering into discussions with fellow coaches, they gained a different view on situations and their own actions as coaches. The workshop contained sufficient tools for the participants to learn how to deal with situations of harassment and abuse. However, not everyone's (substantive) expectations were fully met. For example, some participants would have liked to have received more information on how to approach conversations with parents, or what to do if they themselves are accused of harassment and abuse. A number of safeguarding officers participated in the workshop, they would have liked to receive more information on how to respond and handle matters in a good way. However, the focus of the workshop was on coaches, not on the safeguarding officers of the sports club. A workshop aimed at this target group should contain more specific and in-depth information than the current workshop, as they generally already have basic knowledge on this topic.

During the development of the intervention, a conscious decision was made to split the workshop into two parts, and to organize the second session of the workshop online with the main aim of reducing the (time) burden for the participants. An online format gives the possibility to participate from your home environment. In addition, it was expected that some degree of trust was already present because the first session took place physically. However, we have to conclude that the interaction between the participants was less prominent than expected. Finally, we also noticed a drop-out in the online session of 21%. There were 88 participants in the first session of the workshop, and only 69 to the second session of the workshop. From the evaluation, we conclude that the online format is not an unqualified success.

The duration of session 1 was rated well by both the facilitators and the participants, in contrast to that of the second session. More time could be provided for session 2, or bundle both sessions into one long session. In addition, the difficulty of the cases and the associated questions could be made more challenging. To make case material more



recognizable for the participants, it could be an option to have them bring up a situation themselves. In this way, they can discuss how they can handle the situation in a good way.

## 5. Recommendations

There are a few lessons to be learned from the feedback received from the SPSA facilitators and participants:

- (1) Transform the online sessions into a in-person sessions, or if possible, reduce the intervention to one session with a longer duration (+/- 3 hours).
- (2) Increase the difficulty of the cases and examples.
- (3) Leave room to bring in own case material.
- (4) All coaches are required to follow a training course on harassment and abuse and positive bystander behaviour.

## 6. Attachments

### 6.1. Evaluation questionnaire SPSA facilitators

Surname and first name:

.....

Name of the club where you delivered the workshop:

.....

Number of participants session 1:

Number of participants session 2:

Evaluate the following aspects of session 1 (physical session) and session 2 (online session):

	Session 1					Session 2				
	Not good at all	Not good	Neutral	Good	Very good	Not good at all	Not good	Neutral	Good	Very good
Interaction between participants										
Quality interaction										
Time schedule										
Recognizability of cases and examples										

Is there anything else you would like to share about session 1?

.....  
 .....

Is there anything else you would like to share about session 2?

.....  
 .....

Evaluate the following aspects of the format:

	Not good at all	Not good	Neutral	Good	Very good
Communication about the workshop (practical and expectations)					
Usability of the handbook					
Usability of the sample slides					
Ratio of compensation to time commitment					

## 6.2. Participant Evaluation Questionnaire

Evaluate the following elements of the workshop:

I found this workshop...	Very uninteresting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very interesting	<input type="radio"/>
I found the difficulty of the workshop ...	Way too easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Just right	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Way too difficult	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend this workshop to my fellow coaches...	Absolutely not recommended	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Neither recommend nor discourage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Absolutely recommend	<input type="radio"/>

By attending this workshop, I have ...	Nothing learned	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Learned a lot
The content of the workshop is in practice ...	Useless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very usable

How valuable do you find the following parts of the workshop? Put a cross in the box that best expresses your point of view.

- 1 = Not valuable at all, 10 = Very valuable

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ranking behaviours according to severity.										
Practising responses based on the boundary pointing system.										
Discussing cases based on the boundary pointing system.										
The information about the club safeguarding officer.										
The interaction with the other participants during the workshop.										
The extra information and tips provided by the facilitator.										
The online session.										

What do you think of the duration of the workshop?

- Too long                                       Just right                                       Too short

After this workshop, do you feel that you are better equipped to act in a situation of harassment and abuse?

- Yes     I'm not sure                                       No

Have your expectations about this workshop been met? Please explain.

.....

If you want, you can leave your comments, suggestions or sighs here.

.....

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