



# A REPORT OF IMPACT COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE IN 5 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

A report prepared in partial fulfilment of Work Package 4 and associated  
Intellectual Outputs

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## Preface

Project IMPACT (Developing Communities of Practice to Maximise the Usability and Impact of Clean Sport Education in Europe) was financially supported through the Erasmus+ Sport funding programme of the European Commission between January 2019 and December 2021. The main objective of the project was to utilise the concept of "Communities of Practice" to tackle clean sport education, an important aspect of anti-doping efforts globally. The present guide presents a practical way to develop, monitor, and evaluate communities of practice for clean sport education.

The present report was developed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the successful completion and delivery of Intellectual Outputs (IO) 1-3 for project IMPACT, and also reflects the work completed by all partners for the requirements of Work-Package 4: Development of face-to-face<sup>1</sup> communities of practice.

### Disclaimer Notice

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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<sup>1</sup> **Note:** Because of COVID-19 disruption the Communities of Practice shifted to online mode in 2020 and 2021, although they were originally planned to operate entirely on the basis of face-to-face interaction.

# Project IMPACT Communities of Practice for Clean Sport Education

## Introduction

One of the key objectives of project IMPACT was to develop the first formal Communities of Practice (CoPs) for Clean Sport Education in Europe. This allowed us to examine, for the first time, whether the concept, methods, and approach of CoPs are applicable and relevant to the context of clean sport education, especially in relation to the training and education needs of diverse populations, from elite and recreational athletes, to athlete support personnel (e.g., coaches), and other professionals working in the field of sport. In a way, project IMPACT allowed us to examine CoPs as a “proof of concept” across different European countries and different populations.

Overall, ten different CoPs were developed. Eight of those CoPs were completed during the project’s lifetime, whereas 2 CoPs were developed towards the end of the project and are currently in progress. The 2 new CoPs are presented as “work in progress” but it was deemed important to include them in this report in order to further illustrate the applicability of the concept of communities of practice and the diversity of the topics it may cover within clean sport education.

This report presents the key features of each CoP that was developed in the context of project IMPACT. As you may notice, some CoPs were unsuccessful, other were successfully completed during the project’s lifetime, and others will continue to operate beyond the lifetime of the project. It is important to note that any outcome of a CoP provides a useful learning experience. In this sense, it is perhaps more appropriate to consider the experiences of the CoP members, as well as the function and evolution of CoPs as a learning process, rather than thinking of them as either “success” or “failure” stories.

For reasons of clarity, the IMPACT CoPs are presented below as individual “cases” from the UK, Finland, Greece, Italy, and Cyprus. For reasons of consistency, all individual cases are presented in terms of their key objectives and goals, function (number of meetings), and reflections and key outcomes.

As described in the Policy & Practice Recommendations Report of project IMPACT (see also: <http://project-impact-eu.phed.auth.gr/project-results/>) the objectives and operational plan of each CoP was determined by a needs assessment exercise that preceded the official first meeting each CoP. Although CoPs can be formed and initiated in many different ways, for greater consistency in this project, a needs assessment exercise was performed with individual potential CoP members, which was then followed by a co-creation workshop with confirmed members. The co-creation workshop provided further insights (e.g.,

“Stakeholders’ Insights for Clean Sport Education”) into common areas of interest helped each CoP to specify commonly agreed objectives and goals.

## CASE 1 - Community of Practice of Sport Coaches, Sheffield, UK

### Background

This Community of Practice originated in Sheffield, UK and involved 6 coaches and one expert academic in doping research. The CoP was developed with support from Sheffield Hallam University and the Hallam Barbell Club, a local weightlifting community club. All the coaches were working with both elite and amateur-level athletes from swimming/diving, weightlifting, rugby, wrestling, and winter sports (bobsleigh). The coaches were based in the wider South Yorkshire area. Following the needs assessment exercise and the co-creation workshop, the CoP members realised that different sports had different needs and experiences with regards to anti-doping, and the broader aspect of clean sport values. Specifically, in sports where anti-doping rule violations were more prevalent, there was a greater need to focus on ways to minimise risk and harm among users and to prevent the early onset of doping. Accordingly, in sports with less doping cases the focus was on upholding the spirit of sport, keeping the sport “clean”, and minimising the risk for doping onset across age groups and competition levels.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

Defining the goals and objectives of the CoP was not an easy task due to the differing experiences of coaches from different sports. This task was not achieved until the second meeting of the CoP, when the following goals and objectives were agreed:

1. Maintain an honest, transparent, and criticism-free forum where CoP members can share their varying experiences with doping and learn from one another.
2. Consider ways in which clean sport education can be diversified to address sport-specific needs, especially in sports or populations where anti-doping rule violations are more prolific.
3. Identify approaches and methods to minimise the risk for doping use in athletes with limited knowledge and experience around doping and anti-doping rule violations (e.g., as specified in the World Anti-Doping Code).
4. Identify approaches to support current doping users and help them either minimise harm and/or cease the use of doping substances.

### Function of the CoP

The CoP originally planned at least 4-5 meetings to address the aforementioned goals. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the information to be exchanged, CoP members felt

more comfortably sharing their experiences via face-to-face communication, within a “neutral” setting (i.e., University premises). Two meetings were successfully completed between November 2019 and January 2020. Nevertheless, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a major disruption both on the CoP, and the lives and professional activities of the individual members. Due to social distancing and self-isolation measures that were enforced in the UK, and the concurrent high number of infections and mortality at the time, face-to-face interaction among the community members ceased. At the same time, sporting activity across the country was stopped and athletic events and competitions were either cancelled or postponed until further notice. It was apparent that the pandemic had shifted priorities and, discussing ways to promote clean sport education, did not seem of high relevance while sporting activity was uncertain and related jobs were at risk.

Unfortunately, the CoP ceased its function and never followed-up its original plan. Various factors have played a role, but the most important one was the eruption of the global COVID-



19 pandemic and the disruption it caused at a societal and individual level.

### **Reflections and key outcomes**

Drawing on the experiences of the Sheffield Sport Coaches CoP, it is possible that the early stages of a CoP are the most critical for establishing the commitment of

individual members for the long-term continuation and sustainability of the community. At early stages, commitment and personal investment are naturally at lower levels and a major disruption might further discourage participation or at least not motivate CoP members to become further engaged. The COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented effect on the society and multiple levels, and this has definitely impacted the evolution and survival of the specific CoP.

## CASE 2 - Community of Practice for Anti-Doping in Recreational Sport

### Background

This community of practice was developed in Helsinki, Finland with the support of IMPACT's partner Dopinglinkki, and involved 14 participants from diverse backgrounds: academic researchers; communication specialists; online health advisory manager; harm reduction and needle exchange service workers; anti-doping experts; drug service evaluation and quality expert; and fitness community specialists.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

Soon after the needs assessment exercise and the co-creation process, the following key areas of interest were identified: recreational anti-doping work; harm reduction and prevention of doping use and other drugs; smart drugs; education and research on anti-doping in recreational sport settings; and supporting international anti-doping work in recreational sport. Given the diversity of the members' background and the areas of interest, the following goals and objectives were agreed:

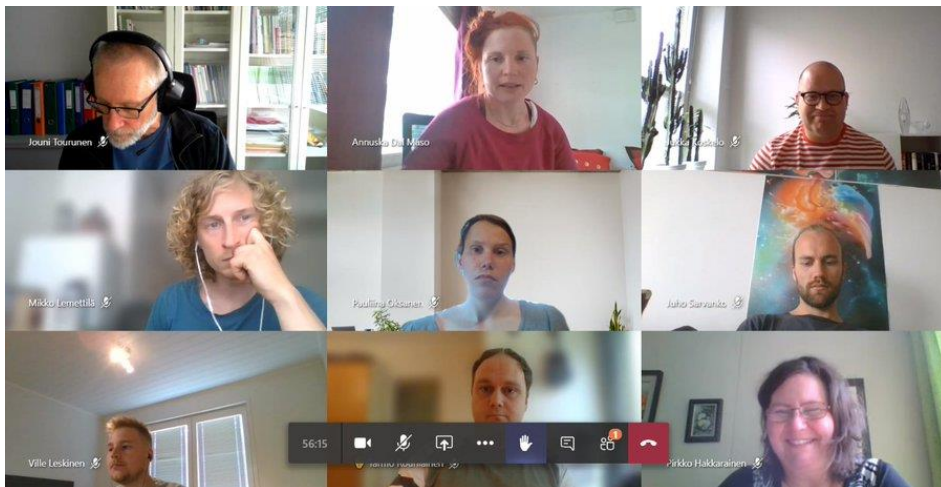
1. To bring together different professionals to share ideas, experiences, and practices about doping in recreational sport.
2. To exchange information and ideas about educational interventions against doping in recreational sport, and to learn from one another.
3. To develop synergies and interaction between different professionals who have not met each other before and have a common interest in addressing doping in recreational sport settings.

### Function of the CoP

It is noteworthy that this CoP represents the culmination of previous "unsuccessful" attempts to find CoP members with an interest and commitment in clean sport education and develop a viable CoP. Because this CoP was developed during the pandemic (Spring 2020) it was natural that online communication among members was the most viable option. Therefore, this CoP operated entirely online. Four meetings were held during the project's lifetime, and all members were actively involved in the online discussions and meetings of the community. The first meetings of the CoP were more challenging as the participants were largely unfamiliar with the concept of the CoP, their role, the expectations ensuing from their participation, and were literally among strangers. The most talkative persons would speak,



whereas most of the members remained either silent or passive, but the atmosphere was generally positive. Through a smooth coordination the CoP Chair managed to smoothen interactions among members and “break the ice”. The next two meetings of the CoP were much improved in terms of member interactions, and this was partly attributed to the fact that several resources or ideas were shared online between members, outside the planned meetings. Participants shared ideas and experiences about doping use in recreational sport in Finland and other Nordic countries. While some participants remained reserved about their experiences with doping, a climate of mutual respect and support was crucial for opening up and sharing information. By the end of the third meeting the CoP was progressing according to plan and in relation to the set objectives and goals. All aspects of health advisory services, prevention, harm reduction, “smart drugs”, education (incl. e-learning) and research were discussed. Participants also reflected on how the COVID-19 pandemic had influenced their work (e.g., needle exchange services, health advisory work,



harm reduction work, communications, education) and how lockdown has affected to the import of the doping substances. The last meeting was focused on the

topic of education and how different educational approaches and methods can be used to effectively prevent doping use in recreational sport settings, and to also minimise harm among current users.

### **Reflections and key outcomes**

The CoP provided Dopinglinkki and all individual members the means through which they can share important information about their practices and ideas about how to improve anti-doping work in recreational sport settings. The key outcomes achieved included improved practices for the members involved, and especially for Dopinglinkki, which now considers the wider use of CoPs to address other drug use issues and to improve organisational processes and learning. Furthermore, new knowledge about anti-doping in recreational sport increased and new connections and synergies were developed among the members of the CoP. Importantly, all the members realised, through their own practice, the benefits and

usability of the CoP – as a tool for learning, synergy development, and the sharing of good practices.

There are several testimonies from the Chair of the CoP and other members that attest to the positive experiences that emerged. Reflecting on the operations of the CoP, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting the chair of the community from Dopinglinkki stated that this CoP *“is giving the added value into our anti-doping work, which have been missing previously”*. Other members stated that *“this is a true community of practice”*. Overall, giving people the opportunity to discuss and share their ideas and experiences appears to be a useful approach in unravelling doping experiences, considering new ways of approaching doping, and seeing the similarities between prevention practices (e.g., using CoPs to address doping, as well as other emerging forms of drug use).

## CASE 3 - Community of Practice of Greek Sport Coaches

### Background

This community of practice was developed in Thessaloniki, Greece and was led by Mr Ntovolis, a former athletics elite athlete and currently athletics coach and PhD researcher at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. This CoP involved 6 other coaches and from both elite and recreational sport, covering the following sport disciplines: martial arts; fitness; mountaineering and climbing; athletics; basketball; and para-sports. The coaches were based in the broader area of Northern Greece, but most of them were based in Thessaloniki and neighbouring cities.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

The needs assessment exercise and co-creation workshop with the members of the CoP indicated that the goals and objectives of this community were diverse, mostly because the community reflected a wide range of experiences from different types and sectors of sport. Of particular importance is that, although the coaches working with abled populations and athletes reported at least some level of exposure to clean sport education, the experiences coming from para-sport were markedly different. Specifically, the coach in para-sport, who also was a CEO of a para-sport organisation, mentioned that there is very little provision for anti-doping in the specific sector and highlighted the needs and challenges in this area. The community reached consensus over addressing the following goals:

1. Increase coaches and athletes' awareness about the new developments and provisions of the 2021 World Anti-Doping Code.
2. Raise awareness about the risks and safe use practices concerning nutritional supplements, and the role of nutrition in performance enhancement.
3. Identify ways to effectively promote clean sport values across different levels and sectors of sport, including para-sport.



## **Function of the CoP**

Following the first meeting where the co-creation workshop took place, three more meetings were held. The COVID-19 pandemic had a disruptive effect on the function and operations of the community, largely due to social distancing and restrictions in travelling between different cities/regions. For this reason, the CoP members maintained online communication and interaction, and resumed their meetings when social distancing measures in the country were relaxed because they deemed it important to keep the formal CoP meetings face-to-face as much as possible. The first two meetings were mostly around the specification of the objectives of the CoP. Interestingly, a pragmatic approach was used and the objectives of the CoP were defined on the basis of common interests, existing needs, as well as existing resources to support the function of the CoP. That is, the members of the community highlighted the importance of setting realistic and feasible goals, that could be achieved given the premises and resources of the community. The emergence of sport values was highlighted in the third meeting of the CoP, emphasising the importance of shifting attention from “winning” to “participating” in sport for the joy and benefits of participation (e.g., improved health). It was also discussed how a clean sport “culture” should be developed so that all coaches become more aware of current doping issues and identify ways to effectively promote clean sport. Lastly, during the third meeting the CoP members agreed to focus more on identifying relevant education resources that would help each one individually to more effectively promote clean sport values and education in their local sporting communities and athletes. The last meeting focused on discussing ways to develop educational and training resources for coaches in elite and recreational sport, and also in para-sport. The Chair of the CoP signposted the members to the resources already included in IMPACT’s Clean Sport Education Repository, where a lot of programs include education and training resources for coaches.

## **Reflections and key outcomes**

Perhaps the single most important reflection from this CoP is that anti-doping and clean sport education are still underdeveloped in para-sport, at least within the specific cultural context/country. Secondly, coaches, especially those employed in recreational sport settings (e.g., fitness) remain largely remote from current advances in anti-doping (e.g., World Anti-Doping Code) and relevant clean sport education resources. Partly, this may be attributed to the fact that Code does not explicitly address recreational sport and its main focus is on elite athletes and organised sport. Nevertheless, doping still remains a perennial issue in recreational sport and systematic efforts are needed to tackle it effectively and protect the health of athletes. Lastly, all the members of the CoP engaged with IMPACT’s resources,

and especially the Repository of Clean Sport Education programs, some of which are available in Greek – so they could be readily used. Although the members of the CoP have moved on with their careers and daily work routine, they still maintain contact and also communicate with the Chair of the CoP to seek further information regarding clean sport education resources.

All the members had enjoyed their participation in the CoP and found it useful. Perhaps the CoP led to more questions than answers (e.g., how to contextualise clean sport education for para-sport), but this is a natural outcome of every setting where people feel able to share ideas and discuss current problems (and potential solutions).

