



# TOOLKIT

# Coaching Through a Gender Lens



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# ABOUT THE PROJECT

This project tackled the significant gender disparity in youth sports participation, addressing the concerning trends of girls dropping out from sports and engaging less in physical activities outside of school. Drawing on the youth and sports strategies outlined by the Federal Ministry of the Arts, Culture, the Civil Service, and Sport of Austria, the initiative aimed to promote youth health and well-being by increasing physical activity among girls and achieving gender balance in sports teams.

At the time, male participation significantly outweighed female involvement, with a 74% to 26% ratio in favor of males. The project set an ambitious goal to achieve 50% representation for women in sports teams, aligning with national strategies for youth and sports.

To address retention and dropout rates among girls in sports, the youth organization collaborated with partners from Austria, Türkiye, Spain, Portugal, and the Czech Republic. Together, they explored social and youth-based factors contributing to gender disparities and sought European-level solutions to make sports more accessible, relevant, and motivating for young women, particularly those at risk of dropping out.

The project's activities and objectives were closely linked to the Erasmus+ program and Youth Exchanges, working to dismantle gender and social barriers to participation. Through interactive activities, it facilitated knowledge-sharing among youth organizations across Europe, fostering a culture of mentorship and support. The collaborative approach promoted shared leadership among partners, echoing the ethos of the European Year of Youth 2022.

## **PARTNERS:**

- YOUTH POWER AUSTRIA (AT)
- ASOCIACION CULTURAL Y DEPORTIVA LAHOYA (ES)
- EVROPSKE CENTRUM MLADEZE BRECLAV EUROPEAN YOUTH CENTRE BRECLAV Z. S. (CZ)
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# COACHING THROUGH A GENDER LENS TOOLKIT

The Coaching Through a Gender Lens Toolkit is a resource designed for coaches, educators, and sports practitioners who want to make sports more inclusive and welcoming for women and girls. It focuses on understanding gender dynamics in sports, addressing the barriers women face, and creating an environment where everyone feels valued and supported. The goal of this toolkit is not only to increase women's participation in sports but also to foster a culture of equal opportunities and mutual respect.

Gender norms and stereotypes often dictate how women are perceived in sports. These norms can limit their development, undermine their confidence, and reduce their chances for equitable participation. By changing the approach of coaches and organizers, it is possible to break down these barriers and ensure that sports become a space where women can develop their skills, build self-esteem, and achieve their goals.

The foundation for this change begins with creating a safe and supportive environment. Communication plays a crucial role in this process, the language coaches use can either empower or discourage athletes. Avoiding stereotypical phrases like "**be strong like a man**" and focusing on individual effort and progress are key to building trust and motivation. Additionally, tailoring training sessions to accommodate diverse abilities and needs demonstrates respect for all team members, regardless of gender.



Supporting girls doesn't just mean giving them space on the field; it also involves encouraging them to take on leadership roles, whether as captains, event organizers, or future coaches. Introducing mentorship programs that connect young female athletes with experienced women in sports facilitates the transfer of knowledge, inspiration, and motivation. This kind of support can significantly boost their confidence and desire for further engagement.

Change doesn't happen on its own, it requires continuous reflection and monitoring. Coaches and organizers can use surveys and feedback mechanisms to assess how inclusive their programs are and identify areas for improvement. Tracking the number of female participants, their retention rates, and their satisfaction with activities provides valuable insights for future development.

Community involvement is also essential when it comes to creating a supportive environment. Parents, local schools, and organizations must be included in the process. Hosting workshops on gender equality in sports can help shift perceptions, while promoting the success of female athletes through media sends a powerful message about the importance of women's presence in sports. In this way, sports become a tool for social change and community strengthening.



This toolkit represents the beginning, a framework that can be adapted to specific needs and challenges.

Its strength lies in its ability to serve as a guide for coaches, organizers, and communities, enabling them to create a sporting environment where everyone has the opportunity to grow and succeed.

# COACHING THROUGH A GENDER LENS TOOLKIT

## 01.

### REMOVING GENDER BARRIERS

#### Steps:

- **Understanding the barriers:** Identify specific challenges women and girls face, such as stereotypes, lack of confidence, fear of discrimination, or inaccessible facilities.
- **Community research:** Conduct surveys or focus groups with girls to understand what discourages them from participating in sports.
- **Training for coaches:** Educate coaches about how gender bias affects their work and ensure they understand the principles of inclusive coaching.



## 02.

### CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

#### Steps:

- **Physical safety:** Ensure sports spaces are well-lit, clean, and provide private changing rooms for women.
- **Emotional safety:** Build a team culture where everyone feels supported and valued. Set clear anti-discrimination rules and promote open dialogue.
- **Transparency:** Allow participants to voice their concerns anonymously about the team or organization.

### 03. GENDER-INCLUSIVE COACHING STRATEGIES

#### Steps:

- **Adapt training sessions:** Design exercises that cater to different levels of fitness and experience. Focus on skill development rather than just results.
- **Praise and feedback:** Use language that encourages, such as “great progress,” instead of “you’re trying hard for a girl.”
- **Equal opportunities:** Ensure fair distribution of playtime and development opportunities among all athletes.



### 04. MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

#### Steps:

- **Connect participants with role models:** Organise meet ups with successful female athletes who can share their experiences.
- **Support personal growth:** Offer workshops on confidence-building, leadership, and stress management.
- **Support networks:** Link participants with coaches and peers through online and local communities.

## 05. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### Steps:

- **Measure outcomes regularly:** Track the number of girls enrolling and staying in sports programs.
- **Gather feedback:** Organise feedback sessions after each phase of the project to identify areas for improvement.
- **Evaluate the atmosphere:** Analyze how included participants feel through surveys and conversations.



# HOW TO MAKE SPORTS BETTER FOR WOMEN TOOLKIT



## **01.** **IDENTIFYING BARRIERS**

### **Steps:**

- **Assess community needs:** Use surveys and interviews to understand what women perceive as barriers to joining sports.
- **Analyze local challenges:** Identify logistical or societal barriers, such as insufficient training times or negative perceptions of women's sports.

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## **02.** **ADAPTING SPORTS PROGRAMS**

### **Steps:**

- **Flexible scheduling:** Create training times that accommodate women balancing family or work responsibilities.
- **Varied activities:** Offer programs that focus on health and recreation alongside competitive sports.
- **Incentives:** Introduce free trials or discounts for women new to sports.



### 03.

## EMPOWERING FEMALE LEADERS

### Steps:

- **Recruit more women:** Actively seek women for roles as coaches, referees, and administrative staff.
- **Training programs:** Organise seminars and workshops for women interested in leadership roles.
- **Visibility:** Promote the successes of female leaders through media and local events.

### 04.

## ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

### Steps:

- **Parent workshops:** Educate parents on the importance of sports for girls and break down stereotypes about “male” and “female” sports.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with schools, NGOs, and local authorities to jointly promote sports for women.
- **Local events:** Organize tournaments or sports days specifically dedicated to promoting women’s participation in sports.



## 05

### SUSTAINING LONG-TERM IMPACT

#### Steps:

- **Establish women's councils:** Set up bodies within sports organisations that focus on gender equality issues.
- **Regular evaluations:** Hold meetings to analyse results and propose next steps.
- **Public recognition:** Organise annual awards to honour contributions to the promotion of women in sports.



# CONCLUSION

The "Coaching Through a Gender Lens Toolkit" and "How to Make Sports Better for Women Toolkit" address the critical need for gender equality in sports across Europe, focusing on countries such as Austria, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, and the Czech Republic. Despite efforts to increase participation, the statistics reveal significant barriers that women and girls face in accessing sports opportunities, leadership roles, and visibility

## STATISTICAL OVERVIEW:

The "Coaching Through a Gender Lens Toolkit" and "How to Make Sports Better for Women Toolkit" address the critical need for gender equality in sports across Europe, focusing on countries such as Austria, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, and the Czech Republic. Despite efforts to increase participation, the statistics reveal significant barriers that women and girls face in accessing sports opportunities, leadership roles, and visibility

### 1. Austria:

- Only **26% of female students** participate in sports teams, compared to **74% of male students**.
- Women represent less than **20% of coaches** in professional sports.



## 2. Spain:

- Female athletes account for **23% of registered participants** in sports federations.
- Over **40% of girls** drop out of sports by the age of 15, with media coverage of women's sports still below **12%**.

## 3. Portugal:

- Female participation in sports clubs is at **27%**, significantly lagging behind men at **73%**.
- In rural areas, women's engagement in sports drops to 15%, with only **11% of coaches** being women.

## 4. Türkiye:

- Women represent just **19% of active athletes**, with rural participation falling to **10%**.
- Cultural norms and safety concerns disproportionately affect women's access to sports facilities.

## 5. Czech Republic:

- Female representation in sports leadership remains low, with women holding only **15% of administrative roles** in sports federations.
- **32% of Czech girls** actively participate in organised sports, but the dropout rate increases significantly after the age of 14, largely due to societal stereotypes and insufficient support systems.
- Only **8% of coaches** in elite sports are women, highlighting a lack of mentorship and role models.



# KEY BARRIERS ACROSS COUNTRIES:

- **Gender Stereotypes:** Women are often discouraged from participating in sports due to traditional beliefs that associate athleticism with masculinity.
- **Limited Access to Facilities:** In Turkey, Portugal, and rural parts of the Czech Republic, inadequate infrastructure disproportionately affects female athletes.
- **Underrepresentation in Leadership:** Across these countries, women hold fewer than 20% of coaching and leadership roles, perpetuating a lack of female role models.
- **Media Representation:** Female athletes receive less than 10% of sports media coverage in most of these countries, further limiting visibility and inspiration for young girls.



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE:

## 1. Promoting Role Models:

- Spain's success in women's football demonstrates how visibility can inspire participation. Similar campaigns could be implemented in the Czech Republic and Austria to highlight achievements of female athletes.

## 2. Policy Reforms:

- Portugal's gender quotas in sports leadership and the Czech Republic's efforts to increase female coaching programs could serve as models for other countries.

## 3. Inclusive Facilities and Programs:

- Austria and Turkey are investing in safe, accessible sports facilities, particularly in rural areas, which can significantly impact women's participation.

## 4. Community Engagement:

- Programs in the Czech Republic that connect schools and local sports clubs have shown promise in maintaining girls' interest in sports through their teenage years.

# CONCLUSION:

The data highlights the urgency of addressing gender disparities in sports across Austria, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, and the Czech Republic. Although progress is being made, structural barriers such as stereotypes, lack of role models, and unequal access to resources continue to limit opportunities for women and girls.

To close these gaps, it is essential to focus on:

- Increasing female representation in leadership and coaching roles.
- Ensuring safe and accessible sports facilities for all.
- Promoting media visibility and celebrating the achievements of female athletes.
- Supporting girls through mentorship and inclusive sports programs.

By addressing these challenges collectively, these countries can set an example for how sports can be a powerful tool for gender equality, empowerment, and social change. This toolkit serves as a practical guide for coaches, policymakers, and communities to create a future where women and girls can thrive in sports and beyond.





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