



Score 4 Inclusion

Connect Sport and Social Inclusion

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Authors / Editors:

Joana Costa

Dimas Pinto

Aldina Silva

Natália Winckler

Marta García Tascón

José Carlos Jáenes Sánchez

María Rosario Teva Villén

David Alarcón Rubio

Project:



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INTRODUCTORY

Sport is one of the most widespread social and cultural phenomena in contemporary societies. Its ability to bring together people from different backgrounds, cultures and life conditions gives it a unique potential to promote values such as respect, solidarity, cooperation and inclusion. However, this potential does not materialise automatically. Sport is also a space where discriminatory, racist, violent and intolerant practices persist, reproducing and amplifying inequalities present in society.

This Proposal Letter is one of the outcomes of the SCORE 4 INCLUSION project (Ref. 101185329), funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, under the Small-Scale Partnerships in Sport (ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP). The project was implemented between March 2025 and April 2026, involving the Instituto Europeu de Estudos Superiores – IEES (Portugal) as the coordinating organisation and the Universidad Pablo de Olavide – UPO (Spain) as the partner organisation.

Over the course of 14 months, the consortium developed a set of interconnected activities in research, training, awareness-raising and dissemination. These included a state-of-the-art review on discrimination, racism and violence in sport in Portugal and Spain; the implementation of a diagnostic questionnaire involving 118 participants from both countries; the organisation of Local Entrepreneurship Labs in both countries; a Transnational Iberian Lab; follow-up sessions; and public seminars with hundreds of participants.

The proposals presented in this document emerge directly from the data collected and the reflections developed throughout the project. They are addressed to multiple stakeholders (government bodies, sports federations and associations, clubs, educational institutions and the wider community) and are organised around six thematic areas: violence in sport; discrimination and racism; gender equality; inclusion of people with disabilities; training of sports stakeholders; and institutional mechanisms and public policies. In addition to institutional proposals, this document includes contributions from the athletes involved in the project, reinforcing the responsibility of athletes, coaches, organisations and institutions in building safer, more inclusive environments that respect human rights.

This Proposal Letter is a tool designed to support those who have the power and responsibility to make sport a genuinely inclusive, safe and fair space for everyone.

1. DIAGNOSIS: THE STATE OF SPORT IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

The literature review and the empirical data collected within the scope of the SCORE 4 INCLUSION project allow for a clear diagnosis: despite the legislative and institutional progress achieved in recent decades, sport continues to be a space where violence, discrimination and exclusion persist in a structural manner.

1.1 Project Evidence

The data collected within the project context reveal a concerning reality. The questionnaire adapted from the Observatório Nacional da Violência contra Atletas (ObNVA, 2025), applied to 118 participants in the Iberian context, identified:

1. Verbal violence as the most frequently reported type of violence, followed by psychological violence.
2. Members of the technical staff (coach or assistant coach) as the most frequently identified perpetrators, followed by teammates.
3. Pressure to achieve above-average results and a sports culture that normalises certain violent behaviours as the main reasons attributed to aggression.
4. The most frequent impacts on athletes: difficulty concentrating, nervousness or anxiety, sadness, and a decline in sports performance.

At the seminar held in Portugal (26 February 2026, Cinema Teatro de Fafe, 216 participants), the results of the interactive evaluation questionnaire (Mentimeter) revealed:

1. 84% of participants (162 responses) considered racism in sport to be a structural and recurring problem.
2. 64% of participants stated that there is no equal opportunity between men and women in sport (153 responses).
3. 53% identified verbal violence as the most frequent type of violence in sport (164 responses).
4. 75% stated that sport should be guided by values, rather than pursued at any cost (145 responses).





1.2 Legal and Policy Framework

In Portugal, the Basic Law on Physical Activity and Sport (Law No. 5/2007, of 16 January) establishes the principles of universality and equality, sports ethics, territorial cohesion and institutional cooperation. The Portuguese Constitution guarantees, in Article 79, the right of all citizens to physical culture and sport. The National Plan for Ethics in Sport (PNED) aims to counter a purely commercial view of sport, promoting its educational and humanistic role.

