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PEAK

Policy, Evidence and Knowledge in Coaching

Preliminary Recommendations for European Sport Coaching Policy and Validation Methodology

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1 Introduction

The primary objective of the PEAK project is "to promote and support good governance in sport" by preparing a set of coaching policy recommendations for use by national and European sport federations, coaching bodies and governments. Six guiding questions underpin this objective, and give shape and focus to the proposed project:

1. What roles, responsibilities, and statuses do coaching currently hold in the overall sport strategies of national governments within the European Union?
2. What policies, programmes and decision-making processes currently exist in European countries to develop and enhance coaching systems; regulate coaching to improve its quality and ensure the safety of all participants in sport, especially children?
3. Do European and National Sport Federations have policies and programmes in place, which aim to regulate or stimulate coaching development?
4. What are the best, evidence-based practices currently available for the inclusion of coaching development in an organization's strategic plan based on which criteria?
5. What evidence-based strategies and practices are available to increase opportunities for women in coaching?
6. What evidence-based strategies and practices are needed to enhance the effectiveness of good governance measures (such as transparency of decision-making, democratic and inclusive decision-making processes) in the practice of sport coaching?

Current policies are lacking a guiding framework. The regulation of coaching, although increasing amongst EU countries, is very heterogeneous. Therefore, the PEAK project will be an important step in strengthening the policy foundations of sports coaching in Europe. The project team members also acknowledge that, due to the different sport systems in Europe, standardized and universal policy recommendations cannot always be developed. However, using rigorous theoretical grounding and evidence, the project does aim to put forth a selection of general good practice recommendations for coaching policies in Europe.

The following Good Practice Methodology Recommendations report first sets out the proposed methodological approach for a framework for coaching policies and a related self-assessment tool. This approach, based on a sound theoretical framework, extensive evidence from the field, and experience in the field of sport governance, can be used as the basis for not only the formulation of recommendations or indicators, but also for the collection of good practice examples and a self-assessment tool.

This report begins by outlining the rationale and structure behind the proposed methodological approach, then presents the theoretical framework and insights from the policymaking field. Using this theoretical and policy background, in combination with the evidence in our research report on coaching policy in Europe, we can thus begin developing an initial set of potential policy recommendations and connected indicators. The aforementioned research report uses literature, expert surveys and expert interviews to extract data from 24 European countries. This data provides insights into the key areas identified by the PEAK project, namely Coaching Systems, Coaching Regulations, Volunteering in Coaching, and Women in Coaching across Europe.

Recommendations are presented as a set of indicators and each indicator is directly connected to the relevant evidence and literature. Finally, following these proposed recommendations, next steps for the project and, specifically, the development of further indicators and a self-assessment tool are discussed.

2 Methodological Approach: A Coaching Policy Index

For the implementation of a framework for coaching policies and a related self-assessment tool, the construction of a coaching policy composite indicator, or index, is likely to provide the optimal mix between clarity, simplicity, and functionality. Composite indicators have been used in fields such as the environment, economy, society, or technological development and are easier to interpret than trying to "find a common trend in many separate indicators" (Nardo, Saisana, Saltelli, & Tarantola, 2005, p. 6). In such an index, the concept of good practice in coaching policy would be broken down into various sub-categories (e.g. regulation, women in coaching), different indicators would be developed for each category and countries could then assess themselves against those indicators, receiving both an overall score and a score for each sub-category. A prominent sport-related example of such an indicator comes from the Sports Governance Observer (Geeraert, 2018). A tool designed to assess the governance quality of sport federations, it features indicators across four major categories - transparency, democratic processes, internal accountability and control, and societal responsibility – and bases those indicators on a set of 57 evidence-based principles of good governance (Geeraert, 2018). Similarly, in the coaching field, the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) created a Quality in Coaching (QiC) model aimed at helping coaching organizations analyse the key components of their coach development system, namely as it relates to leadership, education, strategy and the overall system (International Council for Coaching Excellence, n.d.).

Though there are inherent challenges in developing such a composite indicator – for example, risks related to oversimplification, improper recommendations or misinterpretation – such indicators also allow complex issues to be streamlined and facilitate benchmarking as well as policy development (Nardo et al., 2005). From the outset, it is of utmost importance that any such index is based on both sound, current evidence as well as on a solid theoretical and conceptual framework (Geeraert, 2018; Gómez-Limón & Sanchez-Fernandez, 2010). Given those requirements, the PEAK project needs to collect rigorous evidence related to coaching policies in Europe, identify gaps within those policies, and use that evidence to develop recommendations and indicators around a strong, widely accepted theoretical foundation. The research report has already collected extensive data on coaching systems, regulation, women in coaching and volunteering in Europe. The upcoming section presents the theoretical grounding behind policy and good policymaking.

Figure 1. Proposed Methodological process for Coaching Policy Index, Adapted from Geeraert (2018).

Using this evidence and theoretical background, we begin the process of defining sub-categories, recommendations and indicators. Once developed, these indicators will be validated by external experts, such as sport ministries or coach associations outside the project. Using these validated indicators, a self-assessment tool will then be designed and data will be collected from various countries. Figure 1 presents a graphical depiction of the development process for such an index.

3 Policy and Policymaking

Despite the omnipresence of the term policy, and extensive research on policy relating to fields as diverse as sport, finance, agriculture or health, there is no universal definition for policy readily in use in academic or governmental literature (European Commission, 2017). However, even in the absence of a widely adopted definition, from the outset, we can nonetheless distinguish between two distinct but related concepts: policy-making and policy.

Policymaking is the process whereby a vision is translated into concrete programmes and actions to deliver specified outcomes. In other words, policymaking establishes what needs to be done and then works out how to do so (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). More broadly, the process of policy-making includes how problems are identified and conceptualized, how they are brought to the relevant governing body for solutions, how alternatives are formulated, how a policy is selected, and how that policy is implemented, evaluated and revised (Sabatier, 2019).

Policy, therefore, is the result of that process. It is the specific course of action chosen by an organisation or government to facilitate the achievement of a specific objective (Friedrich, 1963; Rose, 1969). Nabukneya (2005) summarises and combines several existing definitions, and subsequently proposes that policy can be viewed as "a purposive course of action followed by a set of actor(s) to guide and determine present and future decisions, with an aim of realizing goals" (p. 55). Regardless of the specific definition used, it is clear that policy includes some combination of laws, regulations, funding and other actions followed to achieve a specific set of goals.

If properly defining policy itself is tricky, defining and identifying good policy is even more complex. After all, as Scartascini, Stein and Tommasi (2008) note, a universal set of "right" policies does not exist, and "what might work at one point in time in a given country might not work in a different place or the same place at another time" (p. 5). However, using current literature from the broader field of public policy, as well as from sport policy, allows us to make certain extrapolations about both the characteristics of good policy-making and good policy.

The policy-making process can be theoretically conceptualized as a cycle involving many stages (European Commission, 2017; Griffiths & Leach, 2018; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). Generally speaking, the cycle includes the emergence and definition of a problem, the appraisal of potential response options, the selection of options and formulation of policy, the implementation of that policy, and finally the monitoring and adjustment of that policy, as displayed in figure 2 (European Commission, 2017; Griffiths & Leach, 2018).

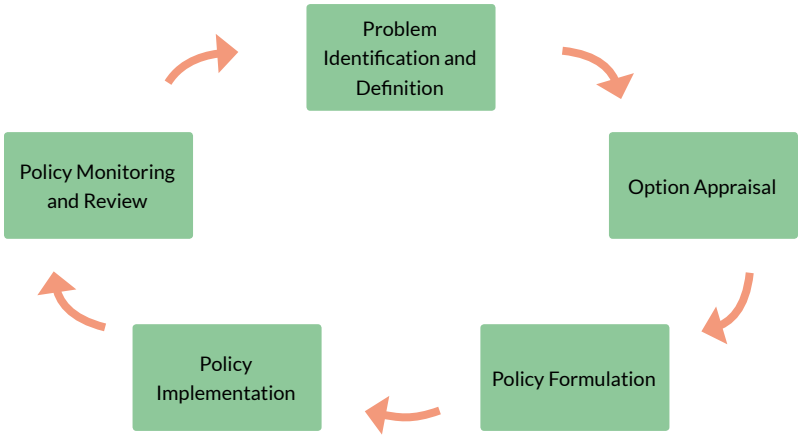

Figure 2. Overview of Policy-Making Cycle (European Commission, 2017; Griffiths & Leach, 2018)

In reality, however, the policymaking process is rarely as streamlined and straightforward as displayed in the cycle. Each element in the cycle encounters numerous challenges and barriers. It may be difficult to precisely define the problem and different interest groups may seek to define the problem in different ways (Griffiths & Leach, 2018). Time or methodological constraints may limit option appraisal, whereas formulating and implementing a policy is dependent on the buy-in of several stakeholders, as well as on the availability and allocation of resources (Griffiths & Leach, 2018). Implementation of policy can be further affected by how individuals or organisations interpret a given policy, and analysis often reveals that a policy can "mean more than one thing" (Yanow, 1995).

