



TACKLING THE MENTAL HEALTH Stigma in Youth Football

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER!

We are excited to launch the first newsletter of the **TEAM** (Tackling the Mental Health Stigma in Youth Football) project! This initiative, co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Sport programme, aims to tackle one of the most overlooked challenges in youth sports: the stigma surrounding mental health.

Over the next 30 months, TEAM will work to create **safer, more inclusive, and mentally healthy environments** across youth football in Europe.

Meet the Partners

The TEAM consortium brings together **7 partner organisations** from across Europe, combining expertise in sports, mental health, youth work, and education:

- University of Nicosia (Coordinator – Cyprus)
- GDA Sports (Cyprus)
- Università degli Studi “Gabriele d’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara (Italy)
- University of Thessaly (Greece)
- Fundación Red Deporte y Cooperación (Spain)
- Cyprus Football Association (Cyprus)
- Associação de Futebol de Bragança (Portugal)

COORDINATOR



UNIVERSITY of
NICOSIA

PARTNERS



GDA
SPORTS

2021



UdA

UNIVERSITY OF THESALY



RED
DEPORTE



UNIVERSITY OF THESALY

FOUNDED 1984



KOP CFA



ASSOCIAÇÃO DE FUTEBOL DE BRAGANÇA

TEAM AT A GLANCE

TEAM is a European Erasmus+ project that brings together organizations from across Europe to use sport as a powerful tool aiming to:

- Conduct **evidence-based research** within youth football organisations on mental health challenges and their impact.
- Develop a **comprehensive framework** that:
 - Goes beyond athlete-specific risk factors (e.g., injuries, overtraining, performance-related stress).
 - Includes general risk factors related to the social and environmental context of young players.
- **Increase** awareness and literacy around mental health and well-being in youth football.
- Enhance **understanding** among:
 - Athletes, regarding ideal mental states and healthy coping mechanisms.
 - Coaching staff, to better recognize and address early signs of distress.
 - Parents, as key support figures in young players' lives.
 - Support both prevention and intervention strategies to manage and respond to mental health issues in youth football environments.

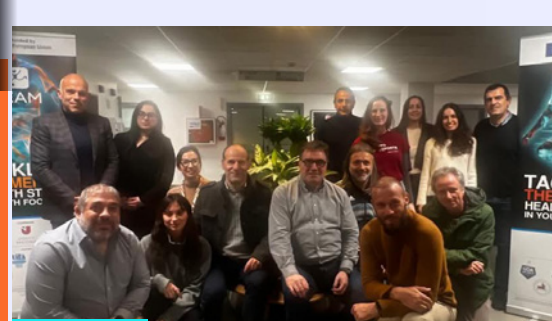
OUR OBJECTIVES

- To **investigate, identify** and **map** the general mental health issues/symptoms in youth football.
- To **track** and **comprehend** the level of awareness and knowledge of youth football players and staff in recognizing and responding to mental health issues/symptoms.
- To develop a **Handbook of Good Practices**.
- To **raise awareness**, provide **insights**, and introduce **good practices** to the youth football stakeholders, practitioners, and policymakers on how to recognize, respond and tackle youth mental health stigma.

PROJECT LAUNCH

The TEAM - Tackling the Mental Health Stigma in Youth Football project **kick-off meeting** took place in Italy 21-22 January 2025 and brought together consortium partners to launch the initiative and align expectations. The meeting focused on:

- Establishing a common understanding of the project objectives and structure.
- Discussing research methodologies and data collection strategies.
- Ining materials.
- Planning dissemination and stakeholder engagement strategies.
- Clarifying financial and administrative responsibilities.



LITERATURE REPORT

Theoretical research reveals the main mental health challenges faced by young football players [Ages 12-19] Sample:

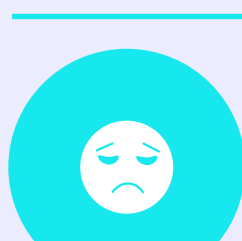
7123
PEOPLE



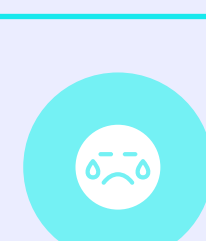
84.2%



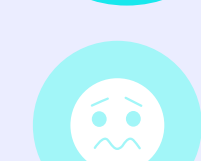
15.8%



Anxiety and pressure:
11-28%



Depression:
6.5-40%



Disordered eating:
11-22%



Burnout, anxiety, general wellness disorders:
17-40%

- Higher rates of **anxiety** are observed among **girls** and during **transitions** (e.g., changing teams or levels).
- **Elite players** show **higher physical fitness**, lower **anxiety**, and greater **resilience**.
- A **goal-oriented, motivationally empowering environment** (coach support, autonomy, clear goals) is linked to higher **emotional intelligence, confidence, and reduced anxiety**.
- Believing outcomes are controlled by **personal effort and skills** (vs. external forces) relates to **lower anxiety**, higher **self-confidence**, and **greater resilience**.
- **Ego-focused, controlling environments** worsen psychological outcomes.
- **Intense training, travel, and international camps** increase stress, fatigue, and mental health issues.
- **Irrational beliefs, perfectionism, and obsession** (from athletes, parents, or coaches) further damage mental health.
- Believing that **success/failure** depends mainly on **external factors** (luck, refereeing, coach bias) leads to **higher anxiety**, **lower confidence**, and **reduced resilience** under pressure.

SPREAD THE WORD – FOLLOW US!

Join our journey and be part of the movement to bring mental health to the forefront of youth football:

Website: www.tacklingmentalhealth.eu

- TEAM Erasmus Project
- @team_erasmusproject
- TEAM Erasmus Project
- TEAM Erasmus Project

Let's work together to build a future where mental health is treated with the same care as physical health on and off the pitch.



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