In Spain, Law 39/2022, of 30 December, on Sport establishes specific provisions for the sports practice of minors (Article 7), prohibiting any form of discrimination. Organic Law 8/2021, of 4 June (LOPIVI), defines violence in a comprehensive manner, including digital violence, and establishes a framework for the full protection of children and adolescents. The Government of Andalusia has developed the Framework Protocol for Action for the Protection of Minors against Violence in Sport, with the support of the RIASPORT platform.

Despite these legal frameworks, the practical implementation of inclusion and protection policies in sport remains uneven and insufficient. Coordination among the different stakeholders – government bodies, federations, clubs and schools – is often inadequate. Reporting mechanisms are not widely known and are underutilised. Training for sports stakeholders in the areas of inclusion and non-discrimination is limited and not systematic.

1.3 Attitudes and Responsibilities in Sport

Sports stakeholders, through their attitudes and responsibilities, play a decisive role in preventing violence, discrimination and other forms of exclusion. This project shows that a large proportion of the problems identified in sport result not only from institutional gaps, but also from the normalisation of inappropriate behavioural practices. Among the main challenges identified are the absence of clear protocols, the lack of accountability among stakeholders, the normalisation of aggressive behaviours, and the shortage of communication channels to support victims. A lack of awareness and training regarding the impact of individual attitudes on the collective environment is also evident.

In this context, it is reinforced that all sports stakeholders – athletes, coaches, managers, referees and institutions – play a key role in creating safe, inclusive and respectful environments.

2. AREA 1 – VIOLENCE IN SPORT

2.1 Diagnosis

Violence in sport manifests itself in multiple forms – physical, verbal, psychological and digital – and involves different types of perpetrators and contexts. The project data show that verbal violence is the most frequent, often occurring during training sessions and in the surroundings of sports facilities. The main perpetrator identified is a member of the technical staff, which highlights the importance of relational and hierarchical dynamics within the sporting context.

The dominant sports culture, focused on results and winning at any cost, creates conditions for the normalisation of violent behaviours. While "hooliganism" associated with professional football is often highlighted in the media, everyday violence in training sessions and locker rooms is far more prevalent and systematically overlooked.

Key project finding: 53% of participants in the Portuguese seminar identified verbal violence as the most frequent type of violence in sport. The ObNVA questionnaire (118 responses) revealed that violence occurs mainly during training sessions and is primarily perpetrated by members of the technical staff.

2.2 Proposals

Proposal 1. Create and implement, in all sports clubs and associations, a mandatory Code of Conduct that clearly defines appropriate behaviours, complementing the legislation for the protection of children and young people at risk (Law No. 147/99), reporting procedures, and the disciplinary consequences applicable to athletes, coaches, managers, family members and spectators.

Target groups: Sports federations, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports clubs.

Proposal 2. Establish anonymous, accessible and effective reporting mechanisms in all sports organisations, ensuring the protection of whistleblowers and the appropriate follow-up of reported cases.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports federations, National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and Protection of Children and Young People (CNPCJR), and equivalent entities in Spain.





Proposal 3. Promote structured sport-based intervention programmes aimed at at-risk youth, using sport as a tool for social inclusion and the prevention of violent behaviours.

Target groups: Municipalities, local development associations, sports clubs, educational institutions.

Proposal 4. Integrate, within the regulations of federated sports competitions, progressive and proportionate sanctions for acts of verbal, psychological and physical violence, regardless of the level of competition.

Target groups: National and international sports federations, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD).

Proposal 5. Develop regular awareness-raising campaigns targeting families and spectators, promoting a culture of fair play and respect in sports venues.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports federations, municipalities, media.

Proposal 6. Ensure accountability of each sports stakeholder (athletes, coaches, managers, families) in the prevention of and response to violent behaviours, including the obligation to intervene, report or flag situations of risk.

Target groups: Sports federations, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports clubs, educational institutions.

3. AREA 2 – DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

3.1 Diagnosis

Racism and ethnic discrimination in sport are persistent and structural phenomena, despite their increasing public visibility in recent years. In Portugal and Spain, as across Europe, athletes from ethnic and racial minorities continue to be subjected to discriminatory behaviours by opponents, teammates, coaches, managers and spectators.

