

# Recommendations on enhancing mental health in elite sport

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# Recommendations

## 1. Ensure protection of mental health of athletes (IOC, 2018) as well as of coaches, experts and staff

- Delineate **criteria** to ensure and evaluate mental health and a mental health-enhancing environment in elite sport (e.g., as part of policy of elite sport organisation)
- Establish **high standard** of mental health support during and after the sport career
- Delineate criteria and standard mental health with **experts and representatives of athletes coaches** and **technical directors** (e.g., athletes' commissions, player associations, coaches council).

# Recommendations

## 2. Develop initiatives to enhance mental awareness and decrease mental health illiteracy in elite sport

- Establish structural **collaboration** between elite sport organisations, psychology/psychiatry organisations and academic centres of excellence
- Initiate from start of talent development a continuous development of **athletes' competences** with which to strengthen their mental health
- Provide **continued professional development** to coaches, other experts and staff regarding mental health and mental awareness.

# Recommendations

## 3. Ensure structured, continued, high-quality and highly accessible services by mental health professionals with expertise in elite sport

- Use a **holistic perspective** to consider the prevalence of mental health issues and to develop and provide support services
- Cover the spectrum '**performance enhancement to therapeutic treatment to crisis intervention**'
- Provide support in preparation, during and after specific **transitions** (e.g., junior-to-senior transition, post-Olympic Games, end-of-career transition, deselection)
- Provide support with regard to **equality, diversity and inclusion** and against abuse
- Ensure **competency-based support provision** by performance lifestyle coaches, sport psychologists, health psychologists, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists
- Ensure collaboration of mental health experts with other experts by embedding them in **interdisciplinary support teams**
- Ensure **continued on-site support provision** during major international competitions and Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Strengthen collaboration among mental health experts using **intradisciplinary teams**.

# Recommendations

## 4. Establish collaboration between stakeholders in elite sport in order to:

- exchange **best practices** with regard to mental health support provision
- set up **CPD initiatives** on mental health for elite coaches
- develop a European **Masterclass program** for mental health experts in preparation to work or when working in elite sport
- ensure the development and use of **psychodiagnostic instruments and support and treatment protocols** valid for elite sport
- enhance the involvement of the **major international elite sport organisations** (e.g., EOC, IOC, IPC) and the European **organisations representing athletes and coaches** (e.g. EUAthletes, Fifpro)
- enable the contribution of European **psychology and psychiatry organisations** (e.g. FEPSAC, EFPA, EPA)
- involve the **media** in reporting on mental health in elite sport.

# Recommendations

## 5. The European parliament could advise to:

- establish an international working group in order to formulate **guidelines** for the Member States on mental health in elite sport (cfr. guidelines on dual career)
- fund **European research** on mental health in elite sport and the development of tools to increase mental health awareness in elite sport
- promote and enable collaboration between elite sport organisations, psychology/psychiatry organisations and academic centres of excellence in order to develop and conduct **Europe-wide initiatives** on mental health for athletes, coaches, technical directors and mental health experts.

# Support

