



Good practice handbook, No. 4

# LGBT inclusion in sport

# **LGBT Inclusion in sport**

**Louise Englefield**

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## Foreword

During an address to the UN on 18 December 2008, Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that:

the ageless cliché that everyone is equal but some are more equal than others is not acceptable. No human being should be denied their human rights simply because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. No human being should be subject to discrimination, violence, criminal sanctions or abuse simply because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

The fight against homophobia is everyone's responsibility.

At the Council of Europe, the objective of this fight is two fold: on the one hand, to promote and ensure respect for the human rights and dignity of every individual, including lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender persons (LGBT persons), and to combat discrimination and violence against them on the other.

There is no room in European sport for violence and discrimination against LGBT persons. In conformity with European sports policy standards adopted within the Council of Europe (European Sports Charter, revised in 2001 and the Code of Sports Ethics, revised in 2010) or within the European Union (for example, the Commission's White Paper on Sport, 2007), discrimination will not be tolerated when it comes to sports activities or access to sports facilities. These texts comply with the universalist approach by recognising everyone's right to participate in sport.

This discrimination ban in the field of sport is also present in other standards more specific to LGBT persons. For example, in 2010 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe asked its

member states (in its recommendation on measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>1</sup>) to take effective measures "to prevent, counteract and punish the use of discriminatory insults with reference to sexual orientation or gender identity during and in connection with sports events", and invited states to "encourage dialogue with and support sports associations and fan clubs in developing awareness-raising activities regarding discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in sport and in condemning manifestations of intolerance towards them". Already in 2003, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe presented a whole series of measures in its Recommendation 1635 (2003) on lesbians and gays in sport.

This edition from the series of handbooks on good practices gives a practical look at the political commitment made by Council of Europe member states in the fight against homophobia in sport. By using concrete examples, EPAS hopes this handbook will provide the necessary tools to completely banish homophobia

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1. Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5, reproduced in the publication *Combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity* (June 2011), a compilation of the standards drawn up by the Council of Europe. This work should serve as a reference for the governments, international institutions, NGOs, media professionals and to all those who are – or should be – professionally or otherwise involved or interested in protecting and promoting the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. The compilation contains the recommendation and its explanatory report (pp. 7-46) and the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1635 (2003), p. 88, as well as the Committee of Ministers' reply, p. 90. For further information on the activities of the Council of Europe, see the website [www.coe.int/lgbt](http://www.coe.int/lgbt).

and transphobia in sport at all levels – professional, elite and sport for all – and that all sports clubs, associations, federations or public authorities in charge of sport will take the subject seriously, using sport, especially with young people, as a tool to fight against homophobia throughout society as a whole.

Stanislas Frossard  
*Executive Secretary*

*Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)*  
*Directorate of Human Rights and Antidiscrimination*  
*Directorate General II: Democracy*  
*Council of Europe*

*“It is not possible to be neutral to homophobia. Either you speak out very clearly that homophobia will not be tolerated, or in reality you communicate to your surroundings that you accept it – regardless of whether you do or not.*

*Norwegian sports shall not be value neutral. We must take a stand; for diversity, for an open and inclusive sport, against any harassment or degradation. ‘With sport’ should also mean ‘against homophobia’.*

*I want everyone reading this not to doubt. Sport in Norway shall be open and inclusive for all – gays, lesbians, heterosexuals, bisexual, and transgender persons.*

*We should and must take responsibility. Sports against homophobia!”*

Tove Paule  
President (2007-2011)  
The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee  
and Confederation of Sports

(From the magazine *Sports against homophobia*, published by the Norwegian Olympic Committee May 2011, sent to all 12 000 local sport clubs in Norway, available in Norwegian at [www.idrett.no](http://www.idrett.no) )





## Introduction

The European institutions have developed standards to promote diversity and combat discrimination in sport, for example the Council of Europe in its European Sport Charter (revised in 2001) and the revised Code of Sports Ethics (16 June 2010) or the European Commission in its “White Paper on Sport” (2007). No discrimination shall be permitted in access to sport facilities or to sport activities.

Sport involves all citizens regardless of gender, race, age, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and social or economic background. (European Commission White Paper on Sport, 2007)

However, the experience of the European Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF) is that sport is still a hostile environment for many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, even in European countries with positive protective legislation regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. Therefore, LGBT people do not enjoy the benefits of sport in the same ways as Europe’s non-LGBT citizens, namely:

- health
- education
- volunteering and active citizenship
- social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities
- the prevention of and fight against racism and violence.

It seems on many levels that sport has been left behind despite the advances in LGBT human rights seen in other areas of European

life, such as family rights, employment rights, hate crime and freedom of assembly.

European sport should, indeed, be a “level playing field” of sporting opportunities for all Europe’s citizens. In fact, much investment has been made in recent years in dealing with inequalities where they have been visible and identified. However, the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender athletes in Europe is not necessarily one of equality of opportunity on or off the playing field and issues of sexual orientation and gender identity have remained largely invisible within sport, with the exception of a few high-profile cases.

This handbook examines the reasons for the widespread and continued exclusion of LGBT people from mainstream sport, examines the nature and mechanisms of prejudice and discrimination towards LGBT people in sport and highlights the costs of this exclusion to sport. The handbook also provides examples of good practice in working with both young people and adults to tackle homophobia in sport and to create more inclusive, tolerant sporting environments in which all LGBT athletes can flourish.



## I. The environment

In order to understand the participation or lack of participation of LGBT people in organised sport it is important to understand the environment in which sports participation takes place.

With the exception of a handful of sports such as softball, korfbal and sailing, sport, since the birth of the ancient Olympics in 776 BC, has been a very gendered environment, largely based on a two-sex model, namely participation and competition continues to be based on male and female segregation.

Within this environment a culture has grown, it could be argued, in which very rigid definitions of men and women exist. Certainly this is true in elite sport. In an industry in which results are achieved through the honing of athletes' bodies for either male or female competition, definitions of the biology of competitors becomes paramount. And because we do not live in a world in which we, as humans, operate purely as biological beings, these rigid definitions of male and female biology have resulted in a culture of complex narratives about what it is to be "male" and what it is to be "female" within sport.

As a number of academics have highlighted, sport remains an "inescapably ... sex segregated social institution" (Brackenridge, 2009). What Brackenridge and other sports academics contest is that not only is sport delineated along very rigid sex boundaries related to male and female physique, but that these ideas about sex – the physiology we are born with – become confused with gender roles – the ideas society constructs about the role of men and women.

Generally speaking, what we perceive as division based on biological difference is often in fact deeply entrenched socially constructed gender differences. That is, how we expect women to behave and how we expect men to behave in our society.

Within these very rigid gender roles, academics also argue, a particular construction of masculinity is prized above all, among athletes, commentators and fans of sport; a kind of "super masculinity". This construction not only disadvantages women's sport and women's participation in sport per se, as women can never achieve the accolade of their male counterparts, but it also creates a culture which excludes a diversity of masculinities and is heteronormative (an assumption heterosexuality is the only normal sexual orientation) in essence; where being a successful athlete for a man means being a heterosexual man.

Meanwhile, for elite women in sport, the challenge becomes a complex juggling of conflicting gender roles – being the best you can be within your chosen sport, while remaining "feminine" and therefore desirable to men.

So, what happens when we value particular relationships over others in sport and how do these discourses in elite sport impact on grassroots engagement?

### I.1. Homophobia in sport

One of the consequences of these rigid gender roles has been the prevalence of homophobia in sport (it can be characterised as a range of negative attitudes and feelings towards homosexuality and people who are identified as or perceived as being homosexual).

This has an affect on the engagement in sport and enjoyment of sport not only by LGBT participants but also men and women who are seen not to conform to particular gender stereotypes.

As outlined earlier, prevalent social attitudes dictate that to be good at sport, men *must* be heterosexual. Of course the obvious implication of this stereotype for men who are not good at sport is that they *must* be homosexual.