European research confirms that discrimination in sport is not limited to football stadiums; it also occurs during training sessions, in locker rooms, in selection processes and in career progression within sport. The “normalisation” of certain discriminatory behaviours, often dismissed as “jokes” or as part of the “sports culture”, makes it more difficult to recognise and report such incidents.

Key project finding: 84% of participants in the Portuguese seminar (162 responses) considered racism in sport to be a structural and recurring problem – rather than an isolated issue or one exaggerated by the media. The most frequently used words to describe how participants felt when witnessing cases of racism in sport were: sad, upset, disgusted, outraged and ashamed.

3.2 Proposals

Proposal 1. Adopt zero-tolerance policies towards racism and ethnic discrimination at all levels of sport, with clear protocols for immediate action and sanctions proportionate to the severity of the acts.

Target groups: Sports federations, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports clubs, referees and match officials.

Proposal 2. Establish permanent observatories to monitor discrimination in sport at the national level, collecting systematic data on incidents in order to assess existing policies and define evidence-based responses.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), Government (Ministry of Sport), academia and research centres.





Proposal 3. Implement intercultural education programmes in sports clubs and associations, promoting dialogue among athletes from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, and using sport as a space for interaction and the construction of shared identities, including practices for identifying, interrupting and reporting discriminatory behaviours in sports contexts.

Target groups: Sports clubs, schools, migrant associations, municipalities, Erasmus+.

Proposal 4. Ensure the representation of people from ethnic and racial minorities in leadership positions, technical management, refereeing and administration within sports organisations, through active recruitment measures and diversity policies.

Target groups: Sports federations, clubs, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD).

Proposal 5. Promote the use of media and social networks as spaces for counter-narratives to racist discourse in sport, encouraging athletes and coaches to take a public stand against discriminatory behaviours.

Target groups: Media, digital platforms, sports federations, elite athletes.

4. AREA 3 – GENDER EQUALITY

4.1 Diagnosis

Gender inequality in sport manifests itself across multiple dimensions: access and participation, conditions of practice, media coverage, funding, remuneration and representation in leadership positions. In 2015, only 14% of decision-making positions in European sports organisations were held by women. In Portugal, regular participation in sport declines significantly among women from the age of 25 (European Commission, 2022). Gender stereotypes continue to influence sports choices and the trajectories of athletes, coaches and managers.

Gender-based violence in sport, including sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination based on pregnancy or motherhood, is a documented reality that often remains silenced. The pressure to conform to traditional gender norms affects both women and men within the sports context.

Key project finding: 64% of participants in the Portuguese seminar stated that there is no equal opportunity between men and women in sport (153 responses). Only 13% considered that this equality fully exists. The testimony of Olympic athlete Jéssica Augusto regarding discriminatory practices related to motherhood was identified as one of the most impactful moments of the seminar.

4.2 Proposals

Proposal 1. Implement mandatory gender equality plans in all sports federations and in clubs receiving public funding, with measurable targets, defined timelines and independent evaluation mechanisms.

Target groups: Government (Ministry of Sport and Equality), Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports federations.

Proposal 2. Ensure parity in conditions of practice, funding and media coverage between women's and men's sports and teams, particularly in relation to public funding and sponsorship agreements.

Target groups: Government, sports federations, media, private sponsors.





Proposal 3. Develop specific support programmes to promote women's participation in sport during key life transitions (motherhood, return to work, menopause), recognising and addressing the specific barriers they face.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), municipalities, sports clubs, companies.

Proposal 4. Adopt positive action measures to increase the presence of women in leadership, coaching and refereeing roles within sports organisations, including minimum quotas in governing bodies.

Target groups: Sports federations, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), Government.

Proposal 5. Explicitly prohibit and effectively sanction any form of discrimination based on pregnancy, motherhood or fatherhood in the sports context, ensuring that contracts and support for athletes cannot be terminated or suspended on these grounds.

Target groups: Government (labour and sports legislation), sports federations, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD).

Proposal 6. Actively promote practices to prevent discriminatory behaviours in everyday sports contexts, including the use of inclusive language and intervention in sexist comments or attitudes, ensuring accountability among all stakeholders.

Target groups: Sports clubs, sports federations, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), educational institutions.