## CASE 4 - Community of Practice of Law Professionals & Whistleblowing

### Background

This CoP was developed within the premises of the online Master's program LLM International Sport Law in Practice, at Sheffield Hallam University (UK), which is attended by an international community of current legal professionals who are interested in developing their expertise in international sport law. The CoP is embedded within the extra-curricular activities of the course and is open to anyone with an interest in the topic of whistleblowing against doping misconduct in sport. The specific topic (whistleblowing) was selected because, at the time, a lot of efforts were led by WADA and the International Olympics Committee to promote whistleblowing behaviour, while the legal aspects involved remained largely elusive (e.g., legal protection of whistleblowers). This CoP operates on a "rolling" basis with new cohorts of students joining the community every year. Overall, 9 members have participated in the CoP across 2 cohorts, between 2020 and 2021.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

Although the topic of the CoP was predefined, the CoP members decided on the different areas they wanted to research through the CoP. This included a wide range of topics, from jurisdiction issues, to legal protection of whistleblowers against retaliation. The community members decided that they would focus on the following objectives:

1. Discuss jurisdiction issues over whistleblowing, using examples from non-sport settings.
2. Identify how many anti-doping rule violations that emerge from whistleblowing reports are resolved at national hearings or in CAS.
3. Identify how many anti-doping rule violations that emerge from whistleblowing reports lead to prosecution and convictions.
4. Identify existing witness/whistleblower protection programs and their key characteristics.

### Function of the CoP

The objectives set by one cohort of students can be revisited or updated by the next cohort. So far, new cohorts/members of the CoP build upon the knowledge base of the previous cohort. Given that all students at the specific course attend online courses, the entire function of the CoP was online and, in this respect, was least affected by pandemic-related

disruption (at least at the level of communication and interaction among CoP members). There are four meetings per cohort, following an initial briefing meeting by the Chair of the CoP, Dr Greg Ioannidis, an internationally known expert in anti-doping litigation and senior academic. In addition to the formal CoP meetings, the members of the community usually have their own meetings either via IMPACT's Virtual CoP platform, or by using other means such as One Drive and other file sharing and collaborative work platforms. In the first meeting the CoP members are self-assigned into specific working groups and each group is responsible for researching a specific topic (e.g., jurisdiction in whistleblowing cases). In the course of the next 2 meetings the different groups engage in independent research and collaborative work and during the formal CoP meetings they present their progress, updates, and findings to the other members of the Community and the Chair. In the final meeting, the CoP members (including the Chair) decide on whether additional meetings are needed to fulfil the CoP's objectives and, if not, they discuss the plans for utilising their findings (e.g., prepare a journal publication, presentation at the MSc course or Faculty, etc.).

### **Reflections and key outcomes**

Unlike other CoPs, the specific community has a more pedagogical and educational character and is used as a tool to help students acquire more in-depth knowledge over a specific doping-related topic (in this case, whistleblowing). Indeed, one of the key outcomes that has been observed following two cohorts of CoP members is that independent research, critical thinking and evaluation, and reporting skills are improved. Therefore, the CoP serves the purpose of pedagogy and learning. In addition, by the end of the final meeting of the community, the CoP members have become more knowledgeable and aware of the legal issues around whistleblowing. With more advances in the specific area (e.g., the recently published recommendation of the Council of Europe regarding whistleblower protection), this CoP has more information to work with.

Both the CoP members and the Chair of the CoP find this activity as highly useful – for pedagogy and learning, and for better understanding a rather complex topic with several legal ramifications. The enthusiasm is shared among the CoP members so that older members of the community may motivate new members to join. Our hope is to maintain this CoP as an integral part of the learning activities of the specific course, and to diversify the focus and topics addressed. A new area of inquiry that will be introduced in the 2022 Cohort of CoP members will pertain to the human rights of athletes who undergo anti-doping proceedings.

## CASE 5 - Community of Practice of University Students for Clean Sport

### Background

This CoP was jointly developed by Cyprus Anti-doping Authority (CyADA) and the University of Nicosia Research Foundation (UNRF) in Cyprus and focused on promoting clean sport values and education within the context of University sports in Cyprus – it is noteworthy that University sport events in Cyprus have increasingly gained popularity, therefore, promoting clean sport values and education among University student athletes was deemed well suited at the time. The 12 CoP members represented a wide and interdisciplinary group from sport science and nutrition, biological and life sciences, and psychological/behavioural science.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

The key objectives of this community were to exchange knowledge and practices around clean sport education; promote clean sport education to University students and the wider community; promote clean sport education using online tools (YouTube, social media).

