To the Beauty of Sport and those who protect it,

to the athletes, to the voices that speak for safety,

and to those who cannot.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF SAFEGUARDING: COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS AND THE ROAD AHEAD

by *Stefano Bastianon*[1] and *Michele Colucci*[2]

1. Introduction: Safeguarding as a Cultural Imperative

In recent years, safeguarding in sport has emerged as far more than a matter of procedural compliance or risk management. Across jurisdictions and international federations, it has become increasingly clear that effective safeguarding demands a deep-seated cultural transformation.

Rather than being treated as an external requirement to be fulfilled, safeguarding must be embraced as a moral, institutional, and cultural commitment—one that defines the ethical essence and legitimacy of sport.

It is now widely understood as a multidimensional process, encompassing legal obligations, normative development, and survivor-centred and trauma-informed practices from the inception of creating safeguarding entities to the practice of investigations and accountability.

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Despite growing global awareness and the proliferation of national and international initiatives, there has been, to date, no comprehensive comparative analysis of safeguarding in sport across countries and sport governing bodies.

The present volume represents the first—albeit necessarily partial—endeavour to delineate a comprehensive picture of the current state of safeguarding policies and practices. It assembles contributions addressing ten national systems alongside analyses of some among the most influential international sport federations. While the findings outlined here are not exhaustive, they offer a crucial foundation for future research, practical innovation, and policy development in this critical area. This book represents a moment in time in the development of safeguarding in sport, the expectation being that both this publication and safeguarding practices will continue to adapt and develop beyond these initial iterations.

This chapter draws upon the diverse contributions collected in this volume to offer a comparative analysis of safeguarding systems, highlighting convergences, divergences, best practices as well as gaps and shortcomings across national and transnational contexts. Several additional international federations were invited to take part in this collective endeavour; although responses were not received in time for inclusion, it is hoped that future editions will provide an opportunity to further broaden this dialogue and to foster deeper engagement and mutual learning across the global sporting community.

2. Core Values and Principles for Effective Safeguarding Practice and Policies

Across international sport, effective safeguarding practice and policies are grounded in a set of shared values and principles that provide both their credibility and long-term sustainability.

At the heart of these systems lie **integrity, independence, impartiality, accountability, transparency, accessibility and inclusivity, confidentiality, prevention, proportionality** and **lifelong learning**—fundamental values that ensure safeguarding mechanisms are both ethically robust and procedurally reliable.

Integrity requires consistency between stated commitments and actual practice, as illustrated by the **IOC's** work in embedding safeguarding into its Olympic Movement Code.

Independence and impartiality protect safeguarding processes from conflicts of interest or undue influence, a challenge faced by all sports associations.

Accountability guarantees that responsibilities are clearly allocated and enforceable while **transparency** fosters trust by making rules, procedures, and outcomes visible and understandable, as emphasized in the **FIBA** Safeguarding Policy.

Equally essential are principles that place the experience and wellbeing of those at risk at the centre of safeguarding design. A **survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach** ensures that policies and practices minimise harm, respect dignity, and avoid re-traumatisation, echoing the lessons emerging from U.S. Center for SafeSport experience and reforms undertaken in countries such as **Australia.**

Accessibility and **inclusivity** demand that safeguarding mechanisms are available across languages, cultures, abilities, and digital divides, a challenge that international federations such as **FIVB,** and **UEFA** have begun to address through multilingual resources and global outreach.

Confidentiality, carefully balanced with a duty to act, strengthens trust in reporting processes, while meaningful participation of athletes, survivors, and other stakeholders - increasingly visible in national safeguarding frameworks in Europe and in international federations like **FIBA -** ensures that safeguarding frameworks reflect lived realities rather than abstract norms.

Finally, effective safeguarding systems must also embody prevention, proportionality, and continuous learning. Effective **prevention** rests on education, awareness-raising, and structured risk management. Initiatives such as **UEFA**'s *Child Safeguarding Policy* and **FIBA**'s *SPOC training course* exemplify how safeguarding can be systematically embedded into daily operations, moving beyond reactive measures to proactive **cultural integration**.

Proportionality guarantees that responses are fair, rights-based, and legally sound, while a culture of **lifelong learning**, reflection, and alignment with evolving international standards allows safeguarding regimes—from **IOC** *capacity-building tools* to *UEFA-safeguarding.eu digital platform* —to adapt to new risks and emerging best practices.

Taken together, these values and foundational principles provide the basis for individual safeguarding policies while simultaneously anchoring a broader cultural transformation within sport. Central to this transformation is the creation of a **safeguarding culture**, one that establishes trust, legitimacy, and effectiveness across all levels of the sporting system. In this way, safeguarding is positioned not merely as a matter of regulatory compliance but as a **collective and enduring commitment** embraced by the global sporting community

3. Governance and Legal Frameworks: Comparative Approaches

The anchoring of safeguarding in institutional and legal frameworks varies considerably across jurisdictions and is in an ongoing state of development.

In the **United States**, the *U.S. Center for SafeSport* (USCSS) stands as the first centralized system designed to intervene, investigate, and prevent abuse across Olympic and Paralympic sports. Established by federal law through the Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 and expanded under the Empowering Olympic and Paralympic Amateur Athletes Act of 2020, the Center holds statutory authority to adjudicate safeguarding cases independently of sport governing bodies. It oversees compliance nationally, requiring annual audits of all 52 national sport organizations, and sets uniform safety standards across disciplines. While its rapid growth has brought organizational challenges, the Center's increasing emphasis on collaboration with stakeholders and survivor communities reflects a move toward more trauma-informed, athlete-centered reforms.

In **Canada**, safeguarding has been integrated into a contractually binding legal framework governed by the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (UCCMS), first implemented under the supervision of the *Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner* (OSIC) and now by the *Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport* (CCES). The CCES ensures procedural independence from the *Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada* (SDRCC) which adjudicates cases by way of its Safeguarding Tribunal, thus creating a robust institutional structure.

Germany´s approach to safeguarding in sport is characterised by the shared responsibility between organised sport and the State. It reveals a dynamic and evolving normative system that seeks both to strengthen the self-regulation of organised sport and to enhance State authority and independent oversight. The adoption of the Safe Sport Code by organised sport combined with the projected establishment of the *Centre for Safe and Non-Violent Sport* by the federal government bear witness to these dynamic developments. Uniquely, organised sport in Germany also developed a "*Code for*

Reappraisal" as a response to systemic abuse revelations, stands out as a model that merges symbolic acknowledgment and recognition of injustices with substantive structural reform.

The Code goes beyond standard compliance mechanisms by publicly recognising institutional failures of the past and making an explicit ethical commitment to confront them. It mandates not only a retrospective examination of abuse cases but also the establishment of independent commissions with the authority to investigate, analyse, and make recommendations on both past and present safeguarding practices. These commissions operate autonomously, include survivor representation, and aim to restore institutional credibility while centring the voices of those harmed. By integrating restorative principles with operational oversight, organised sport Germany has elevated safeguarding from a reactive compliance issue to a proactive, rights-based governance priority. This approach serves as an exemplary framework for other countries and sport bodies seeking to embed safeguarding into broader democratic and human rights infrastructures.

Italy and **Portugal** have institutionalised safeguarding through national legal mandates. Italy's recent sports reform legislation requires every federation and club to adopt safeguarding protocols and designate officers, supported by a national observatory. Similarly, Portugal's legislative framework mandates the integration of safeguarding roles within sport federations and creates avenues for inter-agency coordination.

In **Australia**, safeguarding is embedded within Sport Integrity Australia, a comprehensive integrity system supported by the National Integrity Framework. The structural complexity of Australian sport has been analysed through the *Biermann* model, which identifies fragmentation and proposes models of consolidation and coherence.

Countries such as **Belgium, France**, and **Spain** have made important strides in establishing safeguarding legislation at the national level.

In the case of **Spain,** this is grounded both in international obligations and in the Constitution. However, the implementation of these frameworks across regional and federated structures continues to present opportunities for greater coordination and coherence. Strengthening inter-institutional collaboration could further enhance the effectiveness and consistency of safeguarding efforts within these jurisdictions.

At international level, sports associations, *in primis* the **IOC** and **UEFA,** have incorporated safeguarding into their foundational charters.

The **IOC** has institutionalised safeguarding through a global strategy that combines regulatory tools, education, and event-specific mechanisms. One of its flagship initiatives is the *IOC Safeguarding Officer in Sport Certifica*te, which sets a recognised international standard for safeguarding professionals and has been rolled out in collaboration with universities and global experts. The IOC has also published a series of resources, including model safeguarding policies and implementation checklists, tailored to National Olympic Committees, International Federations, and organising committees. During Olympic Games and Youth Olympic Games, the IOC deploys safeguarding officers on site, supported by a reporting framework and confidential referral systems to enable athlete protection in real time. Through the *Safe Sport Unit*, the IOC collects data, monitors implementation progress, and supports knowledge-sharing among its stakeholders. Importantly, it also promotes gender equality, youth empowerment, and athlete representation within its safeguarding efforts, and aims to embed safeguarding into the broader human rights and governance agenda of global sport.

FIBA has developed a safeguarding architecture formalised in 2022, combining legal obligations, internal policies, and operational tools. A key strength of FIBA lies in the combination of binding regulation−through its Statutes and Internal Regulations−and implementation tools, such as the FIBA Safeguarding Policy and the FIBA Safeguarding Council which ensure periodic review. The FIBA model, based on the principle of '*Whole Sport, Whole Organisation*', extends protection not only to underage athletes but to all participants and stakeholders in basketball, recognising that power imbalances can create risks in different contexts.

As for **UEFA**, its network of child safeguarding officers, supported by central oversight, represents an innovative model of decentralised and, at the same time, harmonised implementation.

The creation of a dedicated safeguarding officers in each national association is intended to facilitate the embedding of safeguarding across European football. These officers receive specialised training, benefit from shared standards and toolkits, and are integrated into a community of practice that encourages peer exchange and capacity building. UEFA has also implemented a central monitoring and evaluation mechanism that allows for continuous assessment of safeguarding practices, including at major events such as the UEFA European Championships and youth tournaments. The federation has published detailed guidelines, including the *UEFA Child Safeguarding Toolkit*, which outlines clear procedures, codes of conduct, and prevention strategies tailored to the specificities of football. Furthermore, UEFA has invested significantly in education through multilingual e-learning platforms and in-person workshops, ensuring that safeguarding reaches grassroots actors as well as elite professionals. This multi-layered approach exemplifies how an international federation can take a leadership role in operationalising safeguarding with both consistency and flexibility across national and cultural contexts.

As detailed in this book, the creation of safeguarding systems has often stemmed from reaction to crisis and scandal. It remains critical for the further development of these legal frameworks to include survivors and those more impacted by abuse in sport, as well embracing principles of "do no harm," human rights, and trauma-informed practice. These frameworks should not be considered static, but instead tools for revision and evolution.

4. Policy Design and Substantive Content

Safeguarding policies differ significantly in their level of clarity, enforceability, and sensitivity to the lived experiences of survivors. A comparative look at national systems and international federations reveals both high-performing frameworks and areas in need of regulatory refinement.

Canada and the **United States** offer particularly sophisticated examples of policy design.

Canada's *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (UCCMS) is one of the most detailed and legally enforceable safeguarding instruments globally. It rigorously defines a wide range of maltreatment behaviours—physical, psychological, sexual, and neglect—and mandates a series of procedural guarantees such as mandatory reporting, case tracking, timelines, and appeals. The UCCMS is not a voluntary standard but a mandatory and contractually binding legal code for all federally funded sport organisations to adopt and implement, reinforcing its normative strength.

The policy framework is well developed, and there are valuable opportunities to further strengthen it by more fully integrating trauma-informed practice and amplifying the voices of athlete-survivors, particularly within national sports governing bodies.

The **United States** established *its SafeSport Code* in 2017, a comprehensive policy defining the U.S. Center for SafeSport's (USCSS) jurisdiction and authority as well as explicit and nuanced definitions of prohibited conduct and processes for the resolution of claims. Updated biennially, the Code increasingly reflects input from athletes, sport governing bodies, survivors, and other stakeholders. Complementing it is the *USCSS Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies* (MAAPP), which regulate one-on-one adult-minor contact, electronic communications, travel and lodging, and other important considerations in the youth-athlete space. USCSS also implements a data-driven prevention strategy, grounded in theory, best practices, and trauma-informed approaches, which combines education with broader systemic reforms such as resource referrals and process-navigation support, and serves athletes, coaches, parents, healthcare professionals, disability specialists, and other stakeholders.

At national level, **Italy** and **Portugal** demonstrate how national legislative frameworks can be used to mandate the adoption of internal safeguarding policies across all recognised federations. In **Italy**, recent reforms adopted by both the government and the Italian Olympic Committee require each federation and sport association to have a safeguarding officer, a code of conduct, and a procedure for handling complaints.

Portugal's system also mandates that federations align with safeguarding principles codified at the national level, with a dedicated observatory ensuring compliance. **Belgium** offers a comparable model, where the implementation of an integrity policy is part of the recognition and subsidization conditions for sport federations. These legal obligations have led to a standardisation of safeguarding practices across sports.

Important opportunities for further development remain. At international, continental, and national levels, a number of sport organisations still rely on generic ethics codes or disciplinary regulations. While these frameworks provide a foundation, they often do not fully capture the specificities of safeguarding concerns or reflect the value of survivor-centred and trauma-informed practices, nor do they always include robust monitoring mechanisms. Strengthening these instruments by clarifying what constitutes reportable misconduct and by offering staff and athletes accessible, user-friendly guidance would greatly enhance their effectiveness. In this way, policy tools can evolve from broad ethical commitments into practical mechanisms that are not only symbolic but genuinely protective.

At the level of international federations, **UEFA**'s safeguarding policy provides a detailed classification of safeguarding risks, assigns clear roles and responsibilities, and provides model procedures for incident management. Rather than functioning as a static document, the policy is embedded in a broader ecosystem of implementation tools, most notably the *UEFA Child Safeguarding Toolkit*, which equips associations and clubs with codes of conduct, checklists, and disclosure management guidance. Combined with UEFA's education and monitoring systems, this framework ensures that policy commitments are effectively translated into practice across European football.

The **FIG** and the **FIVB** have both undergone important reforms in response to past episodes of abuse. They have updated their safeguarding codes to include more precise definitions of misconduct, clearer procedures for reporting and investigation, and commitments to survivor-centred approaches. These revised frameworks mark a significant shift from reactive crisis management to proactive policy planning.

The **FIBA** Safeguarding Policy stands out for its terminological clarity and for its broad definition of protected persons 'Participants' and 'Basketball Parties'), going beyond the traditional focus on minors. The document is structured around four pillars—zero tolerance, education, identification of violations, and risk management—and integrates principles of institutional accountability. It is a dynamic framework, regularly reviewed with the support of the Safeguarding Council, which allows FIBA to

maintain alignment with international standards and to promote a trauma-informed and survivor-centred approach

5. Reporting Mechanisms and Investigatory Structures

The credibility and effectiveness of safeguarding systems are intimately linked to the design and functioning of their reporting and investigatory mechanisms. These mechanisms must be accessible, independent, procedurally robust, and survivor-sensitive. Across the jurisdictions and organisations reviewed in this volume, a wide range of models emerges—some highly developed, others still evolving.

The **IOC** has implemented an event-specific safeguarding model, deploying trained safeguarding officers at Olympic and Youth Olympic Games. These officers operate under a pre-established reporting protocol and coordinate closely with local authorities, international federations and athlete support teams. The IOC has also created guidance for National Olympic Committees and International Federations to replicate these models at domestic, continental and international levels.

In the **United States** the *U.S. Center for SafeSport* has been entrusted with investigative autonomy, statutory powers, and a mandate covering sexual abuse and the most serious emotional and physical abuse for Olympic and Paralympic sports in the country (though some national governing bodies still retain jurisdiction over other significant abuse cases). The UCSS investigatory process includes interviews of witnesses and parties, review of confidential reports, and the option of arbitration for respondents. It operates a case management system supported by professionals with training in trauma-informed practice. It also oversees a Centralized Disciplinary Database to keep the public informed of when people in the US Olympic and Paralympic movements are subject to sanctions. The Center's website, online reporting form, and increased collaboration with stakeholders is creating more transparency of process with the intent of increasing reporting and trust with athletes.