5. AREA 4 – INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

5.1 Diagnosis

People with disabilities show significantly lower levels of physical activity compared to the general population and are more dependent on medical recommendation to begin engaging in sport. The barriers to their participation in sport are multiple and intersecting: structural (performance demands without adaptation), attitudinal (overprotection or rejection due to lack of knowledge and training), and environmental (architectural, transport and cost-related barriers). Sports organisations often fail to accommodate all ages, interests or abilities, systematically excluding people with disabilities who do not fit within the classification parameters of competitive Paralympic sport.

Reference: According to Pereira (2023), people with disabilities in Portugal are generally more sedentary and present higher rates of depression, obesity, cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 30) establishes a legally binding framework for inclusion in sport.

5.2 Proposals

Proposal 1. Require that all sports facilities receiving public funding fully comply with universal accessibility standards, ensuring adequate conditions for access, use and participation for people with disabilities.

Target groups: Government, municipalities, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports facility management entities.

Proposal 2. Create and fund adapted and inclusive sport programmes that go beyond the competitive Paralympic model, addressing the needs and interests of people with different types and degrees of disability, in recreational, school and federated sport contexts.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), Portuguese Federation of Sports for People with Disabilities, municipalities, clubs.





Proposal 3. Integrate mandatory training modules on adapted sport and the inclusion of people with disabilities into initial and continuous training curricula for coaches, physical education teachers and sports professionals.

Target groups: Higher education institutions, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports federations.

Proposal 4. Develop a common language and methodology across the health, education and sport sectors to promote physical activity among people with disabilities, overcoming the current institutional fragmentation that hinders access to sport.

Target groups: Ministries of Health, Education and Sport, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), professional bodies.

Proposal 5. Implement monitoring systems and collect disaggregated data by type of disability in the annual reports of sports organisations, enabling the identification of gaps and the evaluation of the impact of inclusion policies.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports federations, national statistical institutes.

6. AREA 5 – TRAINING OF SPORTS STAKEHOLDERS

6.1 Diagnosis

Coaches, physical education teachers, referees, managers and sports professionals are the stakeholders with the greatest direct influence on the culture and climate of sports environments. Through their daily practices, they determine whether sport is an inclusive, safe and respectful space for all. However, the training of these stakeholders in areas such as inclusion, non-discrimination, human rights and child protection is often insufficient, unsystematic and outdated.

Data from the SCORE 4 INCLUSION project show that the main perpetrator in sports contexts is often a member of the technical staff. This does not necessarily imply ill intent; rather, it often reflects a lack of training and awareness regarding the impact of their behaviours. Continuing education is therefore one of the most powerful and urgent levers for change.

Key project finding: The ObNVA questionnaire (2025) identified members of the technical staff as the most frequent perpetrators in sports contexts. The evaluation of the Local Lab in Spain revealed that participants highlighted as key learnings: “not remain passive in the face of violence”, “distinguish types of aggression and possible responses”, and “the role of psychology in sport”.

6.2 Proposals

Proposal 1. Training in inclusion, non-discrimination and child protection mandatory for obtaining and renewing licenses and certifications for coaches, referees and sports professionals at all levels of qualification.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports federations, training institutions.





Proposal 2. Develop a national competency framework on inclusion and non-discrimination for sports stakeholders, aligned with European reference frameworks (Erasmus+, Council of Europe), and integrate it into the curricula of undergraduate and master's programmes in Sport Sciences.

Target groups: Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Education and Science, higher education institutions, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD).

Proposal 3. Develop and make freely available non-formal education resources on inclusion, non-discrimination and the prevention of violence in sport, aimed at coaches and sports professionals at all levels, including digital materials, videos and good practice guides.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), sports federations, universities, Erasmus+ projects.

Proposal 4. Promote the role of the “inclusion officer” within sports clubs – a staff member or volunteer with specific training in inclusion, non-discrimination and conflict mediation, responsible for supporting athletes in vulnerable situations and ensuring the implementation of the club's inclusion policies.

Target groups: Sports clubs, federations, municipalities, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD).

Proposal 5. Recognise and value, within public sport funding systems, the training and inclusion of practices developed by sports organisations, creating incentives for the adoption of good practices and penalties for systematic non-compliance.

Target groups: Government, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), municipalities.