### Function of the CoP

The CoP was completed in 4 meetings and, interestingly, the community's processes, functions, and results were widely disseminated through a final conference that was organised by the CoP members, with the active support of CyADA and UNRF. The first meeting was used to establish rapport among community members, and to define the goals and objectives of the community, following a co-creation workshops and the needs assessment exercise. Even at the first meeting the members of the community considered action plans and shared ideas about how to best promote clean sport values and education in University sport settings.

Following the first meeting, the members of the CoP engaged actively with the project's early versions of the virtual CoP (VCoP) platform to interact and exchange resources and information that were useful for their tasks. The CoP members formed smaller "expert" groups with each group pursuing a specific topic (e.g., sport nutrition for performance enhancement; the risks of nutritional supplement use; how to raise awareness about the dangers of doping; how to approach and engage university student athletes in clean sport activities).





In the second and third meetings the CoP focused on preparing and presenting material from the independent research of each expert group. The fourth and final meeting of the CoP was completed with the community's conference. During this event each expert group presented their findings and discussed suggestions and recommendations about further developing clean sport education activities and resources.

### **Reflections and key outcomes**

Perhaps the most important tangible outcome is the CoP's final conference, which is available online: [IMPACT - YouTube](#)

However, equally, if not more, important were the reflections and testimonies of the individual CoP members. Firstly, they all found CoP participation a useful learning experience through which they acquired in-depth knowledge about doping and clean sport education. Secondly, they all expressed an interest to continue engage in clean sport education and, as much as possible, integrate this in their future professional practice – this was even more so for sport nutritionists and sport professionals who would have a more direct contact with athletes and coaches and other sport stakeholders.

Drawing on the positive experiences of this CoP, CyADA has already planned the development of future CoPs to address clean sport in University sport settings, attesting to the longer-term sustainability of the project and the legacy of this CoP.

## CASE 6 - Community of Practice of Sport Technicians & Professionals

### Background

This CoP was led by SS Lazio Ciclismo in Rome and involved 9 members who were professionals from different sport-related disciplines and backgrounds, including sport managers, sport organisation stakeholders and club presidents, professional athletes, and sport physicians and nutritionists.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

Following a needs analysis assessment and a co-creation workshop, the community's key objectives were to promote clean sport education and prevention, especially for younger athletes; and improve the anti-doping practices in sport clubs and organisations associated with SS Lazio and beyond.

### Function of the CoP

The community held four meetings in total, the last of which incorporated a policy-making event with external partners to discuss policy issues and future developments in clean sport promotion, and a “train-the-trainers” event where the functions and key outcomes of the CoP were shared with external participants. Given the course of the pandemic at the time, and its disruptive effects on sport activity, the first two meetings of the CoP focused on mitigating the effects of the pandemic on efforts to promote clean sport values among athletes. Reflecting on the situation, the members of the CoP realised that the pandemic had shifted attention away from clean sport issues and athletes and their entourage were mostly focused on maintaining top performance with less means (e.g., trainings were ceased or disrupted), and clean sport education was not among their top priorities. Accordingly, the meetings overviewed anti-doping challenges in sport clubs and identified the areas where intervention was needed – for instance, only a small number of athletes updated their knowledge with regards to the World Anti-Doping Code and WADA's Prohibited List. The third and fourth meeting were especially focused on promoting initiatives to sensitise and educate younger athletes about doping issues, and in fostering clean sport values. To this end, the online educational content offered through IMPACT's Clean Sport Education repository was deemed relevant and appropriate. For this reason, SS Lazio Ciclismo has embedded IMPACT's website and online resources in their web homepage, and other SS Lazio clubs are encouraged to do so. This way more young athletes in SS Lazio clubs will have the opportunity to access clean sport education resources and materials. Following the

last meeting and the round table discussion with members of the CoP and external participants, the community members engaged in a reflective exercise where they considered the next steps in promoting clean sport within the SS Lazio multisport club (which represents more than 10.000 athletes from 70 different sport disciplines) and beyond.

### **Reflections and key outcomes**

As already mentioned SS Lazio Ciclismo and other members of the community have already integrated, or are about to integrate, IMPACT's clean sport education resources to support their anti-doping efforts. One of the key reflections of this CoP is that, through interaction and the sharing of experiences and ideas, community members developed a better understanding of the problematic and critical areas that need to be addressed at a club level, and also identified ways to intervene and promote clean sport values in different sport clubs – especially among younger athletes. Furthermore, the community considered the organisation of different public engagement and mass communication campaigns to promote clean sport values, as a way of raising awareness about clean sport in the local community.



## CASE 7 - Community of Practice of Sport Stakeholders

### Background

This CoP was initiated and led by Dr Vassilis Barkoukis at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUn), Greece, and largely operated in Athens with the active support of the Greek National Anti-Doping Organisation (then known as ESKAN). The community consisted of 7 members which included a former Olympian athlete, 2 representatives from the Greek NADO, one journalist with an interest and related career in anti-doping, a representative of an NGO for clean sport, and a former member of Greece's national anti-doping laboratory.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

The key objectives of this community were to:

1. Promote clean sport values and education, as widely as possible, across levels and types of sport, and in the wider community.
2. Establish synergies between the NADO and external partners, in order to pursue joint projects on anti-doping and clean sport education.

### Function of the CoP

Overall, four meetings were held, two of which were face-to-face in Athens, and 2 were virtual due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and social distancing measures. Following an initial consultation and co-creation workshop where the objectives of the community were commonly agreed by its members, the second meeting of the community pertained to the organisation of different activities to publicly promote clean sport values – inside and outside sport (e.g., in schools and educational settings). To this end, several actions were organised and the community also developed a social media strategy where different athletes would post their own message in support of clean sport. Nevertheless, the disruption caused by the pandemic at the time of the CoP operations prevented from these ideas to be materialised. The third and fourth meetings of the community focused on establishing synergies between the Greek NADO and other organisations involved in anti-doping with academic institutions, in order to pursue joint projects on anti-doping and sport integrity. To this end, the Greek NADO and AUn jointly submitted grant proposals (some of which were successful) to WADA and the European Commission, under the E+ Sport programme. Nevertheless, although successfully initiated, the collaboration between the NADO and other members of

the community was somewhat disrupted by the re-structuring of the organisation, which involved a new leadership structure.

### **Reflections and key outcomes**

This CoP was challenged by two major issues: the COVID-19 pandemic and the re-structuring of the Greek NADO. Notwithstanding these challenges though, the synergies have been revived and AUTH will be collaborating with the Greek NADO on other initiatives relevant to clean sport education and anti-doping. This can be seen as one of the key outcomes of the specific CoP. Upon reflection, one of the lessons learned from this CoP is that when challenges of any nature (e.g., pandemic, re-structuring) emerge at the early stages of the CoP there is a risk for the community to disintegrate, postpone activities, or even disband. To support the community's survival, members need to have risk mitigation plans in order to maintain communication and synergies, and to remain committed and engaged with the CoP.

## CASE 8 - Community of Practice for Media & Communication Specialists

### Background

This CoP was initiated by SS Lazio Ciclismo in Rome and involved 5 members who were communication specialists and professionals (e.g., sport journalists, communication and media experts).

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

Following initial consultation and needs assessment exercise, the CoP members agreed that the key objective of their community was to promote clean sport education and doping prevention through tailored mass communication campaigns and interventions. One the key needs that was identified to this end, was that communication specialists needed to become more aware of anti-doping and clean sport education issues, so that they would accurately and more effectively promote such issues to their audiences.

### Function of the CoP

The Community operations were completed within four meetings. In the first two meetings the members reflected upon the current situation in media communication and anti-doping and concluded that communication campaigns represented a weak point of anti-doping policy in Italy. As such, it was also discussed that detailed and clear communication messages should be developed and disseminated to the wider public, using a professional approach. Furthermore, it was identified that institutional communication (e.g., from sport clubs) was not enough to widely promote clean sport values and anti-doping norms in the public. Rather, a more concerted approach utilising both traditional and modern media communication (e.g., social media communication strategy) would be beneficial. In the subsequent meetings the community reviewed the current state of play in anti-doping communication and identified that the public is mostly informed about doping through major scandals that make the headlines. This was identified as a “deficit” approach to anti-doping, and the community members discussed ways in which clean sport education could be promoted in a more positive light. Several initiatives were suggested, such as including permanent columns in clean sport in sport newspapers and magazines to promote positive stories. Accordingly, social media campaigns with more positive clean sport messages could be developed. The operations of this CoP were further culminated at the round table



discussion with external participants and organisation that was organised in October 2021 by SS Lazio Ciclismo in Rome.