Canada has developed a similar system, characterized by the independence of the *Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport* and the *Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada* from sport organisations. This independence helps to increase impartiality and limit conflicts of interest. Both complainants and respondents benefit from extensive procedural guarantees, including clear guidance documents and a structured appeals process. The system also enhances transparency, accountability and confidentiality by publishing anonymised statistical reports and arbitral awards, as well as maintaining a public registry of sanctions.

In **Australia,** *Sport Integrity Australia* (SIA) has a remit for safeguarding complaints that currently covers only athletes who are aged under 18 and any athlete alleging discrimination in relation to a protected characteristic. SIA offers a single-point-of-contact structure with standardized intake forms for sports organisations signed on to its National Integrity Framework and has cross-referral capabilities with child protection authorities and police.

While SIA's remit is deliberately defined, it also presents valuable opportunities to enhance system alignment—for example, by clarifying jurisdictional pathways when national sport governing bodies have varying levels of engagement with the National Integrity Framework—and to strengthen communication around initial reporting processes and available avenues for appeal.

Several international federations have established dedicated integrity or safeguarding units and entities. For instance, **FIFA** has reinforced its commitment to safeguarding by establishing the *Safe*

Football Support Unit (*SFSU*), an autonomous entity operating under the aegis of the FIFA Foundation. This groundbreaking initiative aims to provide timely, expert guidance to survivors, victims, and whistleblowers within the football ecosystem. The SFSU functions as an independent and confidential avenue for support, offering a secure and impartial space for individuals to seek assistance. Its core mandate is to assess and monitor incidents of violence or abuse in football in real time, and to deliver specialist support. Although not an investigatory body, SFSU aims to build in trauma-informed and survivor-centered advocacy from the ground level. When appropriate—and in accordance with the FIFA Disciplinary Code, the FIFA Code of Ethics, and relevant legal norms—the Unit may also furnish technical advice to disciplinary and ethics bodies, thereby strengthening institutional responses. The SFSU thus plays a dual role: empowering those affected by abuse and enhancing procedural fairness and accountability within football's governance structures.

FIBA has established a multi-level system of reporting and case management, with a centralised channel (website and dedicated email) complemented by the work of Safeguarding SPOCs within its National Member Federations. Case management is entrusted to the Safeguarding Case Management Group, which operates in coordination with the Integrity Officer, the Ethics Panel, and the Disciplinary Panel, thereby ensuring a balance between victim support, confidentiality, and procedural rigour. The possibility for FIBA to intervene directly in cases where National Federations are unable to act adequately represents an important accountability mechanism.

The International Biathlon Union (**IBU**) has created its own safeguarding mechanism following revelations of abuse and now maintains trauma-informed procedures for intake and response.

UEFA has developed a model based on decentralised reporting channels reinforced by a network of national child safeguarding officers. These officers are embedded in national associations and act as points of contact. During international competitions, UEFA mandates the presence of safeguarding personnel on-site and has established fast-track mechanisms for urgent cases. Reporting tools, including mobile applications and multilingual materials, are designed to maximise accessibility across diverse audiences.

Across **all sports federations**, there are valuable opportunities to strengthen safeguarding systems by enhancing the perceived independence of safeguarding officers. This can help build greater trust among victims and survivors, who may otherwise feel reluctant to report concerns within existing organisational structures. In addition, expanding access to trauma-informed training for safeguarding officers would further equip them to respond in ways that are sensitive, survivor-centred, and aligned with international best practice.

Several other federations—including **World Rugby**, **FIG**, and **FIVB** — have begun to integrate psychological and trauma support into their reporting systems, including confidential counselling options, survivor accompaniment programmes, and clear timelines for case resolution.

Despite these innovations, important gaps remain. In Spain, for instance, several stakeholders have noted persistent uncertainty around the scope and confidentiality of reporting mechanisms. In some federations, complaints continue to be managed internally without sufficient independence, undermining both trust and outcomes. Taken together, these experiences suggest that while substantial progress has been made, further investment in transparency, institutional independence, trauma-sensitivity, and accessibility is essential to ensuring that safeguarding systems are not only available but also trusted and effective. It is

essential that investigatory systems be developed within a trauma-informed framework, while also ensuring appropriate support mechanisms for victims and whistleblowers.

6. Training, Capacity Building, and Cultural Transformation

Education and capacity-building represent foundational pillars of any sustainable safeguarding system. A comparative analysis of the initiatives undertaken across countries and federations reveals a growing consensus around the need to move beyond awareness-raising and towards comprehensive, embedded training strategies that transform organisational culture and professional practice.

The **IOC** has pioneered global standard-setting in this area through the development of its Safeguarding Officer in Sport Certificate. Designed in collaboration with academic institutions and safeguarding experts, this programme provides in-depth training on legal, psychological, and procedural aspects of safeguarding. It aims notonly enables standardised knowledge and practice across National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs), but also to fosters peer learning and to build an international network of trained safeguarding professionals. The IOC has further supported this work through online platforms, practical toolkits, and multilingual guidance adapted for varying regional and sporting contexts.

Several international federations have integrated safeguarding into mandatory training curricula for coaches, administrators, and technical officials.

FIVB, for example, has embedded safeguarding modules into its licensing programmes, making them a prerequisite for continued professional certification. Similarly, **World Rugby** mandates safeguarding training as part of its minimum standards for player welfare and competition hosting, linking these requirements to its global accreditation system.

An innovative element is the **FIBA** Safeguarding Excellence – Single Point of Contact (SPOC) Course, the training programme dedicated to safeguarding focal points within National Federations. The course, enriched by the FIBA Safeguarding Toolkit, combines theory and practice, guiding SPOCs in developing action plans, communication strategies, and local referral maps. This multi-layered pedagogy extends to coaches, referees, volunteers, parents, and players, promoting the idea that ‘safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility’ and normalising a proactive and cultural approach to protection in basketball.