We see this stereotype played out in changing facilities, playgrounds and sports halls across Europe. Homophobic language in community sport is still commonplace, with terms such as “faggot” and “queer” (and their national equivalents) being regular terms of abuse for boys who don’t achieve, while “kicking it, throwing it or running like a girl” (Walther-Ahrens, 2011) remain normalised ways of subjugating opponents and sometimes fellow teammates.

Meanwhile, girls who excel at sport and place value on physical strength, speed, stamina or competitiveness cannot possibly be heterosexual in a society where, on the whole, (heterosexual) women are still expected to be submissive nurturers.

Of course, the stereotypes are further compounded by the way in which sports themselves are attributed a “gendered” identity. Take football, for example, which is definitely considered a male sport; and rugby, handball, cricket, snooker, angling and even golf. Meanwhile ice skating, gymnastics, synchronised swimming and lacrosse are all seen as female sports.

This results in those daring to cross the designated gender coding of particular sports inevitably being subject to speculation about their sexuality. In this environment, male gymnasts and female

rugby players are equally encouraged to prove their heterosexual masculinity/femininity or, in the case of lesbian, gay and bisexual athletes, conceal their homosexuality.

These societal “scripts” about who may or may not succeed in sport have led to the considerable invisibility of lesbian and gay athletes in elite sport.

## 1.2. Transphobia in sport

Meanwhile, the highly gendered nature of sport creates additional problems for transgender and intersex athletes. Transphobia is a range of negative attitudes and feelings towards transsexualism and transsexual or transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity.

While competition is strictly organised into “male” and “female” categories, a focus has naturally emerged over time on the differences between male and female, or “sexed” bodies, particularly as the differences between men and women become less in wider society.

This has resulted in a history within elite sport, of “sex testing” athletes; a mandatory practice which was carried out as recently as 1998 by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as an attempt to produce differentiation between men and women, when it was not self-evident. Of course, sex testing was only ever carried out on women athletes, which raises questions about its legitimacy, but the practice was also put under pressure by high profile cases such as that of Maria Jose Martinez Patino, the Spanish hurdler who failed a “sex test” because she was found to have

XY chromosomes. She was barred for three years and stripped of her medals, before being reinstated in 1988 when it was proved that her body could not use the extra testosterone it carried.

The IOC Stockholm Consensus on Sex Reassignment in Sport (2003) has gone some way to address the problems caused by the “sex test” for elite athletes. Rather than relying on the individual country’s protective legislation, the IOC have ruled that:

- “transsexual athletes who have had sex reassignment surgery before puberty shall be admitted to competition;
- all other transsexuals must be post-operative, have legal and governmental recognition of their gender conferred by their country of citizenship, have hormonal therapy administered by medical personnel to minimise ‘gender-related advantage’ in competition, and live for a minimum of two years in their newly assigned gender.”

However, their ruling certainly has not eliminated transphobic attitudes in sport. Many transgender athletes still report facing negative attitudes to their participation in sport. As Cavanagh and Sykes (2006) explain, debates about the participation of trans athletes have been very much limited to paranoid debates about “genetic men infiltrating women’s competition”, and yet it is ridiculous to assume that there are men in the world who are so desperate to win a medal in their sport that they would try to disguise themselves as women to achieve their goal. In fact, transitioning from male to female does not necessarily incur an unfair physiological advantage. As Michelle Dumaresq, the Canadian professional downhill mountain bike racer explains:

It actually made things harder because after the hormone treatment and operation I no longer had the muscle mass to support my bones. This so-called advantage I’m supposed to have doesn’t exist.

Of course, within elite sport slight biological differences can have a significant impact on competition, but at a community sports level, there is such a diversity of participation levels and levels of participants, that the issue of biology should be a very minor factor when considering the delivery of open and accessible sport.

It should also be noted that while the debate on access to sport focuses on trans women (women who were born into a man’s body, but who have made the transition to living as women), that they make up only part of the trans population of Europe. Another largely invisible segment of the population is trans men (men who were born into a woman’s body, but who have now made the transition to living as men) whose access to sport and physical activity also needs to be addressed positively. While sport maintains its focus on binary gender division, it is at risk of being unresponsive to, as Mianne Bagger, Danish Professional Golfer, put it in 2009,

the realities of human diversity and the huge “grey” area that exists between the ... definition of male and female.

### 1.3. Institutional discrimination

While there have been a small number of European athletes “coming out” during their careers in recent years (Vibeke Skofterud, Norway, cross country skiing, 2008; Ireen Wüst,

Netherlands, speed skating, 2009; Donal Óg Cusack, Ireland, hurling, 2009; Anton Hysén, Sweden, football, 2011; Steven Davies, UK, cricket, 2011), these remain few and far between. We still have yet to see a footballer or basketball player at the top level of European sport be open about their homosexuality since Justin Fashanu. Fashanu, the UK's first "million pound" black footballer revealed his sexual orientation to the press in 1990 and subsequently committed suicide eight years later.

This lack of visible LGBT high-profile athletes can be seen as a direct result of the discomfort sport continues to have with (homo) sexuality and gender identity, and this manifests itself in a number of ways throughout our sporting institutions, ministries, governing bodies and NGOs. While many of these organisations seem to have embraced the agenda for equal opportunities, sexual orientation and gender identity are often made problematic within sport and not given the same consideration as, for example, racism, disability and gender.

Although there is some acknowledgement among these organisations that issues exist for LGBT people in terms of access to participation and retention, there is often a lack of expertise in the area, and, in many cases, persistent stereotyping and a general confusion about the issues.

Women's sport, for example, has been consistently reluctant to deal with the issue of homophobia because of the way homophobia is used to marginalise women's participation in sport. It seems that it is often easier to deny the existence of lesbians in women's sport than to challenge the gender stereotypes that equate all female athletes with lesbians.

As Pat Griffin, leading US academic and activist explains, women's sport is full of closets, but these closets are not just occupied by "closeted lesbians":

These Closets are full of heterosexual women who believe that women's sport is one lesbian scandal away from ruin. (Griffin, 1998)

Anxiety also persists within sport about the role of LGBT people off the field of play, as volunteers, administrators and coaches, particularly those working in youth sport. Persistent stereotypes of gay men as paedophiles and lesbians as recruiters of girls into lesbianism prevail in many parts of European sport and these views do not necessarily reflect a culture of acceptance in the country in which they are expressed.

Research by Leanne Norman, Carnegie Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University (2011), for example, into the experience of lesbian coaches in the UK revealed that while the experience of professional lesbian coaches was improving, some "lesbian coaches were deemed less skilled, assuming (gay) women coaches do not make sporting leaders" or had been considered "paedophiles" and "predators towards their athletes" at some point during their career. Meanwhile, in 2012 the UK has been rated as the highest-scoring country in terms of legal rights for LGBT people in Europe (see ILGA-Europe's Annual Review).

The costs of LGBT exclusion from sport, however, can be significant. It is estimated that approximately 8% of Europe's population is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This represents a significant market in terms of:

- paying members of gyms and other sports facilities;

- ticket-buying customers for sports events;
- volunteering and active citizenship.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, John Amaechi, former NBA player and psychologist, spoke publically about his sexuality in 2007, when he published his autobiography *Man in the Middle* in which he describes his experience as a closeted gay athlete. He talks of the costs of LGBT exclusion and homophobia in terms of the performance of elite athletes. He asks us to consider how much more athletes would be able to achieve if they were able to be open about their sexuality.

As Daniel Kowalski, Australian swimming champion, said of his own career when he came out in 2010:

I lost to some amazing champions, so I'm not for a second saying that this (not being open about my sexuality) is the reason I didn't win. I often wonder if the lack of self-confidence and lack of identity in many ways held me back from reaching my potential.

The cost in terms of athletes can be quantified not only in the performance of athletes already engaged in sport, but also the pool from which we draw talent. Ultimately, the greater the pool of participants, the greater the chance sport has of nurturing elite athletes. If we continue to exclude LGBT people from sport, directly or indirectly, we limit the population of potential champions. Can European sport really afford to miss out on these opportunities for growth and investment?