## Reflections and key outcomes



This CoP addressed an important gap in existing anti-doping efforts: the lack of professional, tailored, strategic mass communication campaigns to promote clean sport as a positive story. Another key takeaway message from this CoP is that public communication campaigns should utilise smart, appealing, and easy language in order

to widely disseminate clean sport messages and include positive role models such as famous athletes and sportspeople. To this end, SS Lazio Ciclismo organised different mass communication campaigns to increase the visibility and public awareness of IMPACT during the project's lifetime. Such efforts can be more strategically organised to promote clean sport more widely and with greater impact on the general public.



## CASE 9 - Community of Practice of Early Career Researchers

### Background

This CoP originated in the context of project IMPACT towards the end of 2021, but it will be sustained and will further grow and continue through funding from another E+ project, MINDFUL MUSCLES: <https://mindfulmuscles.org/>

The key aim of this CoP was to bring together early career researchers from different disciplines who study different aspects of doping in sport, and create a “living lab” that will lead to innovative research ideas and solutions for doping testing, control, and prevention. Overall, the CoP currently consists of 7 early career researchers with a background in bio-medical and life sciences, psychological and social sciences, and sport and education sciences, and more members have expressed their interest to join the community.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

Following an initial consultation process with individual CoP members and through a co-creation/collaborative group discussion, the objectives of the CoP were to:

1. Connect early career researchers with fellow academics and researchers working in related areas or subjects.
2. Promote knowledge exchange and transfer about novel research ideas, methodologies, and data analytic procedures.
3. Advance scientific research in relation to IPED use, body image, and relevant psychological and educational interventions.
4. Improve the skills and competencies of early career researchers interested in publishing their work and pursuing research grants.

### Function of the CoP

The community has already completed two meetings since January 2022, and another meeting will be arranged before June 2022. While this CoP represents “work in progress”, one of the key outcomes is that the community has initiated an Open Lecture Series that is dedicated to promote new scientific advances in the field of clean sport research. The first talk in the Open series took place in March 2022 and it was attended by an international audience of expert researchers, academics and scientists, and practitioners working in clean sport. The talk is available in YouTube via this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIs6crARQgE>



## CASE 10 - Community of Practice of Mixed Martial Arts Athletes VS Doping

### Background

This CoP was developed following empirical research led by CyADA in collaboration with the project coordinator, Prof Lambros Lazuras, Sheffield Hallam University, and Dr Dara Mojtahedi, University of Huddersfield, about the risk perception, beliefs, and doping practices of Mixed Martial Athletes (MMA). A relevant publication is shown here:

Petrou, M., Lazuras, L., Hillier, M., & Mojtahedi, D. (2021). Doping behaviour in mixed martial arts athletes: the roles of social norms and self-regulatory efficacy. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 1-16.

The research group was interested to further explore the health-risk beliefs of competitive MMA athletes with differing doping experiences and address the issue of clean sport values. Following an initial consultation and co-creation with MMA athletes it was decided that a CoP would be well suited to address clean sport education in MMA.

### Goals & Objectives of the CoP

This CoP represents “work in progress”, but the provisional goals and objectives relate to addressing current needs of MMA athletes for clean sport education; considering both primary prevention of doping (i.e., preventing onset) and harm reduction approaches in MMA; and exploring perceptions of doping, morality, and mortality among MMA athletes.

### Function of the CoP

Already 11 competitive MMA athletes have expressed their interest to participate in the CoP and consulted with the research group in order to specify the provisional objectives of the community. It is expected that the first meetings will be initiated in September 2022, following a number of individual interviews with additional MMA athletes.