Nonetheless, these basic cycle components can facilitate an analysis of good practice within each part of the policymaking cycle. Thus, moving forward, we will summarise some of the relevant literature related to policymaking, extrapolate key good practice recommendations from that literature and directly connect it to the different phases of the policymaking cycle.

3.1 Evidence

Grounding policy in a rigorous, evidence-based approach is one of the most common and oft-repeated recommendations present in policy literature (Cloete, Coning, Wissink, & Rabie, 2018; European Commission, 2017; Griffiths & Leach, 2018; Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016; Orton, Lloyd-Williams, Taylor-Robinson, O'Flaherty, & Capewell, 2011). More specifically, literature often emphasizes the need for the policy process to be informed by current, relevant, high-quality evidence (Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). For example, it is important that the evidence addresses key policy issues, that the evidence is appropriate and transferable to the current context, that the evidence be collected recently, and that it helps identify implications for policy, research or implementation (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). Considerations related to quality, meanwhile, should also include the appropriateness of the research methods used, thorough reporting of study data, the expertise of the researchers or organisation, and the presence of any conflicts of interest (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). A systematic review related to evidence-based policymaking in the health sector further supports many of the above points, noting that policymakers need research to be based on effective methods, provide suggestions for implementation, as well as be unbiased and credible (Orton et al., 2011).

Evidence can be obtained through a variety of sources or approaches. Evidence can be collected through external research, through consultation with stakeholders directly involved in policy, and through benchmarking against policies in different countries or contexts (Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). Another option is to outsource the collection and assessment of evidence to a dedicated authority with expertise in research and analysis (European Commission, 2017). Policy-making in many fields relies on such an approach, including in sport. For example, the Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands, which is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, "aims to strengthen the impact of sport through better use of knowledge and to increase the level of knowledge about sport and physical activity" (Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands, n.d.).

Solid evidence can play a role at almost every stage of the policy cycle. Evidence can help policymakers define a problem and set realistic, useful targets. Evidence collected during the monitoring phase can also directly influence how a policy is implemented or adjusted.

3.2 Consultation and Coalition Building

Literature in the policy field also regularly underlines the importance of consultation and coalition building in the policymaking process. Consultation confers many benefits upon the policymaking process, and, when done

properly, helps ensure the long-term success of a given policy (European Commission, 2017; Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; McConnell, 2010; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016; World Bank, 2010; Wouters, Hardie-Boys, & Wilson, 2011). First and foremost, actively consulting relevant stakeholders allows policymakers to not only inform relevant groups of policy developments, but also to obtain advice regarding policy alternatives and take steps towards building an effective coalition (European Commission, 2017; Wouters et al., 2011). By engaging stakeholders more deeply, stakeholders can contribute directly to the "development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution" (Wouters et al., 2011, p. 17). Such an approach namely allows policymakers to tap into additional resources and knowledge that may not immediately be at their disposal (European Commission, 2017). And, ultimately, this consultation process not only allows policymakers to obtain valuable input, but it also helps confer legitimacy on the chosen course of action, which is critical for the success for any policy (McConnell, 2010).

Consultation can be conducted in various ways, including through public meetings, workshops, special committees, focus groups, web-based techniques and social media (Shipley & Utz, 2012). Each of these methods come with inherent drawbacks and advantages, and, more generally, there is still no tool "to evaluate the consultation methods employed" (Shipley & Utz, 2012, p. 37).

Proper consultation can improve not only the policy formulation process, but it can directly influence policy implementation, generate compromise and help build the necessary coalitions for policy success. Coalitions are essential to sustain a given policy course, as coalitions can have the "capacity to appeal to overlapping motivations of multiple constituencies" (World Bank, 2010). Building successful coalitions is a time consuming, delicate task. Though coalitions are meant to serve a common goal, they must also cater to multiple motivations. Furthermore, coalitions must ensure to include all relevant stakeholders. If important stakeholders are left out of the process and do not buy-in to a policy, then they will not maximize their efforts to successfully support or implement that policy, perhaps even working against the new policy (McConnell, 2010; Wallner, 2008).

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Though sometimes perceived as an unwelcome burden, monitoring and evaluation is increasingly recognised as integral to policy success. Indeed, practitioner guidelines across Europe consistently emphasize this point, as the results from the monitoring process allow decision-makers to assess the quality of implementation, if a policy is achieving its objectives, and if value-for-money is being delivered (European Commission, 2017; Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). The findings from such an analysis can also allow decision-makers to adjust or review a policy as needed, as well as provide valuable evidence for subsequent policy-making endeavours. However, policymaking and policy evaluation are highly context-dependent and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Therefore, a key element of evaluation is to understand the mechanisms that lead to the policy working or failure within a specific context and target group.

Policy evaluation should however not solely be left to the hands of policymakers or policy implementers. Indeed, evaluations are often managed by the same organisation that carried out the policy, and therefore, the organisation has the incentive and opportunity to minimize negative findings (Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; McConnell, 2010). As such, sceptical, external scrutiny is also valuable in stimulating policy development and ensuring policy legitimacy (European Commission, 2017). This means welcoming external inspection from media, civil society groups or independent academics (European Commission, 2017). In a coaching context more specifically, external inspection could include academics, consultants, coaching committees, or professional coaching associations. Be it internal or external, though, the requirements for monitoring and evaluation are very similar to the requirements for evidence discussed above. Namely, the data collected during this process should be current, relevant, and of high-quality (Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016)

4 Potential Evidence-Based Recommendations and Indicators

Using the evidence collected in the research report, including the literature review, expert surveys, and expert interviews, we can begin to formulate a set of sub-categories and indicators for a Coaching Policy Index. These sub-categories and indicators are not only based on the analysis of the obtained evidence, but also aligned with recognized good practice in the field of policymaking. Tentatively, we can propose four major sub-categories: coaching system, regulation and support, diversity and inclusion, and data and research (see Figure 3).

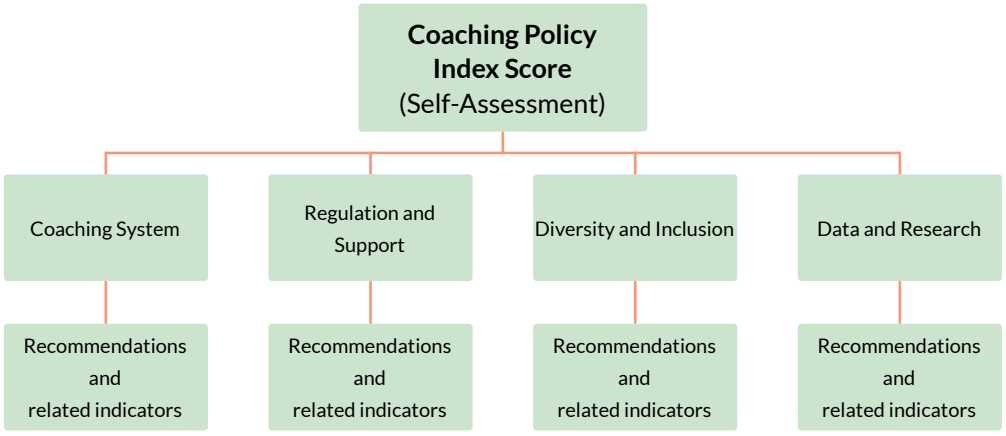

Figure 3. Graphical Depiction of Proposed Coaching Policy Index.

In the following, we will present potential top-level recommendations and relevant indicators, as well as a brief overview of the evidence and theoretical groundings that support those indicators. Namely, these recommendations are supported by the above literature review as well as the findings generated in the project's research report.

From the outset, however, it should be duly noted that these indicators are preliminary. Exact definitions must be agreed upon, and all indicators should be further defined by the project consortium. Any set of recommendations and indicators will be subject to external validation from experts from outside the project. Furthermore, though these recommendations are made at the national level, we make no judgement as to who exactly should implement these recommendations. Depending on the sport system in a given country, it could be that a sport organisation, coaching organisation or government department are best placed to take the lead.