2. See [www.euractiv.com/sports/volunteer-work-sport/article-129580](http://www.euractiv.com/sports/volunteer-work-sport/article-129580). Most sport in EU member states is run by a volunteer workforce of coaches, administrators, officials. Without these volunteers grassroots sport could never happen.

Of course, not all discrimination is direct. The largely invisible presence of LGBT people in organised sport has resulted in a lack of strategic inclusion. Fundamentally, stakeholders are still reluctant to monitor sexual orientation and gender identity and this has resulted in a lack of robust data in relation to LGBT participation and progression within sport. This lack of evidence means that issues of participation at all levels remains invisible and organisational strategy often fails to address issues of LGBT inclusion in all areas.

#### 1.4. Including LGBT people in sport

Including LGBT people in sport should not be a complex task for organisations wishing to explore new markets and ensure they are providing services to all. Outlined below is the EGLSF's "Eight steps for LGBT inclusion in sport":

1. Do not be afraid to raise the issue.
2. Audit existing provisions across your organisation.
3. Access appropriate training and support.
4. Promote the positives to members (e.g. business case).
5. Set a zero-tolerance agenda for homophobia and transphobia (including homophobic and transphobic language).
6. Engage with stakeholders such as EGLSF, LGBT sports groups and community groups with regards to need (across age, gender etc.).
7. Do not rely on one person to develop policy and practice; ensure whole organisation has engagement and ownership.
8. Celebrate your achievements.



Meanwhile, those wishing to positively engage LGBT people in sport should be asking themselves the following questions as part of their strategic planning approach:

- **Management and administration:** Are LGBT people represented at management level with the organisation?
- **Membership:** Are LGBT people represented among membership? If not, how can the organisation/club benefit from this new market?
- **Competitive structures:** Does the organisation/club provide competition that is accessible to trans participants?
- **Increasing participation:** Is foundation-level activity targeting the LGBT communities at all? Do “taster” sessions and grassroots activities meet the needs of LGBT participants?
- **Developing coaching and coach education:** Are coaches aware of the need to challenge homophobia and transphobia in their work? Do LGBT coaches get overlooked for leadership programmes? Are there clear pathways for LGBT coaches given the lack of visible role models?
- **Performance and excellence:** Are talented individuals being overlooked because they do not fit the heterosexual norms? Do the same pathways exist for LGBT athletes?
- **Facilities:** Are the needs of LGBT people considered in the development of new facilities and their location? Are they in locations in which LGBT people feel safe?
- **Information, publicity and promotion:** Is the image of the organisation and its messaging inclusive of LGBT people? What is being done to positively engage the LGBT community?

- **External liaison and communication:** Have key LGBT partner organisations been identified? How will your organisation consult with them?

## 2. Young people, sexual orientation, gender identity and sport

It is clear that the campaign to challenge homophobia in sport and to work towards the full inclusion of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people requires the education of those involved in sports delivery. It also requires a focus on young people, who are the future of European sport.

Young people can be most at risk of homophobia and transphobia in sport and the consequences of this can be to alienate young LGBT people, and young people assumed to be LGBT, from sport for life. The intimate nature of sport, and a lack of appropriate facilities (such as communal changing areas with no privacy) in school and youth sport can leave LGBT young people particularly vulnerable to abuse. A recent study by Sheffield Hallam University (Formby, 2011) in the UK showed that LGBT students in more than one school in South Yorkshire were being asked to change in toilets or other rooms separate from, but located near, the changing areas their classmates were using. The report concludes that, “Perhaps not surprisingly, this made them (LGBT pupils) feel singled out and excluded, and contributed to some not attending PE and/or school.” Other UK studies have confirmed these findings (UK LGBT Sports Development organisation also found this to be the case in a study of young people’s attitudes to sport. The RFL, the national governing body of rugby league, also found similar experiences among young LGBT people in their study into perceptions and experiences of rugby league).

The use of homophobic and transphobic language, as outlined earlier in the handbook, is also a particular issue in school and youth sport. If left unchallenged, name-calling and so-called “banter” by young people can result in damaging effects to the self-esteem of young people and their alienation from sport. In environments in which homophobia and transphobia go unchallenged, LGBT young people often feel that they are left with a choice to either remove themselves from sports participation altogether or to attempt to compartmentalise and hide that part of their identity. As the age of “coming out” lowers throughout Europe (the average age has lowered from 18 years to 14 years in the past decade in some western European countries), it can be concluded this exclusion from sport or compromise of identity within sport is happening at a younger and younger age.

### 2.1. Examples of good practice

The following examples of good practice represent initiatives by EGLSF member clubs and associated organisations, which have worked to engage young people in a variety of ways. Some focus on the engagement of LGBT young people in sport in LGBT positive environments (Jugendnetzwerk Lambda, Pride Youth Games); others provide examples of tackling homophobia with young people within sport (Plons Shorties, Out in Slovenia) and others still use sport as a vehicle through which to challenge homophobia in wider society (Tackle Homophobia, North Side/South Side Games).

### 2.1.1. With Sports Against Homophobia

The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee & Confederation of Sports (NIF), Norwegian People's Aid & The Norwegian LGBT Association

**Country:** Norway

**Sport:** across organised sport

**Target group:** sports organisations

**Project description:** "With Sports Against Homophobia" was a project for increased diversity and equality which was carried out from May 2007 to December 2009, and partly funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

The aim of the project was to:

- promote sport as an open and safe environment where gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people can feel at home;
- prevent and counteract discrimination in society through comprehensive action against harassment and homophobia in organised sports;
- improve living conditions and quality of life of gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgender people.

Project objectives included:

- raising awareness and increasing the severity of responses to discrimination and exclusion on account of sexual orientation;
- enhancing policy work within sports against discrimination because of sexual orientation;

- developing and enhancing the means with which to work against harassment and homophobia, including methods raising consciousness and challenging attitudes;
- presenting good role models and healthy attitudes regarding various sexual orientations through sports;
- ensuring that work against discrimination because of sexual orientation is included in the ordinary business of sport.

The project acknowledged the influence that sports leaders have on the lives of LGBT young people and encouraged them to set a zero-tolerance agenda for homophobia in sport. It educated coaches that they could not remain neutral to homophobia or harassment. They must speak out very clearly to say that homophobia will not be tolerated, and be aware that not doing so communicates to their athletes that it is acceptable.

The project taught coaches to proactively create a safe environment by setting ground rules such as: "We have zero tolerance for harassment; whether you are white or black, homosexual or heterosexual means nothing here." It showed the importance of using the word "homosexual"; highlighting that a coach who openly dares to use the word "homosexual" in such a context, and who addresses the issue at all, communicates that he or she is open to and tolerant of this issue and that this creates a safe environment for LGBT young people.

The project also taught parity between all forms of discrimination and encouraged sports leaders to take action against all forms of discrimination and harassment in sport, including homophobia. It taught coaches to challenge homophobic language used by young

people, such as “faggot”, “queer”, “homo”, “dyke”, “butch”, etc. It taught coaches that the use of the word “queer” as a swear-word is unacceptable and gave them the tools to challenge this language among young people.

### 2.1.2. Jugendnetzwerk Lambda Berlin

**Country:** Germany

**Sports:** ball games, power aerobics, yoga, bowling, black light mini golf, ice skating, swimming, slacklining

**Target group:** LGBT youth up to 27 years of age, teachers and trainers from athletic groups

**Project description:** The Sports Project is a programme run by Lambda Berlin-Brandenburg e.V., a youth organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people, which is financially supported by the Initiative für sexuelle Vielfalt branch of the Berlin city government.

The purpose of the project is to allow LGBT youth to engage in group sports and encourage personal input and active participation in a safe and welcoming environment.

The programme's concept was developed through the collaboration of youth members and Lambda staff/volunteers. The Sports Project meets once a week to engage in a variety of sports as well as to discuss the discrimination LGBT people face in sports today, particularly within the public school system. The programme's open collaboration concept allows for continuous input, analysis and suggestions from youth members on how the weekly meetings are constructed and implemented. The participating youth are free to choose the sporting activities they wish to engage in and the open environment ensures that no one is forced to take part if they do not wish to.

