

Racism, ethnic discrimination and social exclusion in sport

Article 21 falling under the Equality Chapter of the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) prohibits discrimination on several grounds, including race, colour, ethnic or social origin and membership of a national minority.

Policy context

The potential of sports to convey human values is of increasing interest for the European Union. At the same time, the perception and awareness of racism and discrimination in sport have considerably changed at European level over the past decade, at least in football, with an emerging need for action. European and international actors and stakeholders active in the field of sport corroborate this development of a more active approach against racism and discrimination in sports.

In a new report, the [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights \(FRA\)](#) examines these issues in detail.

Widening participation in sports

In many sports across the European Union, minorities and migrants are underrepresented, particularly in the management positions of sport organisations. Women and girls with a minority or migrant background are particularly underrepresented.

In some countries, social exclusion and geographical isolation can lead to low participation levels of Roma and Travellers in sport. Unavailability of sports facilities in certain areas also reduces participation levels of some groups.

Reinforcing awareness and improving diversity

More targeted awareness-raising activities by sports governing bodies, federations and clubs are necessary to realise the inclusive potential of sports. Such activities could include diversity programmes to encourage the participation of migrants and ethnic minorities, or initiatives to remove the barriers to accessing management positions in sports organisations.

Monitoring racist incidents in sport

Racist incidents among spectators of sport events are often reported in the media. In men's football, for instance, fans are recorded as the main perpetrators of such incidents.

However, racist incidents also take place among players, particularly in amateur sports.

Referees and club officials may also be involved in racist incidents. Furthermore, a considerable number of incidents take place in the context of youth sports.

Systems monitoring racist incidents in sports only exist in a number of EU Member States. Some are more advanced and capture more racist incidents than others; most available data, however, are related to football.

Effective monitoring

National and local authorities are encouraged to develop effective monitoring of racist incidents and discrimination in sport in close cooperation with sports federations to improve the recording of incidents, and also to facilitate lodging individual complaints.

Strengthening regulation and enforcement against racist incidents in sport

Statutes or similar documents of European and international sports organisations often contain anti-racism or anti-discrimination provisions. However, few such organisations have clear disciplinary procedures against racist or discriminatory behaviour in place, with the exception of international football and cricket organisations.

The disciplinary regulations of the [Union of European Football Associations \(UEFA\)](#), as a good practice example, comprise anti-racism provisions and a catalogue of negative sanctions in case of infringement.

To make anti-racism regulations more effective:

Sports governing bodies need to elaborate and implement effective anti-racism regulations and equality measures. The European Commission could play an important role in coordinating the exchange of good practice between Member States in this context.

The [Council Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia in criminal law](#) is an important legal instrument that could be used to combat racism in sport.

Equality Bodies and sport

The FRA report shows that in at least 16 EU Member States Equality Bodies and other institutions, such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), take action in cases of racist incidents and ethnic discrimination in sport.

To involve Equality Bodies in tackling racism and ethnic discrimination in sport:

Equality Bodies and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) should be more involved in addressing racial discrimination in sport. These bodies could support sports federations and clubs in developing awareness-raising activities. They could provide support to potential victims and, where this is permitted, participate in legal action against perpetrators.

Background

The FRA report is based on interviews with relevant experts and stakeholders, and on secondary data and information covering the period 2003-2008. In addition, input was provided by stakeholders at European and national level including national sport federations. The research examined professional and amateur sports engaging men, women and children or youth.

Football and athletics were examined in each of the 27 EU Member States and a third sport, popular in the respective Member State, was also covered.

EU Member State	Sports examined
Austria	Football, athletics, alpine skiing
Belgium	Football, athletics, basketball
Bulgaria	Football, athletics, volleyball
Cyprus	Football, athletics, basketball
Czech Republic	Football, athletics, ice hockey
Denmark	Football, athletics, handball
Estonia	Football, athletics, basketball
Finland	Football, athletics, basketball
France	Football athletics, tennis
Germany	Football, athletics, handball
Greece	Football, athletics, basketball
Hungary	Football, athletics, water polo
Ireland	Football, athletics, hurling/camogie
Italy	Football, athletics, basketball
Latvia	Football, athletics, ice hockey
Lithuania	Football, athletics, basketball
Luxembourg	Football, athletics, cycling
Malta	Football, athletics, basketball
Netherlands	Football, athletics, korfbal
Poland	Football, athletics, speedway racing
Portugal	Football, athletics, handball
Romania	Football, athletics, handball
Slovakia	Football, athletics, ice hockey
Slovenia	Football, athletics, alpine skiing
Spain	Football, athletics, basketball
Sweden	Football, athletics, ice hockey
United Kingdom	Football, athletics, cricket

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has published two reports on racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport in the EU:

- *Racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport: A comparative overview of the situation in the European Union*
- *Racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport: The situation in the European Union – Summary report*

A Handbook of good practice will be published in 2011 for sports federations, clubs and players or athletes, with examples of initiatives to combat racism, ethnic discrimination and the exclusion of migrants and minorities in sports.

The reports are available at www.fra.europa.eu