

"With Sports Against Homophobia"

Experiences from a 3-year project in The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF)

The project

The project "With Sports Against Homophobia" was carried out by The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF), in partnership with The Norwegian LGBT Association (LLH) and The Norwegian People's Aid (norwegian organisation with substantial work on anti-discrimination). The project lasted for 3 years 2007-2009. The project was partly funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality.

The project aimed to promote sport as an open and secure arena where LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) persons feel at home as athletes, coaches, referees and fans.

As a pioneer project by a national mainstream sport organisation addressing sexual orientation and homophobia, the project provides unique experiences from a topical area usually avoided or ignored by sport organisations.

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Aims and objectives

The project is founded in NIF's vision of «sport for all». The organisation works to provide everyone with the opportunity to participate in sport according to their own wishes and requirements. NIF intends to instil positive values for individuals and communities, thereby strengthening its position as a popular movement and motivation force in society.

The NIF Sport Policy Document 2007-2011 specifically states the sports commitment to “*zero-tolerance for discrimination and harassment regardless of gender, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation and disability*”. It also specifically mentions that “*lesbians, gays and bisexuals are – differing from many other minorities – an invisible group, and that it is therefore an extra challenge to contribute to dissemination of knowledge and information in order for this group to be fully accepted within sports*”.

The objectives of the project;

- to increase awareness about discrimination based on sexual orientation
- to promote sport politics against discrimination based on sexual orientation
- to develop and promote measures hindering homophobia, including awareness-raising and attitude-challenging methodology
- through sports promote good role-models and healthy attitudes towards different sexual orientation
- stimulate a situation in which action against discrimination based on sexual orientation is part of the daily work of sport organisations

The project has worked closely towards and in cooperation with the national sport federations and regional confederations.

Conclusions

Through the project period, there has been a significant increase in sport federations/confederations addressing the issue. From being a “taboo” topic within organised sport, the topic is now more easily addressed. The discourse on sexual orientation and sport in the national media has also changed; from portraying sport as one of the last “homophobic arenas” in society, to focusing on those positive efforts made by sport federations/confederations.

The project has provided experiences and knowledge on how this topic can be addressed, and what obstacles that might occur. It has been important to focus on the responsibility of the sport organisation, and not on the individual gay/lesbian/bisexual athlete. The connection between gender roles and homophobia has been an important conclusion from the project.

Follow-up

After the end of the project period (31/12-09), work on the topic is now integrated in the activities of the secretariat of The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports.