

SUPPORTER Recommendations **for teachers and lecturers** **in universities of sport and faculties of sport** **to advance gender equality**

May 2025

These guidelines are based on findings from the EU-funded SUPPORTER project and draw on learnings from the project's partners, eight sports higher education institutions. They reflect outcomes of peer exchanges and collaborative work during a workshop that took place on 20 March 2025.

Sport universities and faculties play a crucial role in educating students about gender equality and gender-based violence and also in contributing this knowledge to the wider sports ecosystem through the coaches, managers, physical education teachers, and the athletes they train and teach. Additionally, sports universities and faculties can serve as model institutions, inspiring other higher education institutions and the broader sports ecosystem to promote gender equality through the development of inclusive, innovative, intersectional and impactful gender equality plans.

The processes of commercialisation and marketisation of sport have led to increased attention directed towards the ways in which sport can and should be run. In this way, individual practices within sport draw meaning from wider discourses on, for instance, gender, biological sex and sexuality in society. Teachers and lecturers are not only responsible for the development of athletic and/or academic skills, but also for fostering a culture of inclusion, respect, and fairness within their academic and athletic programs. By embedding gender equality principles into their courses, they can ensure that all students, regardless of gender, feel valued and supported.

Teaching is often conducted within a binary context, as this remains the norm in sports. This binary context is closely linked to dominant forms of masculinity, which can marginalise other expressions of masculinity as well as femininity. As a result, women students and students identifying as LGBTQI+ may be more vulnerable to inequality or gender-based violence.

Teachers play a vital role in ensuring that all university students are protected from gender-based violence, are aware of where to seek support, and how to report incidents. They also play a key role in fostering an institutional culture that promotes inclusivity and student safety. Teachers are encouraged to rely on their institution's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) and policy framework to guide their efforts.



Overarching recommendations

Identify your institution's GEP and its implications for your teaching practices and the academic programs that you are involved in.

Understanding gender inequalities and gender-based violence

- Ensure a common understanding within the institution of the following concepts:
 - Sex, gender
 - Non-binary and binary
 - Gender equality
 - Intersectionality in a sport context.
- Ensure that as teachers and institutional staff, you know your rights in terms of safety and are familiar with the contents of your institution's GEP.
- Participate in trainings on gender inequalities and teachers' role in addressing them, on gender-based violence, on supporting mechanisms for reporting parties and sanctions (disciplinary) for perpetrators.

Creating an inclusive learning environment

- Incorporating discussions about gender-based violence into educational settings helps create inclusive and safe learning environments. Students from diverse backgrounds can feel validated and supported when sensitive topics like gender-based violence are addressed openly. This can contribute to improved mental health and overall well-being, facilitating effective learning.
- Teaching with sensitivity: gender-based violence in particular often involves traumatic experiences, which can be triggering for some students who may have personal experiences with violence.
- Provide mentorship for students to support each other (social and psychological support)

Integrating the gender dimension into research and teaching content

- Assure that a gender dimension is included in curricula and course content. All students should have at least basic knowledge of gender equality in sports, gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, and how sports are ingrained and affected by gender norms.
- Promoting gender + research in sport context as well as research with intersectional perspectives and research on gender-based violence.
- Develop research applications on gender + and gender-based violence in sports.
- Incorporate history lessons on women in sports to highlight barriers and progress.
- Encourage students to write essays and thesis on the topic of gender or gender equality.
- Address the issue of gender-based violence in your teaching: raising awareness, challenging power dynamics and make sure that students know where to seek support and how to report incidents.



Become an advocate

- Higher education teachers have an opportunity to take the lead and push for institutional change

Overcoming resistances

- Recognise that resistance is part of all change processes.
 - Implement regular progress assessment towards gender equality.
 - Organise regular trainings for change agents on resistance.
- Put in place support systems for change agents to avoid isolation and tiredness and gender fatigue.

The SUPPORTER project

SUPPORTER, “SecUring sPORTs Education thRough innovative and inclusive Gender Equality Plans”, is an EU-funded project running from April 2023 until September 2025. The project aims to support eight sports higher education institutions from Central and Eastern Europe in developing their own intersectional, innovative, inclusive and impactful Gender Equality Plans which explicitly address gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Find out more about SUPPORTER!

<https://supporter-project.eu>

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