Besides the benefit of sports and exercise, there is a strong focus placed on the exchange of ideas and experiences, both ongoing

issues and past experiences. The sharing of ideas not only helps people to talk and open up but also helps to establish a feeling of camaraderie and community.

Many participants share experiences of isolation and discrimination in school sports and describe distressing incidents in changing rooms and gym halls, especially trans youth and other more visible LGBT youth.

Others describe experiences of exclusion and embarrassment which led to a negative association with sports in general. Outright rejection or being picked last by their peers for team sports is one of many such traumatic experiences shared during the group discussions.

Pressure to perform well in gender-biased sports was another problem identified by a large percentage of the members.

Positive experiences were also shared and reflected on, including a change of attitude in fellow peers as a positive reaction to an LGBT student's coming-out at school. This sometimes led to a significant drop in anti-gay jokes and comments.

The ideas and thoughts expressed in the weekly meetings by members have been collected in an Internet blog ([queererschulsport.tumblr.com](http://queererschulsport.tumblr.com)) which ensures that these experiences are shared beyond the group and made available to everyone outside Lambda, including non-LGBT people. This also aims to actively attract new members and participants so that the Sports Project remains sustainable through new and ongoing membership.

Besides some short scenes where young people were filmed talking about their experiences, those involved also collaborated on a script for a film targeting these topics. Here, the everyday experience of young LGBT people in German gym classes and school sport clubs were shown from the point of view of the participants. Due to the fact that Lambda groups are open to and include international members whose first language might not be German, participants also suggested that English subtitles be created for the film.

The variety of sporting activities in which the members wanted to participate varied quite a bit since most wanted to take part in as many sports as possible. Many were also eager to try trendy sporting activities like slacklining and black light mini golf. On the occasion when they agreed to play black light mini golf together, the sports group drew a larger amount of participants than usual, proving the success of the open collaboration concept of the programme.

### 2.1.3. Tackle Homophobia

East Sussex County Council, Targeted Youth Support Service & The Justin Campaign

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Sport:** football

**Target group:** 11-19 year-olds

**Project description:** “Tackle Homophobia” is a project that seeks to work with young people in order to raise awareness and challenge homophobia on and off the football pitch. East Sussex County Council, The Justin Campaign and Brighton & Hove Albion FC in the community run weekly football sessions that engage young people in positive sporting activities while delivering and promoting an anti-homophobia message. The Justin Campaign was founded to demonstrate that ten years after Justin Fashanu’s tragic suicide in 1998, homophobia is still hugely prevalent in both grassroots and professional football. Along with raising awareness the campaign has a strong focus on Art, Events, Education and football. Through these four key initiatives and some forward thinking strategic work with other inclusive sporting organisations, the Justin Campaign seeks to challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions that exist around LGBT people and to work towards a future where the visibility of LGBT people in football is both accepted and celebrated.

To date the project has run a high-profile tournament in which over 150 young people participated with a similar number also in attendance. The event received high praise from a variety of areas including local councillors, the Stonewall charity, and was featured on a number of media sources such as The Pink Paper and several premiership football club websites. Teams wore striking

merchandise showing “Tackle Homophobia” to support the anti-discriminatory message. The Peacehaven Team also attended a recent England Under 19s match and were invited onto the pitch for press photographers to capture the bright pink shirts with slogan making a very explicit stand against homophobia.

The project continues to expand with young people, having a clear focus and a leading role in organising games against other youth teams, a further tournament and possibly attending a European Youth Tournament next year. Those involved gain skills in football, social engagement, team work, and respect in sports on and off the pitch.

Success is measured by observing less homophobic bullying/discrimination, increasing LGBT participation, and increasing engagement of young people in sports; the benefits provided for young people have the following timescales:

- short-term outcomes (0-1 month) – increasing positive activities;
- medium-term outcomes (2-5 months) – increasing positive activities, providing safe place for LGBT young people to take part in sports;
- long-term outcomes (6 months-1 year) – increasing positive activities and social cohesion due to increased tolerance and social skills.

The project has received funding via an application made by young people and additional funding from a housing association group; there were enough resources to continue the project until July 2012. It has expanded from football sessions in one town to now being run in two towns with a district-wide tournament.

#### 2.1.4. Pride Youth Games (PYG)

Pride Sports, LGBT Youth North West

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Sports:** track and field, swimming, bell boating, cycling, orienteering

**Target group:** 16-21 year-old LGBT young people

**Project description:** Pride Youth Games is a participatory event that takes place as part of Pride Games, the UK's annual LGBT multisport event held in Manchester. The aim of the PYG is to engage LGBT young people in physical activity at the point at which many have become disengaged from sport because of negative experiences in school and community provision due to homophobia and transphobia.

Young people participating in the PYG are recruited through established LGBT youth provision from throughout the UK. This youth provision can be characterised as delivering support to LGBT young people who face a number of issues, such as:

- homophobia/transphobia;
- homelessness;
- financial problems;
- family breakdown/childhood abuse.

The focus of the PYG is on sports participation, enabling young people to “have a go” at a range of sports activities during a residential weekend programme, which also contains a number of youth-work or team-building activities. Elements of the sports programme, such as cycling, are delivered independently to the Pride Games Programme, while others, such as track and field,

have some overlap. This enables young people to watch adults competing in sports activities, for example during their lunch time, exposing them to positive LGBT role models in the field of sport.

The PYG also have competitive elements, encouraging young people to positively try their best throughout the programme. For example, the track and field event offers 30 minutes coaching for all participants in throws, jumps and running. Young people are then given the opportunity to race and to record their performance in jumps and throws. The programme always ends with relay races of teams with mixed abilities, encouraging young people to value each other's team contribution.

The PYG have run for several years during the Pride Games. In its most successful format, in Manchester, more than 90 young people from throughout the UK participated. There was an opening ceremony, which was supported by one of Greater Manchester's local authorities and included welcoming speeches by a Police Inspector and the local Mayor. A Prom night was also organised.

Providing LGBT young people with a positive, anti-discriminatory environment in which to participate in sport at the Youth Games has had the following outcomes:

- encouraged those participants who had become disaffected with sport to re-engage;
- raised awareness of the need for LGBT sports groups/clubs to engage with young people;
- enabled young people to make new friends/develop new networks;



- empowered young LGBT people to feel positive about their bodies;
- made young LGBT people aware of the range of options available to them in terms of sport and physical activity.

### 2.1.5. The North Side/South Side Games

COC Rotterdam in partnership with: Rotterdam EuroGames 2011, Rotterdam Verkeert, Homosport Nederland, Hogeschool (University) Rotterdam

**Country:** Netherlands

**Sports:** football, soccer showdown, basketball

**Target group:** youth aged 14-18

**Project description:** In 2011 the EuroGames were organised in Rotterdam. COC Rotterdam (the oldest LGBT organisation in the world) took the opportunity to develop a sports education programme for secondary schools in Rotterdam. The activities were carried out in December 2010 at three schools in Rotterdam (two in the north and one in the south part of the city). In total 500 students participated in these games.

For three days, combined sports and educational programmes were offered at the three schools. The three schools' scheduled gymnastic lessons were "taken over" by the organisation of "North Side/South Side Games". Each lesson had four topics: one educational and three practical sports.

The educational topic lasted approximately 15 minutes and was led by two to four "tutors". It started by showing a promotional film about the upcoming EuroGames in their city, after which the tutors started a discussion by asking the students questions such as: "Did you know of the existence of EuroGames in your city?" They also asked what the students would do if their best friend told them they were gay. The students were also given the opportunity to put questions to the tutors (most of whom were gay or lesbian).

The practical sports topics consisted of actual sports matches where the group was divided into teams playing against each other.

The discussions were fruitful. If it started slowly, the tutors used their enthusiasm, expertise and collaboration to make it run smoothly. The introductory film was a good starter. By combining the educational part with practical sporting activities, an open atmosphere was created and any aggression was released during the sports and not during the discussion.

During discussions not many students thought positively or had nuanced opinions about homosexuality. By speaking these thoughts aloud, groups' opinions became more positive because others also dared to share their positive thoughts on homosexuality. Observations showed that boys were, in general, more negative about homosexuality than girls. This was also the case with the Muslim students. The fact that the discussions were embedded within sports activities had a positive effect on the dialogue. The regular teachers at the schools said afterwards that students continued the dialogue even after classes.

The following points summarise the outcomes of and the conclusions to be drawn from this initiative.

- **Sustainability:** the sustainability of the program is bolstered by successful project management, full documentation and media support.
- **Anti-discrimination:** the initiative managed to create awareness about homosexuality related to sports.

- **Effectiveness and impact:** the programme made young people think about homosexuality and sports and they kept on talking about it even after the event had finished.
- **Transferability:** the programme can easily be used in other secondary schools. Full documentation and evaluation are available (in Dutch).
- **Review and assessment:** the programme is low-cost and easy to use. However, participation of schools was lower than anticipated. In general schools did not want to participate in combined sporting and educational activities. In some cases the PE teachers were enthusiastic but the school management or board did not support them.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** the groups that supported this initiative were actively engaged and collaboration ran smoothly.

### 2.1.6. Plons Shorties

HHZV Plons

**Country:** Netherlands

**Sport:** swimming

**Target group:** young swimmers (under 12 years old)

**Project description:** “Plons Shorties” is a swimming competition where gay adult swimmers meet young swimmers from regular swimming clubs. The participants each swim one length (25m) of every swimming stroke (this is very short, hence the name “shorties”, and not an officially recognised distance, but very suitable for newcomers).

Each participant swims:

- Programme #1: 25m butterfly
- Programme #2: 25m breaststroke
- Programme #4: 25m backstroke
- Programme #5: 25m freestyle

After the first two distances, all participants swim a 4x25m free-style relay (programme #3). All participants team up (mixing clubs), so that every contestant participates and each relay team has two experienced swimmers and two beginners or two children (so adults and children mix).

The total time per person of all four swimming strokes is compared to the 100m medley world or national records per age group. The participant who is percentage-wise the closest to the record wins a medal, therefore all ages have a chance to win medals. They are, in effect, racing against age appropriate benchmarks, not against

each other. Medals are given to the 10 best beginner swimmers (including beginner adults) and the 10 best experienced competition swimmers.

This can sometimes be confusing for the young LGBT participants, as they do not automatically win by swimming the fastest times. It is the best relative time compared to the record in each age group that results in a winner. The winner can either be 8 or 80 years old!

Plons Shorties has the following outcomes:

- young swimmers experience swimming as a sport for life;
- young swimmers meet gay people and see how they interact in sports and reach out to society. Parents in the audience meet gay people in a less confrontational manner (compared to pride parades) and experience the sense of sportsmanship, friendship, friendliness and joy among LGBT people and feel the less suffocating competitive atmosphere that usually rules mainstream tournaments.
- LGBT people can show children that it is okay to be LGBT, that they have fun, enjoy life, sports and each other.

Parents and youth coaches have evaluated the tournament very positively and feedback shows that they will come back with their children next year. The fact that the initiative has continued into its third year is evidence of its success.

### 2.1.7. Out In Slovenia & DIH

In partnership with: SPORTICUS (Fair Play Association of Slovenia) and Youth centre Zalog, Ljubljana

**Country:** Slovenia

**Sport:** football

**Target group:** young people aged 12-25

**Project description:** the project was aimed at promoting sport among youth, including the LGBT population in sport, and promoting human rights and inclusion of LGBT people in sport within the wider community. This was achieved mostly with two football tournaments for equality and against discrimination and several workshops in human rights education.

The tournaments were held in April and October 2011 in the outskirts of Ljubljana. They were prepared in co-operation with the Zalog youth centre and Association Sporticus, a fair play association. The tournaments involved participation by several teams, consisting of and representing youth groups, LGBT groups and minority groups. The tournaments were whole-day events with about 15 teams playing against each other (about 120 participants per tournament). Due to the number of teams, pitch capacity and the notion of fair play, the participants were put into two age groups – younger (upper primary school) and older (secondary school and above).

The tournaments involved the whole community of the neighbourhood, and included a social event with practical workshops (handicrafts, sports), with free soft drinks, snacks and music. The protocol of the events was run by the fair play association, and

qualified referees were provided to ensure a solid game basis. The system allowed each team to play at least two matches on the pitch.

All participants received T-shirts promoting the fight against discrimination, small gift packages and medals for all (to award their involvement and participation). Trophies and some bigger prizes were awarded to the first three teams (footballs, cinema tickets, etc).

Before, in between and during the matches, anti-discrimination and fair play slogans were announced, with banners displayed at the venue throughout both events.

Human rights education workshops in the youth centre were organised throughout the year. They were led by a certified human rights trainer from the association, who carried out the workshops on human rights, and more specifically on LGBT rights and discrimination. The workshops were in the form of discussions, team work, structured occasionally by COMPAS workshops, featuring guests, quizzes, films, etc.

Workshop sessions lasted one-and-a-half hours each, and were organised outside school hours, in the afternoon at the local youth centre. They were attended by groups of between 5 and 20 young people. About 15 workshops have been carried out during the project period.

The project was inspired by the FARE Action week in previous years, and was extended to include two football tournaments and the workshops. Some funding was received from FARE and EGLSF, and some from the City of Ljubljana, while a lot of work is carried out on voluntary basis.

The project has been very successful over three seasons so far. While changes in attitude by the participants has been gradual, there has been a noticeable difference in the nature of contributions during the workshop discussions.

### 2.1.8. Paris Foot Gay (PFG)

**Country:** France

**Sport:** football

**Target group:** open to all

**Project description:** the football association Paris Foot Gay (PFG) was created in 2003 in response to the idea that French football players could be white, black or North African (*black, blanc, beur*), but not gay! The PFG football team is a sport activist organisation aimed at:

- raising visibility and showing that there is homophobia in football;
- fighting homophobic acts and speech in stadiums;
- encouraging diversity and educational programmes against homophobia;
- supporting victims of homophobic acts.

Since its creation, the PFG men's football team, which plays in the regular football league at regional level, is the association's window to the world. The team is non-communitarian and 70% of its ranks are currently heterosexuals.

The PFG sports club was the initiator in France of the Charter against Homophobia in Football, which was then taken over and extended to other sports by the French Ministry of Sport in 2011. To date, this Charter against Homophobia has been signed by eight major French League 1/League 2 football clubs. Despite the French Professional Football League having signed and fully supported the charter, the number of clubs involved remains very small, and has

not significantly increased in recent years. The follow-up to the effective implementation of this charter has not been fulfilled. Fortunately, a growing number of local authorities are making progress and have included the provisions of the charter in their policies (see the example of the poster campaign in Montreuil).

In 2009, an incident raised the visibility of PFG's activities, when a local football club "Bebel" refused to play against PFG's team because of their supposed homosexuality. This incident helped highlight to those (many) who doubted its existence that there was indeed homophobia in football. Since then, many amateur clubs have signed the charter and PFG has been working for several months with a club in southern France, which has created an association "b.yourself Provence" to fight against all forms of discrimination, including homophobia.

TV Campaigning: the other leading campaigning activity undertaken by PFG against homophobia in football consists of two major national TV campaigns: in 2009, with the financial support of the French Professional Football League, and in 2011, called "Red Card to Homophobia" funded the Paris City Council and the Regional Council of Ile de France. This second campaign gave a voice to leading professional football players for the first time as well as to the current president Louis Nicollin from Montpellier, who are committed to fighting homophobia. This is a significant step forward compared to only a few years ago, when no player from League 1 was willing to answer questions from journalists about homophobia. This clip created a big media buzz on the Internet, was broadcast on 40 TV channels and has been included in several prime-time TV shows. Leading French football clubs posted these

clips on their websites or played them on giant screens in the stadiums during football matches, and will continue to do so.

Grassroots campaigning and education – b.yourself Campaign: several observations led PFG to make educating young people a priority. It launched a national program called “b.yourself” to meet this objective. This programme has two components: awareness among young people and workshops for educators and professionals. Its broad objectives according to the programme chairman are to be achieved through interventions throughout the country, open to all sports and leisure activities and covering all forms of discrimination, racism and sexism. Video materials are used during the meetings with young people to engage them in constructive discussions and help express themselves without taboo, regardless of their socio-cultural environment. These are not objectives, but a strategy or *modus operandi* of the 11-minute documentary by Michel Royer broadcast on Canal+, “Homophobia in sport, what’s the problem?”.

Another key annual event is the tournament organised by PFG involving hundreds of young people at the Parc des Princes (the historic football stadium in Paris) for a day of sport and education. This year, the special focal point of this tournament was its opening match, in co-operation with a French women’s football team, “les dégommeuses”, and a South African women’s football team, Thokozani FC, created in 2007 in memory of a young lesbian football player killed because of her sexual orientation. This action aims to highlight discrimination based on sexism and lesbophobia in sport.





### 3. Engaging LGBT adults – The LGBT sports movement

While working with young people to educate them about homophobia in sport or to engage them in sport must be seen as a priority, there is also work to be done to ensure the re-engagement of adults in sport, many of whom can experience a life without sport due to their early experiences of exclusion, homophobia or transphobia as young people.

Facing exclusion from organised sport, LGBT Europeans began to organise as early as the 1970s and this led to the establishment of LGBT sports groups during the 1980s. Feeling like there was no place for them in the mainstream, LGBT people developed safe spaces where they could participate in their chosen sport without fear of discrimination or harassment.

The constitution of these sports groups has, on the whole, reflected the culture of grassroots sports organisation within home European countries, meaning that Germany and the Netherlands are host to a number of large community multisport clubs (for example, SC Janus ([www.sc-janus.de](http://www.sc-janus.de)), of Cologne, established in 1980, and Kouros ([www.kouroseindhoven.nl](http://www.kouroseindhoven.nl)), representing hundreds, if not thousands, of members. The UK and Ireland, on the other hand, host many smaller, single-sport initiatives and the only national 11-a-side LGBT football league in the world.

In recent years there has been a significant growth in LGBT sports organisations throughout central and eastern Europe, including the establishment of clubs in Croatia, Poland, Slovenia, Russia and Ukraine. Given the challenges to LGBT human rights present

in these countries, many of these clubs are not only active in the delivery of sport to LGBT athletes, but also in the campaign for LGBT human rights through sport.

In 1989, a number of European LGBT sports groups came together to form the European Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF), the European advocate for LGBT people in sport. EGLSF is made up of more than 120 sports clubs representing more than 20 000 LGBT sports participants. EGLSF has been part of the core group of the FARE Network (Football Against Racism in Europe, [www.farenet.org](http://www.farenet.org), the anti-discrimination campaign for European football) since 2002 and has had consultative and later participative status with the Council of Europe since 1999.

Membership of EGLSF is diverse, attracting informally constituted clubs from countries in eastern Europe, where registration of LGBT organisations with statutory authorities is not always possible, alongside clubs from Germany, the Netherlands and France which receive not only statutory endorsement, but often funding and support, and which have been active for up to 30 years.

This diversity of membership within EGLSF naturally brings with it an array of regional perspectives, priorities and working methods and with these differences, significant challenges for establishing priorities for a joined-up, strategic approach to LGBT inclusion and challenging homophobia across the continent.

EGLSF is also the licensing body of the EuroGames, Europe's LGBT Sports Championships, a participatory sports event, which can attract as many as 6 000 participants. Members of the EGLSF have contributed examples of their work to this guide.

### 3.1. Examples of good practice

Outlined within the following section are examples of good practice in engaging LGBT adults in sport contributed by EGLSF member organisations and which are in some way unique or outstanding in their focus or delivery. Many more excellent examples exist, of course, in the day-to-day business of EGLSF member clubs, but it would be impossible to list all of them here (see [www.eglsf.info](http://www.eglsf.info) for links to EGLSF members).

The examples in this section include projects such as the long-standing Outreach-Programme initiated by two multi-sport clubs in Frankfurt (FVV and Artemis), to encourage co-operation between west and east. This programme uses a scholarship system for their annual tournament as a platform for pan-European networking, cross-fertilisation of ideas and ultimately, the empowerment of eastern European athletes to organise in their own countries.

DonaSport describes how Panteres Grogues, the largest multi-sport club in the Iberian LGBT sports network has invested in the engagement of women in the organisation, as lesbians have previously been under-represented among their membership and how participation in their annual women's festival has grown by 300% in the last year.

Open Athletics, a UK network of individual LGBT track and field athletes, describes how its members have worked to achieve excellence in grassroots sports delivery to the wider community through their monthly 5 km races and how they have worked to "normalise" LGBT people in sport by delivering a high-quality event for the whole community. They also describe how they

have contributed to the renewal of an area of urban economic disadvantage in central Manchester.

QSport shows how a community development approach to sport outweighs priorities of competition when both engaging new participants and developing sustainability for LGBT sport in south-east Europe. It also illustrates how the use of a range of media, including social media, in the delivery of sport can widen its reach and impact.

And finally, the Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation outlines how co-ordination of LGBT sports groups on a national level can increase the influence of the lobby to end homophobia in sport.

### 3.1.1. FVV e.V. and Artemis e.V.

**Country:** Germany (Frankfurt) and eastern European countries

**Sports:** volleyball, football, badminton, basketball

**Target group:** LGBT sports teams in eastern European countries

**Project description:** FVV and Artemis, two LGBT multi-sport clubs in Frankfurt, invite sports teams from eastern Europe to join their annual international LGBTIQ XMAS Tournament in Frankfurt. As the average income in eastern European countries is generally much lower than in Germany, costs of participation by eastern European teams/athletes are subsidised by the clubs. This subsidy is provided through local business sponsorship as well as through contributions by tournament participants from western Europe.

However, financial support is not the most important element. Eastern European LGBT sportsmen and women often suffer significant discrimination in their home countries. The Outreach-Programme therefore also aims to encourage participating teams to establish structures in their home towns for LGBT athletes. The XMAS Tournament is not only a team-building event for them but also offers a platform to connect with teams from western Europe, who were perhaps not aware of their existence, as well as with other teams from eastern Europe with whom they can share common experiences.

The famous German Olympic athlete Imke Duplitzer is the ambassador of the programme, which was awarded for its contribution to a more tolerant Europe, by the City of Frankfurt and the main-stream sports federation Hessischer Sportbund.

The Outreach-Programme has succeeded in inviting around 500 athletes from eastern Europe to the XMAS Tournament. In the last few years, many former participants of the Outreach Programme in eastern European countries, especially in Poland, have formed new LGBT sports clubs. Asked about their motivation to initiate such a club in their home country, most of the founders mentioned the participation in the XMAS Tournament as a starting point and an inspiration for their project. Today some of these clubs are proud to be able to organise their own international tournaments. In Budapest, where many LGBT athletes have been supported by the Outreach-Programme, the EuroGames (the biggest LGBT sports event in Europe) will take place in 2012 for the first time in an eastern European country.

Unfortunately there are still many countries in eastern and western Europe where LGBT athletes suffer from discrimination and have no structures of their own to organise their emancipation from social repression. The Outreach-Programme of FVV and Artemis has been copied by other LGBT sports clubs in western Europe, which demonstrates the transferability of the concept.

### 3.1.2. Panteres Grogues

**Country:** Spain (Catalunya)

**Sport:** hiking, indoor soccer, swimming, volleyball, synchronised swimming, basketball, table tennis, beach volleyball, running, skating, and cycling among others

**Target group:** lesbians

**Project description:** Panteres Grogues is a non-profit organisation with 650 members, which aims to provide a place where gays, lesbians, transsexuals and bisexuals can freely participate in sports activities in a relaxed environment. However, the association is open to anyone who wants to participate in sport.

The membership of Panteres Grogues has traditionally been very male, with proportionally less lesbians participating in the organisation. In 2009, Panteres Grogues made the decision to address this imbalance with the launch of an initiative to engage more lesbians.

The DonaSport project is an integration and community development project, working on the creation of networking and empowerment of women for a growing, sustainable and self-managed group, which acknowledges the additional discrimination faced by women in the LGBT community. Sport is used as a tool to develop the project, taking advantage of the fact that sport is very well assimilated and accepted in society. The project consists of a calendar of events, mostly sports tasters and non-competitive events which aim to network women and involve them in the future of the event and Panteres Grogues itself.

DonaSport began in 2010 and is now an annual event with its own organising group. Even within this time frame, the project has

grown considerably, participation increasing by 300% in the last year, while the range of sports activities in the official programme has doubled.

DonaSport takes place in March every year to coincide with the International Women's Day. In this way, the theme of the events has a strong anti-discrimination focus for lesbians taking part. All the activities of DonaSport are completely free of charge. Being able to reach most lesbians independently of their incomes is fundamental. Funds to develop these activities come from the budget of Panteres Grogues Sports club, as well as grants from the Government of Catalunya, the Barcelona City Council, and in 2011 a grant from the EGLSF.

One of the most significant decisions by its Steering Committee in terms of broadening the reach of the event has been to make activities non-competitive. In this way, new members can be attracted independently of their knowledge and ability within a sport.

The sports programme is complimented by a cultural programme. A competition was held as part of this programme to design the poster of the following year's DonaSport, with sports equipment as a prize. With this initiative, a new image has been devised for future events; consolidating a brand for the event has also helped DonaSport become a single, strong entity.

Significant outcomes of the project have been:

- the development of a strong, co-ordinated lesbian community;
- an exchange of lesbian experiences for empowerment in the face of common discrimination;

- a group structure in Barcelona city and Catalunya region, that focuses the aims and efforts of the lesbian community; a community that was not formally structured in the way that other communities, such as the gay community, in the same area were.
- a steering committee set up entirely by volunteer women, around 10-15 members of the Panteres Grogues Sports club.

### 3.1.3. qSPORT

Society for sport recreation

**Country:** Croatia

**Sport:** multiple sports

**Target group:** LGBT community and supporters

**Project description:** QueerSportWeekend (QSW) is a three-day event organised by qSPORT and its partners on an annual basis since 2007. The last edition was held in Zagreb from 21 to 23 October 2011, welcoming past, present and future members, guests from the whole of Croatia and additionally two guests from south east-Europe who wished take part in LGBT community sport for the first time. The tournament consists of a registration and welcome programme on the Friday, a joint brunch and workshops on the Saturday, followed by sports with a night screening and a party. On the Sunday, there is recreation and sports session and a final farewell to those departing.

The primary goal of the event is to promote and inform on LGBT sport activities (regular and new offerings in sports), but also to develop network, community link and capacity-building. Public relations over a single, concentrated weekend (mostly through community media and social media channels) for all events makes the individual activities appear structured, stable and more visible in the overall dynamics of LGBT programme offerings.

Unlike many weekend international LGBT multi-sport events that focus a competition, QSW has almost no interest in the competitive aspects of sport – but rather fully focuses on participation and inclusion of as many and as diverse people as possible.

The 2011 programme included several sports (swimming, basketball, tennis, badminton and soccer), introductory classes (salsa and self-defence), recreational activities (hiking), culture (screening of the movie *Take the Flame*) and night-clubbing (including a performance by a prominent lesbian cultural figure). There was also a chance to informally meet over brunch and to learn more about qSPORT and get information on LGBT sport in general in an info-session, as well as to meet, network discuss and plan future collaborations in a workshop-like set-up with queer sport enthusiasts and fans from the region.

qSPORT ensures that members from as many initiatives and partners (even including one founder) are present to achieve maximum diversity: lesbian teams meet predominantly male teams, straight members get introduced to others, generational and regional diversity are encouraged (travel costs for most are funded), and so on. To make it a unique experience for all involved the aim is to be as accessible (participation is free), but also as systematic as possible about all aspects of organisation so that the capacity and experience are visible also in details such as registration forms and e-mail communication, media relations, official t-shirts, etc.

Each QSW is an opportunity for volunteers to learn new skills and better identify with the organisation, as well as to experience the work in community development as something important and empowering. It is also a chance to spark the imagination on what is possible and to encourage higher ambitions in what needs to be done among otherwise content and passive members – to actually strive for more and to commit to future work. Joint evaluation is almost as important as the initial process of planning and

preparations, especially if it includes self-reflection and establishing a know-how resource document such as a manual or a handbook.

Supporters of the event (for example, Heinrich Boel Stiftung office in Zagreb, FARE, EGLSF and GLISA) have an opportunity to be represented (and also receive follow-up reports). qSPORT ensures that all participants are informed of the network of organisations to which it belongs. Although it might be a marginal group within the sport system, this is compensated for by qSPORT's networking and expertise.

Significant outcomes of the project have been:

- many participants took part for the first time in such an LGBT sport event and met with other enthusiasts;
- some of the more experienced participants were, for the first time, introduced to structural problems and analytical thinking in LGBT sports, something that went beyond their routines of training and competing. They also came to grasp the diversity and complexity of operations;
- many partners (including straight allies) gained a better understanding of the social impact for LGBT, who are too often estranged from sport;
- most of the participants are encouraged by the size of the event and number of participants, as they usually tend to think of themselves as isolated individuals or an exceptional, small group.

qSPORT tries to make photo and text documentation available so that references to experiences remain vivid in the long term. It

also asks for statements from participants and then shares them as inspiration for future work.

The project is not quite sustainable as it relies on small grants and lots of voluntary work by a small number of informed and committed individuals. Future considerations include fundraising activities and participation of all-in costs made during the event with a symbolic fee.

The structure and the programme is quite transferable, although it relies on local capacities and opportunities that the host organisation might have. Free space for the main meeting and collaboration with local clubs and media are some of the most important things to set up from the start.



### 3.1.4. Open Athletics

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Sport:** track and field, running

**Target group:** LGBT people, isolated LGBT track and field athletes, women

**Project description:** Open Athletics is a network of individual LGBT athletes and groups across the UK with an interest in track and field.

Its organisational structure (as a network organisation rather than a club) tries to overcome what are, possibly, obstacles common to all minority sports. Even in larger cities minority sports find it difficult to muster a sufficient critical mass of LGBT people to constitute and operate as a club. For smaller cities and towns, the difficulties are even greater. A flexible network structure that tries to meet the communication needs of isolated track and field athletes as well as groups and clubs in larger cities seems at least one way forward.

The network aims to link people and groups around the country. Annual track and field meetings organised by any individual or group in the UK, or joint participation as “Open Athletics Team” in European and international LGBT competitions are examples of opportunities created by members to the benefit of the network as a whole. The network is affiliated to the National Governing Body for the sport (England Athletics) and it is also member of EGLSF.

The Open Athletics branch in Manchester is currently the largest. Perhaps one of the most well-known activities of the Manchester branch (well known to both LGBT and non-LGBT people across the

city) is the organisation of a monthly 5 km run event in a deprived area of the city. Since the origins of the 5k Run in Alexandra Park in 2005, Open Athletics wanted to contribute as an LGBT club to neighbourhood renewal and conceived the 5 km runs as an LGBT-led event but open to and for the community as whole. The 50% net income generated by the series is donated to the local Friends of Alexandra Park group which supports the series by providing the marshalling.

The Manchester branch’s approach has been criticised for not focusing on the LGBT community and running an event that is attended largely by non-LGBT people. In the meantime, for the six years that the monthly runs have taken place, Open Athletics has gained a reputation of providing sporting opportunities that are well organised, welcoming all levels of abilities and experience and open to LGBT and non-LGBT people. It is believed that six years of solid participation and positive feedback from participants has made a contribution towards normalising LGBT sport in the Greater Manchester area and the north.