UEFA offers a comprehensive model of safeguarding education. Its training strategy includes a range of delivery formats—e-learning modules, in-person workshops, and event-specific briefings—targeted at different levels of the football ecosystem. UEFA has ensured that safeguarding content is tailored to cultural and national contexts, while maintaining coherence through a centralised curriculum. Crucially, safeguarding training is extended to referees, volunteers, and support staff, ensuring that protective principles permeate the entire operational structure.

National systems also reflect a growing formalisation of training requirements. In **Italy**, the recent sports reform laws mandate safeguarding education for all staff working with minors, with implementation monitored by a national observatory. **Portugal** has similarly introduced legal obligations for training, often delivered through sport federations in collaboration with state agencies. In both countries, safeguarding is increasingly integrated into national coach education frameworks.

In **Canada**, the UCCMS framework is accompanied by a robust training infrastructure developed by various stakeholders, including the Coaching Association of Canada and includes the *Respect in Sport programme* and the *Safe Sport Training Module*. These tools, among others, are widely used and offer flexible access formats, including mobile compatibility and multilingual versions, enhancing outreach to a broad participant base.

In the **United States**, the *U.S. Center for SafeSport* (USCSS) requires all adult participants within Olympic and Paralympic sport who are in regular contact with minors or have authority over minors to take annual SafeSport Core Training focused abuse prevention and response and also provides various other educational resources offered in accessible formats, multiple languages, and via the SafeSport Ready mobile app.

Australia, under the coordination of Sport Integrity Australia (SIA), delivers tailored safeguarding training linked to its National Integrity Framework. This includes sport-specific case studies, child protection modules, and sector-wide guidelines for trainers and educators. SIA also promotes continuous professional development through webinars, community outreach, and partnerships with universities.

Athlete-survivor advocacy has significantly contributed to reshaping educational content and delivery. Initiatives such as "*Nothing About Us Without Us*" and "*The Army of Survivors*" foreground lived experience as a critical pedagogical resource. Such movements encourage institutions to remain responsive and forward-looking, while strengthening the credibility of training through the integration of diverse perspectives. They also advocate for the co-design of curricula and call for trauma-informed methods of delivery that respect the psychological safety of participants. The expertise of athlete-survivors' lived experiences are critical to truly shifting sports culture and interrupting the acceptance of abuse in sports worldwide.

Education in safeguarding is not solely a technical matter; it is also deeply cultural. Concepts such as psychological safety, relational trust, and inclusion—highlighted in the thematic chapters of this volume—have become central to reimagining how teams, federations, and organisations function. Training is thus not only about transmitting knowledge, but also about cultivating an environment in which safeguarding is prioritized as a value, not merely a rule.

The cumulative effect of these initiatives is a gradual but noticeable shift toward a culture of safeguarding embedded in daily practice. However, challenges remain, particularly in reaching community-level coaches and volunteers in under-resourced settings, and in ensuring the long-term prioritization of educational programmes. Bridging these gaps will require sustained investment, multi-level coordination, and a willingness to view safeguarding not as a compliance burden, but as an ethical and pedagogical mission.

7. Evaluation, Oversight, and Institutional Learning

Effective safeguarding requires not only sound policies and training but also robust mechanisms for evaluation, oversight, and institutional learning. These elements are essential for identifying weaknesses, tracking progress, and adapting practices based on emerging challenges and stakeholder feedback. Comparative evidence from national systems and international federations reveals a growing awareness of the need for structured monitoring and feedback loops, although implementation varies widely.

The **IOC** integrates safeguarding indicators into its broader good governance monitoring. Its *Olympic Movement Unit on the Prevention of Harassment and Abuse in Sport (*OM Unit) encourages National Olympic Committees and International Federations to report annually on safeguarding implementation. Moreover, the IOC evaluates the deployment and functioning of safeguarding officers at the Olympic and Youth Olympic Games, incorporating these lessons into its global strategy.

In **Canada**, prior to the *Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport* (CCES) taking over the administration of the *Canadian Safe Sport Program*, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC), as an independent function of the *Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada* (SDRCC), published data on safeguarding complaints, resolution timelines, and procedural outcomes. These transparency measures serve both as accountability mechanisms and as instruments for continuous policy refinement. Annual reports and statistical dashboards allow stakeholders to track trends, identify risk patterns, and assess institutional responsiveness. It is anticipated that the CCES will continue these best practices.

In the contribution from **Australia**, researchers approach their analysis through the *Biermann* model. This analytical framework allows stakeholders to assess safeguarding by mapping actor interdependence, identifying where strategies align or require adjusting, and pinpointing regulatory and policy gaps. The model supports evidence-based adjustments, and the authors envisage this model as a robust way to inform national dialogue on integrity system reform.

Portugal and **Italy** have prioritized safeguarding evaluation through the creation of dedicated national observatories, which serve as central hubs for oversight, coordination, and institutional learning. These observatories are charged with a multifaceted mandate that includes systematic data collection on safeguarding practices, independent policy audits, monitoring of training implementation, and the dissemination of evidence-based good practices.

In **Italy**, the *Osservatorio Nazionale per la Tutela dei Minori nello Sport* was introduced as part of a broader package of legislative reforms that redefined the governance of sport and reinforced accountability mechanisms across federations and clubs. The observatory has adopted comprehensive guidelines that sports associations are required to follow in the development and implementation of their safeguarding policies. Moreover, these associations have a legal obligation to report regularly to the observatory on their safeguarding activities, compliance levels, and any incidents or corrective measures undertaken. This reporting requirement reinforces oversight and ensures a continuous flow of data to inform national evaluation strategies. The observatory works in close collaboration with the national anti-violence network and child protection services to ensure cross-sectoral alignment and comprehensive oversight.