7. AREA 6 – INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND PUBLIC POLICIES

7.1 Diagnosis

The effectiveness of inclusion policies in sport depends not only on the quality of legal frameworks, but above all on the existence of robust institutional mechanisms that ensure their effective implementation. In Portugal and Spain, as in most European countries, there is a significant gap between what is legislated and what happens in the daily practice of sport. Coordination across different levels of governance – national, regional and local – is often weak. Funding for inclusion policies is insufficient and inconsistent. The evaluation of the impact of adopted measures is rare and not systematic.

The sport model based exclusively on results and spectacle, dominant in the public and media sphere, creates constant pressure on the educational and inclusive values of sport. Public policies must actively counter this trend, reinforcing the social role of sport and ensuring that public resources primarily serve this function.

7.2 Proposals

Proposal 1. Develop a National Plan for Inclusion in Sport, with a multiannual framework, measurable targets and guaranteed budget allocation, integrating in a coherent manner policies related to violence, discrimination, gender equality and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Target groups: Government (Ministry of Sport), Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), in coordination with the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

Proposal 2. Make public funding for sports federations and clubs conditional on compliance with minimum inclusion criteria, namely: the existence of a code of conduct, training of sports stakeholders in inclusion, operational reporting mechanisms, and disaggregated data on participation.

Target groups: Government, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), municipalities.





Proposal 3. Establish protocols for systematic cooperation between sports organisations and social, health and education services, ensuring integrated and multi-sectoral responses for athletes in vulnerable situations.

Target groups: Government, municipalities, social security bodies, health institutions, schools.

Proposal 4. Create a helpline and a specialised support service for athletes who are victims of violence, discrimination or harassment in the sports context, ensuring confidentiality, psychological support and access to information about their rights.

Target groups: Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), equality bodies, professional associations of psychology and social work.

Proposal 5. Promote the ratification and effective implementation of the Council of Europe recommendations and European Union directives on inclusion in sport, ensuring their translation into legislation and concrete practices at national and local levels.

Target groups: Government, Portuguese Parliament, Spanish Cortes Generales, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD).

Proposal 6. Support and fund transnational projects in research, training and dissemination on inclusion in sport – such as SCORE 4 INCLUSION – recognising their contribution to knowledge production, the transformation of practices, and the strengthening of European cooperation.

Target groups: European Commission (Erasmus+), Government, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), ANECA (Spain).

Proposal 7. Integrate criteria of ethical and behavioural responsibility into the allocation of public funding to sports organisations, requiring the demonstration of concrete practices for the prevention of violence and discrimination, and the promotion of safe environments.

Target groups: Government, Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD), municipalities.

8. CONCLUSION

Sport has the power to change the world – but only if we act, deliberately and collectively, to place that power at the service of inclusion, equality and human dignity. The proposals contained in this Letter emerge from a European project that brought together researchers, coaches, athletes, students, managers and citizens from Portugal and Spain, committed to building a better sport.

The proposals presented here are concrete, based on empirical evidence and framed within the existing legislative and institutional context in Portugal and Spain. Their implementation requires, to varying degrees, financial resources, institutional capacity and political will.

The SCORE 4 INCLUSION project demonstrated that it is both possible and necessary to create spaces for reflection, exchange and learning around these issues. The athletes who participated in the Local Labs and the Iberian Lab showed a remarkable capacity for critical analysis, empathy and willingness to change. The 216 participants in the Fafe Seminar made it clear that racism in sport is a structural problem that requires structural responses. The 100% satisfaction rate in the Local Labs in Portugal and Spain confirms that these non-formal education methodologies are effective and that sports stakeholders are receptive to change.

The evidence gathered throughout the project shows that structural changes in sport largely depend on the attitudes and behaviours of its stakeholders. Accountability must therefore be understood as a central pillar of inclusion policies, placing responsibility on different actors, alongside institutional and legislative measures.

Change begins on every training field, in every locker room, and in every decision made by a coach, a referee, a manager or a spectator. But it cannot stop there. It requires public policies that support it, institutions that demand it, and resources that make it possible. That is what this Letter calls for.

Because sport belongs to everyone. And everyone deserves a sport that respects them.



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Seville, Spain