



VOICE
Voices for truth and dignity -
Combating sexual violence in European
sport through the voices of those affected



Funded by the Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

2nd Newsletter
October
2017





Newsletter #2

VOICE

The Voice Workshop: 25-29 September

Arriving in Köln on Sunday and Monday, all the teams working on the VOICE project – university researchers, those with lived experience (or 'survivors'), victim support teams and sports organisations - came together to develop the next stage of the project.

We spent time catching up on where each country had got to since our last meeting in February. We discussed initial findings from the research teams and discussed our next steps.

The Voice project, from its origins, has worked closely with those who have been subjected to sexual violence in sport. The views of those with lived experience were integral to our workshop. The task of developing educational resources from the life-history narratives of adults who had been affected by sexual violence in sport was challenging; but the team worked extremely hard, inspired by the presence of 'survivors', who created the right measure of reflection and challenge to ensure that the child in sport stayed at the centre of our focus.

The days were long, but full of enthusiasm and creative energy. Academic theory and research was bolstered by the valuable practical knowledge of our sports and victim-support partners about what would work for their members. Some of the team have already produced resources locally that were showcased to the group.

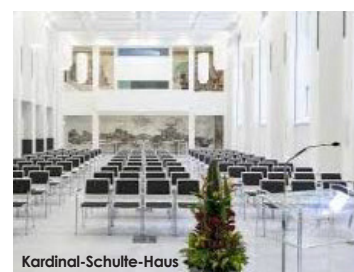
The Steering Group - Bettina Rulofs, Gitta Axmann, Mike Harill, Gloria Viseras, Kevin Murphy and Sheila Taylor - had prepared the workshop programme and Heiko Walter (from 'Digipaed multimedia') and his team assisted in the management of the sessions. Storyboards were created, heavily relying on the narratives from those who had told us their stories. Themes were developed and supporting materials discussed. We now eagerly await the first drafts of our ideas.

The team at the German Sport University ensured we had a little time to see Köln at night. The high vantage point of The Cologne Triangle Tower provides a spectacular view of the city. But the highlight of the week was the dance and music performance from some of the hugely talented students. Teresa Maria Odipo, entertained and played the piano beautifully, then led us into a sing-along session. After an intense week this was a very welcome release for all who were there. An evening that will remain with us all for a long time.

Our final conference will present the project in full: the insights from research, including the process of conducting such a unique project, and the educational resources. All underpinned by a strong motivation to share knowledge and make sports, in all countries, safer for our children and young people and free from sexual violence, exploitation and abuse.



Representatives from 21 organisations took part in the Workshop



Kardinal-Schulte-Haus

The Voice Conference

4-5 May 2018

Kardinal-Schulte-Haus
Bergische Gladbach,
Germany



The Project Team

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Launch of Short Film

The Workshop also saw the launch of a new Voice film featuring one of our inspirational ambassadors, Colin Harris (below). Everyone was moved by Colin's contribution and the film can be viewed on our Twitter account @Voicessport or via our <https://vimeo.com/236444463>



"Society, institutions, try to bury this issue, bury the voice."

Colin Harris

Karen Leach

I was delighted to be a part of the European Workshop for The Voice Project in Cologne. This project is so important to ensure the voices of those that have been deeply hurt as children now be heard.

As a survivor I know only too well the deep pain, hurt and devastation child abuse causes. My wish is this doesn't happen to another child, that people listen, start to be more aware and educated in order for children to be safe everywhere.

Hearing the Voices of survivors, their truth, and their life is a huge part of this project. Survivors must be heard, must be allowed to speak; we were silenced for far too long as children. The truth can only be told by survivors, no one else knows what it is like to be abused. The voice project has allowed our voices to be heard. From my heart I thank you for this opportunity and for the respect and value I felt from you all.

To sit in a room with people who spent the whole week passionately working towards safeguarding children, was truly an honour. I could see and feel how much everyone wants this to stop and works so hard to find the right answers and to go forward with the best safe practice, safeguarding all children.

There has been so much work put in to get to this point of the project, and much more until the conference in May. The Voice project is one of the best things I have ever done or been a part of and that is down to the wonderful people. I am very proud to be a part of this team.

Together we can achieve anything, together we are strong. People need to know the Truth. The Voice Project for me is about the truth, from Survivors whose Voices are now free.



"Survivors must be heard, must be allowed to speak."

Karen Leach, report overleaf

My reflections on the VOICE workshop

The last week of September was an intensive, emotional, sometimes also challenging but above all, a creative, industrious and heart-warming week. During that week, the European VOICE workshop was organized. Our goal was to develop educational material on sexual violence in sport based on survivors' stories we've collected during the last year. We brainstormed about the materials we could use to develop short videos on different types of sexual violence in sport. Together with the videos, other information would be included in the prevention package such as some theory and appropriate responses to sexual violence. Together with the other participants, I listened to all the stories we collected and we chose the most suitable ones to be at the heart of the material.

All I can say, is that this week was filled with emotions, which made it really intensive. At times I, and I think a lot of others with me, felt very emotional. After all, I wouldn't be a normal human being if I would lack empathic responses and if I didn't, even for just a second, try to take the perspective of the survivors in the stories. It was also challenging. All stories I listened to, and even the ones I didn't hear, are equally important, valuable and significant. Consequently, having to choose between all stories to develop educational material that covers every possible situation of sexually boundary-crossing behavior in sport, is impossible and sensitive at the same time. Impossible, because every single story is unique and contains features that should be acknowledged and educated about. Sensitive, because we were personally involved with the person whose story was being discussed by others. We sometimes knew how much he or she was in pain or how much he or she wanted to contribute to VOICE by sharing his or her story. After the decision to throw all the single stories together, everyone became creative and industrious. Thinking about how we could give every single story a voice we developed our own stories, based on the one's we've heard. Seven unique and original video scripts came out of this process. And that's what made it heart-warming: everyone working together for one single cause: to prevent sexual violence in sport.

I would also like to thank Bettina and Gitta for the perfectly organized workshop. Alongside the serious work, they made sure there was some time for laughter and banter (and Kölsch!) as well. I am so grateful for receiving the opportunity to be part of this lovely group. They welcomed all young researchers with open arms and gave us a voice, by including us in every single step of the project. I am so proud to call this project my very first real (international) research experience.

Dagmar Stockman, participant from Belgium

APPEAL

The project consortium is looking for organisations to support the initiative and activities, as well as individuals affected by sexual violence or abuse in the context of sport or physical education.

If you have been affected, or know somebody who has been, we would like to hear from you.

We apply a broad definition of sexual violence, including a wide range of behaviours, e.g. verbal and emotional sexual harassment, physical sexual violence and also homophobic violence.

We especially invite individuals living in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom (project partner countries) to contact the researchers in these countries, helping us share the story and conduct a European research study. All contacts are strictly confidential and identity of participants taking part in a research interview is protected.

If you wish to contribute your experience to the research please contact the research team in your country:

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