In **Portugal**, the national observatory functions under the auspices of the Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth (IPDJ) and maintains strategic partnerships with various ministries, national sport bodies, and civil society organisations. It issues annual public reports that present disaggregated data on safeguarding activities, compliance levels, and institutional performance, thereby fostering transparency and peer benchmarking. The observatory also provides technical assistance to federations in designing safeguarding policies, conducting internal reviews, and meeting national standards. Both observatories embody a model of embedded institutional learning, in which evaluation is not an isolated function but a continuous and integral part of safeguarding governance. Their work exemplifies how State–sport partnerships can strengthen the operational capacity of sport organisations while aligning safeguarding with broader public policy objectives.

UEFA has developed a dynamic evaluation framework centred on its safeguarding operations during major international tournaments. The federation collects structured feedback from safeguarding officers,

team officials, and athletes to assess the effectiveness of reporting channels, case response protocols, and support services. This event-specific evaluation model not only enhances real-time learning but also generates comparative insights applicable across competitions.

Additional examples of institutional learning can be seen in federations such as **World Rugby** and the **FIG**, which have launched internal reviews and commissioned external audits to assess their safeguarding systems. These processes have led to the development of corrective action plans and the refinement of safeguarding structures.

However, in many jurisdictions and sports bodies, significant challenges persist. Data on safeguarding complaints and responses remain fragmented, inconsistently recorded, or not publicly available. This limits the ability of stakeholders to conduct cross-jurisdictional comparisons or benchmark progress. In some contexts, there is a reluctance to engage in external evaluation due to reputational concerns, legal constraints, or lack of institutional capacity.

To build a truly responsive and accountable safeguarding culture, it is essential to prioritize evaluation as an integral part of organizational development. This requires not only technical tools but also a cultural shift towards transparency, humility, and evidence-informed learning. The experiences analysed in this volume suggest that where institutional learning is prioritized, safeguarding systems evolve more rapidly, respond more effectively to survivors' needs, and enjoy greater stakeholder trust.

8. Comparative Reflections and Structural Innovations

The comparative analysis of national and international safeguarding contributions reveals a dynamic and rapidly evolving landscape. Across jurisdictions and sport organisations, a wide range of structural innovations and institutional reforms are being developed, signaling the emergence of safeguarding as a fully-fledged field of governance in sport.

One of the most notable developments is the creation of more independent safeguarding institutions.

The *U.S. Center for Safe Sport* (USCSS) and now the *Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport* (CCES) represent a fundamental departure from traditional in-house compliance models. These bodies possess autonomous investigatory powers and maintain formal legal mandates. They have helped to standardise safeguarding expectations across multiple sport disciplines. Their case management systems, public reporting practices, and procedural guarantees take steps to define their independence and increase transparency and trust within sport.

The importance of legislative mandates is equally evident in **Italy** and **Portugal**, where safeguarding reforms have been embedded within national sport laws. In both countries, State-driven initiatives have catalysed institutional restructuring, compelling federations to adopt formal safeguarding policies, designate officers, and submit regular compliance reports. In **Italy**, this State mandate goes hand in hand with a parallel mandate from the sport sector itself, creating a cooperative framework in which both State and sports governance work together to foster and develop robust safeguarding policies. This demonstrates how political and legal engagement can generate systemic change and ensure long-term sustainability. Similar developments are visible in **Australia**, where Sport Integrity Australia (SIA) functions as an overarching national authority with both regulatory and educative mandates.

Decentralised yet coordinated structures also provide promising models. **UEFA**'s safeguarding network, consisting of designated safeguarding officers within each national federation, exemplifies how federated governance models can balance local autonomy with continental coherence. UEFA supports this network with centralised tools, training modules, and tournament-specific protocols that enable safeguarding to be implemented in a harmonised but flexible manner across Europe. The **International Olympic Committee** (IOC) mirrors this logic through a framework of universal safeguarding standards while encouraging tailored implementation by National Olympic Committees and International Federations.

Survivor-led innovations constitute a transformative force across several contexts. The **United Kingdom** and the **United States** have witnessed the rise of movements such as the above - mentioned "*The Army of Survivors*" which prioritises co-production, experiential knowledge, and survivor representation in policy development and education. These grassroots initiatives are pushing institutions to integrate lived experience not only as testimony but as an essential source of systems development, policy legitimacy, training content, and ethical reflection.

The case of **FIBA** demonstrates how an integrated approach—combining regulatory obligations, educational tools, reporting mechanisms, can serve as a replicable model for other international federations. Its ability to engage National Federations with practical tools and pathways of empowerment underscores how safeguarding can become a shared and culturally embedded commitment.

In **Germany** safeguarding is now a core component of sport-related professional accreditation, linked directly to quality assurance frameworks. These initiatives ensure that safeguarding is not relegated to a designated department only but becomes an everyday concern for all stakeholders.

Equally important are innovations in trauma-informed investigatory processes. The **IBU**, the **FIG**, and **World Rugby** have made significant strides in aligning investigative procedures with survivor well-being and independence. By providing access to psychological support, reporting channels, and procedural accommodations that aim to reduce re-traumatisation, their work aims to provide the balance between due process and empathy and demonstrates that legal integrity and emotional safety are not mutually exclusive.