From February 2012, Open Athletics has decided to address a new challenge: women’s low participation in sport and the image of women’s sport. While the mixed Alexandra Park 5 km event has helped undermine negative stereotypes of LGBT people and LGBT sport for six years, it has more recently been highly regarded by club athletes and subsequently, Open Athletics observed a parallel reduction in the number of women participating in the event. It has therefore re-framed the 5 km series into a women-only run with the intention of providing an outlet for women of all ability levels to take part in a safe environment while at the same time

providing evidence of a women's event that is both competitive and inclusive and that attracts both elite athletes as well as beginners. To do so, a choice of longer and shorter routes is available as well as regular and free circuit training for women. It is still very early days to evaluate this new project, but it does seem to show that the dynamics of sport participation for men and women may be different.

On a neighbourhood renewal front, Open Athletics believes it has contributed to undermine the bad reputation surrounding the local park. In terms of participants, the event brought, month after month, a total of just under 6000 people during the first six years of the Alexandra Park 5 km mixed series. Just recently the Park was awarded £2.5 million for refurbishment by a lottery funder and it is hoped the Open Athletic event has contributed to raise the profile and the need for investment in the area. The group was involved in the refurbishment funding application and in the consultation process.

Outcomes of the Alexandra Park 5 km runs have been the recognition as a partner and stakeholder in the development of the area and the park. One can interpret such recognition by the City Council as well as by the athletics development team and by other local groups as a sign of normalisation and the removal or lowering of homophobic barriers.

As regards sustainability, the event, particularly because of its monthly recurrence, relies on a small number of fully committed volunteers.

The evidence is that other groups in the area have been attracted by the idea of setting up a monthly series. Open Athletics has been approached a number of times by individuals in small organisations seeking advice and insight into the needs and requirements for such an event.

### 3.1.5. Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation (FSGL)

**Country:** France

**Sport:** over 40 sports

**Target group:** LGBT sports clubs

**Project description:** the Fédération Sportive Gaie et Lesbienne (FSGL) was created in 1986, under the name of CGPIF (Comité Gay Paris Ile de France), by a group of enthusiastic participants of the Gay Games in San Francisco, with the intention of promoting higher participation in the next competitions and to prepare future French delegations.

Today, bringing together 35 LGBT sport associations from all over the country, the FSGL has over 40 sports, including levels ranging from “recreational” to “national competition.” Everyone can find what they are looking for: meeting others, friendly atmosphere, physical fitness, sporting challenge and striving for excellence. While initially mostly located in Paris, LGBT sports associations can be found in most major and medium-sized cities all around the country (Montpellier, Marseille, Lyon, Nice, Rennes, La Rochelle, Toulouse, Tours and Brest).

Open to all, the FSGL’s sport associations are a forum with the purpose of fighting against discrimination through sport, whether related to sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnic origin, religion, HIV status or physical condition, but also for the pleasure of doing sport in an environment of tolerance and friendliness, and to promote the acceptance of gay people in society.

Grassroot sport activities: through their grassroots sport activities, the FSGL sports associations contribute to increasing visibility

and improving social inclusion of LGBT people in sport as well as in everyday life, through their participation in regular and specific sports tournaments. They have also been very active in building good relationships with their respective national sport federations: for swimming, by including their own competition in the regular sports calendar; in track and field, by organising the first Mediterranean meeting in Marseille in April 2012 with the inclusion of the Athletics committee and the support of the French Athletics Federation (FFA).

Since 2003, the FSGL has organised an international tournament covering more than 14 sports, the Tournoi International de Paris (TIP), involving more than 1 500 sport participants coming from all over Europe (35% from outside France). The FSGL also co-ordinated the French team and participants in major international LGBT sport tournaments, such as the Gay Games, the Out Games and the Eurogames.

Advocacy activities: since 2010, the FSGL has been a full member of the National Committee against Discrimination in Sport, launched by the French Ministry of Youth and Sport. One of the first missions of this committee was to draft a charter against homophobia in sport, first initiated in football, for its extension to all sports. All national sports federations have been invited to sign and implement this charter against homophobia.

The FSGL has been participating in the initiative launched by the French Ministry of Sport for the creation of educational kits and programmes to fight against discrimination in sport. The Sports Ministry has officially launched video clips and media training for the fight against homophobia and racism in sport. Sketches

show everyday situations in sport (eight sports are represented) around homophobic and racist attitudes. Each sketch aims to facilitate discussion and raise awareness in the sport. The first training session using these educational tools was organised in March 2012 with the participation of the President of the FSGL and was addressed to the top national trainers from the French national leading institute for sport expertise and performance (INSEP).

In 2001, the FSGL developed a working group on HIV, which led to the drafting of a charter on “HIV and Sport”, including recommendations and examples of good practice, used by its sports associations to develop dedicated sport programmes for this specific public, which has also been adopted by local authorities and the Federation of Gay Games (FGG).



## 4. Conclusion

While the campaign against homophobia and transphobia in sport is successfully opening doors to sport for many excluded people and many examples of good practice do exist, there is clearly some way to go until LGBT people are completely integrated into mainstream sporting opportunities throughout Europe. Indeed, many of the opportunities that exist have been created through the dedication and passion of LGBT people themselves, working almost exclusively as volunteers to provide improved activities in their own community.

However, as discussed earlier in this handbook, homophobia and transphobia in sport is not just a problem affecting LGBT people, it is a form of discrimination which permeates the whole of sport and which also affects those who are simply suspected of being LGBT as well as those (men) who fail at sport and those (women) who excel at sport. As such, challenging homophobia and transphobia is the responsibility of everyone in sport.

It is clear that there is a need to develop good practice in working with young LGBT and heterosexual people in sport, if an environment is to be created which is inclusive, welcoming people of all backgrounds, and competitive, ensuring we maximise potential for sporting success in Europe and are able to share outcomes with the rest of the world.

It also must not be forgotten that LGBT people in Europe pay taxes, buy lottery tickets, are participants in sport quite often *despite* the discrimination they face, which begs the question of what kind of return they are seeing on their investment. There

is also the business argument for including LGBT people in sport which should not be forgotten, both in terms of increasing potential investment from a further 8% of the population as well as widening participation and ultimately increasing the talent pool.

While different regions of Europe and different countries provide a diversity of challenges, it is clear that sport throughout Europe needs to reflect on its engagement of LGBT communities and athletes and begin a dialogue for positive change.



## Reference texts and further reading

### National and international organisations and stakeholders

Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1635 (2003) on lesbians and gays in sport

Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (paragraphs 39-41)

European Commission, White Paper on Sport, 2007, COM(2007)391 final

European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation, The Copenhagen Principle on Sport ([www.eglsf.info/EGLSF\\_Public\\_Documents/Copenhagen\\_principle\\_on\\_sport\\_2009.pdf](http://www.eglsf.info/EGLSF_Public_Documents/Copenhagen_principle_on_sport_2009.pdf))

International Olympic Committee, Stockholm Consensus on Sex Reassignment in Sport ([www.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/en\\_report\\_905.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/en_report_905.pdf))

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Griffin P. (1998), *Strong Women, Deep Closets; Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, Human Kinetics Publisher, Champaign IL

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## Author

Louise Englefield co-founded Pride Sports in 2006, the UK's organisation for LGBT sports development and equality. Having studied Sociology and Philosophy at Staffordshire University, she has worked for over 20 years in and around the voluntary and community sectors, holding positions such as Strategic Director of the Gay Healthy Alliance Project, member of the Football Association Tackling Homophobia Advisory Group and, until recently, was Co-President of the European Gay & Lesbian Sports Federation, where she now volunteers as Campaign Manager. In the sporting world, Louise is a Level 2 Football coach and was the co-founder of Manchester's LGBT Basketball Club.

Since the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) was set up in 2007, one of its major priorities has been the promotion of diversity in and through sport. To this end, the Council of Europe has developed a pan-European programme involving a variety of stakeholders from public authorities and the world of sport. All have an important role to play in reversing the discriminatory trends currently observed in sport and in promoting sport as a means of fostering diversity and social cohesion.

This collection of good practice handbooks is an illustration of current policies and practices throughout Europe. Its aim is to disseminate and share positive experiences highlighting the potential of sport in promoting the Council of Europe's fundamental values of human rights.

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