Taken together, these examples illustrate that safeguarding is no longer a peripheral or reactive function. It is evolving into a multidimensional, transnational, and rights-based system of governance. The field is increasingly defined by its adherence to principles of independence, inclusion, transparency, and survivor empowerment. What emerges is a flexible yet normatively robust architecture—capable of adapting to diverse institutional settings while remaining anchored in shared values of dignity, safety, and accountability. The best practices identified in this volume represent a roadmap for policymakers, sport leaders, and safeguarding professionals committed to transforming sport into a safe and ethical space for all. Equally, any gaps revealed offer critical opportunities to learn, adapt, and strengthen safeguarding policies, ensuring continuous improvement and long-term effectiveness.

9. Challenges and Unresolved Issues

Despite the growing sophistication of safeguarding frameworks, numerous structural and cultural challenges continue to impede their full realisation. Chief among these is the fragmentation of responsibilities, particularly in federated or decentralised sport systems. In contexts such as **Belgium** and **Spain**, overlapping mandates among ministries, regional authorities, and sport federations often result in coordination gaps, conflicting guidelines, and diluted accountability. The absence of a unified chain of command in safeguarding governance undermines consistency and delays institutional responses to abuse.

Horizontal cooperation between sport bodies, child protection agencies, health services, and law enforcement is gaining recognition as a key element of effective safeguarding. Encouragingly, some countries—such as **Canada**, **Germany**, and **Italy**—have already established inter-agency protocols and referral mechanisms, offering valuable models to build upon. Strengthening such collaboration across more jurisdictions presents a significant opportunity to enhance holistic, multidisciplinary safeguarding responses.

Financial constraints further compound these problems, especially at the grassroots level.

Smaller clubs and local associations often lack the resources to remunerate safeguarding officers, conduct regular training, or develop accessible reporting channels. This resource disparity can result in uneven protection for children and vulnerable persons depending on the sport, region, or level of play. In developing sport systems, these inequalities are often exacerbated by limited technological infrastructure, insufficient language support, and a shortage of qualified personnel.

One way to mitigate these disparities is by linking funding to safeguarding obligations, a strategy increasingly adopted in certain jurisdictions. In the **United Kingdom**, safeguarding training requirements are closely tied to the conditions for receiving public or lottery funding rather than solely to internal quality assurance processes. For example, *Sport England* and *UK Sport* require funded organisations to demonstrate that all relevant staff and volunteers have undertaken approved safeguarding training, and to maintain evidence of completion as part of compliance audits.

Cultural resistance remains one of the most persistent barriers to safeguarding implementation. In various organisational settings, safeguarding continues to be regarded as a bureaucratic imposition rather than a core ethical responsibility. High-profile scandals, widely covered in the press, have reinforced perceptions of institutional denial and defensiveness, as well as a reluctance to place the protection of athletes and survivors at the centre of organisational priorities.

Leadership commitment is another important factor. Where leadership actively endorses safeguarding—through strategic planning, resource allocation, and public advocacy—implementation tends to be more effective and sustainable. However, in the absence of such commitment, policies often remain superficial or performative. The discrepancy between formal adoption and actual practice continues to be a critical fault line in many settings.

Addressing these unresolved issues will require a combination of legal, cultural, financial, and organisational strategies. It will also necessitate greater investment in monitoring, evaluation, and survivor engagement to ensure that safeguarding evolves from a policy imperative into a lived institutional ethos.

10. Recommendations for Harmonisation and Future Development

Drawing on the comparative analysis of institutional models, legal frameworks, and field-level practices, a number of strategic recommendations emerge to guide the future development and harmonisation of safeguarding in sport.

First, harmonisation requires the codification of **minimum, binding safeguarding standards**. At present, protection remains uneven: some systems impose rigorous training and compliance audits, while others rely on voluntary guidelines with little or no enforcement. To close these gaps, international standards should be grounded in human rights principles and translated into **concrete obligations**. These would include, at a minimum, the requirement that all coaches, volunteers, and staff complete accredited

safeguarding training as a condition for licensing or club affiliation; the establishment of **independent, accessible reporting channels**, available in multiple languages and free from conflicts of interest; and regular compliance monitoring, with proportionate sanctions—such as withdrawal of funding or exclusion from competition—for organisations that fail to meet safeguarding obligations.

International organisations such as the International Olympic Committee (**IOC**), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**), and the **European Union**, and the main international federations are well positioned to lead this process by linking recognition and financial support to safeguarding compliance. Their role is not only to articulate broad principles but also to ensure that binding standards are monitored, enforced, and adaptable to diverse legal systems while guaranteeing core protections.

Second, safeguarding must be anchored in institutional independence. Countries such as **Canada** and the **United States** have demonstrated the value of independent safeguarding entities—like the *U.S. Center for SafeSport* and the *Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner* (OSIC) and the *Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport* (CCES) —which possess both autonomy and investigative authority. Exploring adaptations of these models at the national and international level, with appropriate resourcing and legal mandate, is critical to building trust and procedural integrity.

Third, the meaningful inclusion of survivors in all stages of safeguarding governance—systems development, policymaking, training, implementation, and evaluation—should be prioritised. The experience of **survivor-led initiatives** in the United Kingdom and the United States, including the above-mentioned "*The Army of Survivors*" and "*Nothing About Us Without Us*," illustrates the added legitimacy and transformative insight that comes from centring lived experience in institutional practice with a comprehensive trauma-informed approach.

Fourth, training standards should be harmonised and embedded within sport education pathways across all roles and levels. The **IOC**'s global safeguarding certification, the **FIVB**'s coach education integration, and national models in **Australia**, the **United Kingdom,** and the **USA**, illustrate early examples of standardised, context-sensitive capacity building. Training should include not only technical guidance but also cultural competence and trauma-informed methodologies. To ensure comparability and mutual recognition across countries and organisations, the adoption of a common safeguarding formation framework—similar to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) at European level—should be considered. Such a framework would define progressive levels of safeguarding competence (from foundational awareness to advanced specialist expertise), establish shared descriptors of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and allow for transparent recognition of qualifications across sporting contexts globally. This would support mobility, consistency, and quality assurance in safeguarding education, while remaining flexible enough to adapt to local cultural and institutional realities.

Fifth, stronger investment is needed in data collection, policy evaluation, and transparent public reporting. Observatories in **Portugal** and **Italy**, **Canada**'s anonymised statistical dashboards, and **Australia**'s application of the *Biermann* model demonstrate how monitoring and evaluation can inform evidence-based policy revision. Regional and international platforms for peer learning—such as those facilitated by the **IOC** and **UEFA** should be expanded to support comparative benchmarking, exchange of good practices, and collaborative problem solving.

Finally, safeguarding must be fully integrated into the broader integrity and good governance frameworks of sport. This requires embedding safeguarding standards into funding criteria, performance evaluations,

and governance audits. Safeguarding should no longer be treated as an ancillary function but as a core determinant of institutional legitimacy and part of the fabric of sport culture.

The path forward is both complex and urgent. It calls for the consolidation of fragmented efforts, the scaling up of successful models, and the development of inclusive, transparent, and legally robust systems. By implementing these recommendations, sport organisations can ensure that safeguarding is not merely a compliance obligation but a foundational pillar of ethical, resilient, and rights-based sport governance.

11. From Protection to Empowerment

Safeguarding in sport has undergone a profound conceptual and structural transformation. Once considered a peripheral concern, it is now recognised as a foundational pillar of ethical governance, institutional legitimacy, and athlete well-being. The national systems and international federations examined in this volume reveal that safeguarding is no longer defined solely by regulatory compliance or risk mitigation. Rather, it has emerged as a multidimensional framework grounded in human rights, inclusion, accountability, and empowerment. And although there is much work to be done, these systems are starting to center safeguarding in a way that will interrupt and prevent abuse in sport.

The most promising examples—whether from independent institutions in North America, federated networks in Europe, or survivor-led movements —demonstrate that meaningful safeguarding requires structural independence, cross-sectoral coordination, educational innovation, sustained leadership, and adherence to principles of human rights and trauma-informed care. It also demands a fundamental cultural shift: from hierarchical models of control to participatory models of care, where all stakeholders—especially those most vulnerable—are seen as rights-holders with voice and agency.

The journey is complex, uneven, and ongoing. Yet it is increasingly guided by a shared normative horizon: the creation of safe, inclusive, and empowering environments in which sport can fulfil its highest social and ethical aspirations. Across jurisdictions, we see a growing convergence around key principles—such as transparency, survivor-centredness, and institutional learning—that are reshaping how safeguarding is conceptualised and operationalised.

Importantly, the momentum is not merely top-down. Grassroots advocacy, survivor leadership, and peer education are catalysing change from within. Equally vital is the meaningful inclusion of local actors and frontline professionals with expertise in medicine, psychology, pedagogy, and social work. These individuals bring critical, context-sensitive insights that enrich safeguarding frameworks and enhance their capacity to respond to diverse forms of harm. Their interdisciplinary knowledge helps ensure that safeguarding interventions are not only procedurally robust but also emotionally and developmentally attuned to the needs of children and vulnerable adults. The inclusion of athletes, coaches, and community-based practitioners in the co-design and implementation of safeguarding measures ensures that reforms are not only legitimate but also responsive, culturally relevant, and sustainable.

As this volume shows, safeguarding is not an endpoint but a living practice - one that evolves with context, deepens through reflection, and strengthens through collaboration. The direction of travel is clear: toward a global culture of safeguarding where protection is not an exception but the norm, and where sport becomes a domain of dignity, trust, and empowerment for all participants. By embracing this vision, sport can move beyond harm prevention to become a transformative force for resilience, equity, and human flourishing.

12. Commitments and Priorities for Future Action

To advance the culture of safeguarding in sport, the following 10 key priorities are identified for immediate and sustained action:

- **Create clear, shared transnational standards** for safeguarding that apply across sports and countries, while still respecting local cultures and systems.
- **Support independent safeguarding bodies** that can act fairly, listen to survivors, and investigate concerns without pressure from sport organisations.
- **Involve survivors meaningfully** in shaping policies, training, and decisions.
- **Make safeguarding training a must-have** for everyone in sport - from coaches and volunteers to athletes, managers and referees - so that safety becomes part of everyday practice.
- **Collect and share better data** to understand what is working, what is not, and where help is needed, while being open and transparent with the public.
- **Ensure that grassroots associations**, especially smaller clubs, receive **targeted financial and organizational support** so they can hire safeguarding officers, deliver high-quality trainings, and implement robust safe reporting and risk assessment systems.
- **Work together across sectors**, connecting sports stakeholders with schools, families, local communities, health services, and child protection agencies to respond better when addressing integrity, prevention, and safeguarding issues.
- **Make safeguarding part of how we measure success**, linking it to funding, performance reviews, and good governance.
- **Keep learning and improving**, by listening to frontline workers, using research, and learning from one another across borders.
- **Promote research, projects, and studies on safeguarding**, at both national and international levels, and support public events - such as conferences, workshops, or panels - ideally held alongside major sporting events. These moments help raise awareness, spotlight the issue, and generate momentum for change.