Coaching System	**Recommendation 1:** Implement a formal or legal, nationally-recognized definition of coaching, specifying the exact subsectors to which the definition applies.
	Recommendation 2: Clearly define an organisation (or group of organisations) responsible for leading coaching in your country.
	Recommendation 3: Create a national professional association for coaches.
Regulation and Support	**Recommendation 4:** Implement a licensing system for coaches in your country.
	Recommendation 5: Implement professional or occupational standards for coaches in your country.
	Recommendation 6: Align coaching qualifications with your National Qualification Framework.
	Recommendation 7: Implement mechanisms in your country to support volunteer coaches.

Diversity and Inclusion	**Recommendation 8:** Implement relevant, evidence-based national-level policy or programmes to support women in coaching.
	Recommendation 9: Implement relevant, evidence-based national-level policy or programmes to support diversity in coaching.
Data and Research	**Recommendation 10:** Implement national register or database of coaches in your country.
	Recommendation 11: Actively track coach data, including activity status, coaching qualifications, coaching level, demographics, and employment status.

Figure 4. Initial Proposed Recommendations

4.1 Coaching System

4.1.1 Recommendation 1: Implement a formal or legal, nationally-recognized definition of coaching, specifying the exact subsectors to which the definition applies.

According to data from 24 respondents from different European countries featured in the research report, 19 (79.1%) report having a definition for coaching. Defining the exact, relevant area in question is an important step in the policymaking process, as it helps to identify problems, stakeholders and target groups (European Commission, 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that countries develop a clear definition of coaching, including the exact sub-sectors to which the definition applies (e.g. competitive sport, recreation sport, fitness, outdoors) as well as describing of the specific body of knowledge and skills of a coach that differentiates coaching from related occupations (physical educator, instructor, etc.).

4.1.2 Recommendation 2: Clearly define an organisation (or group of organisations) responsible for leading coaching in your country.

As with the definition, most European respondents of our survey indicate having an organisation or group of organisations leading coaching in their countries. Indeed, 18 respondents (75%) report having a responsible organisation or group of organisations. Given the size and importance of the coaching sector, it is therefore important that an organisation, or group of organisations, be clearly appointed to be responsible for the sector and that its responsibilities are clearly articulated. Amongst other things, this organisation should have a clear role in the regulation and support of coaching, including the development of qualification requirements, the definition of a national incensing system, and the overall tracking of coaches. Furthermore, the presence of such an organisation also allows for greater opportunities for agenda setting and policy implementation.

However, we make no pronouncement here about the exact type of organisation. Depending on the country context, Government Ministries, Olympic Committees, national sport organisations, or coaching-specific organisations could take on these responsibilities.

4.1.3 Recommendation 3: Create a national professional association for coaches.

Consultation is a key element in successful policy-making, as it allows policymakers to develop a relevant policy for stakeholders, obtain legitimacy, and support policy implementation and build coalitions (European Commission, 2017; Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; McConnell, 2010; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016; Wouters et al., 2011). Despite these well-established benefits, the majority of countries have weak representation and consultation mechanisms when it comes to coaching. In other words, "the voice of the coach" is missing (Duffy, North, Curado, & Petrovic, 2013). In fact, 15 respondents (62.5%) indicate not having a national, multi-sport association to represent coaches, though occasionally, respondents reported that specific sports such as foot-

ball have their own associations. As for the countries that do have such associations, interview respondents often note that these associations were weak and little active. For instance, one interviewee noted that their national association was 'insufficiently recognized' and required more financial support.

Hence, we recommend that countries have a national professional association to represent the interests, positions and needs of (paid and volunteer) coaches. Not only would this empower coaches to be better involved in agenda-setting and the overall policy-making process (Cloete et al., 2018; European Commission, 2017), but it could potentially contribute to greater professionalization in the sector. Ideally, this professional association would work closely with the organisation(s) responsible for coaching, creating continuous dialogue and a true coalition for the advancement of coaches and coaching policy.

4.2 Regulation and Support

4.2.1 Recommendation 4: Implement a licensing system for coaches in your country.

All countries report having some form of coach licensing system. Based on responses and information provided, countries are roughly evenly split between national and federation-managed systems, with 11 countries (45.8 %) reporting that licensing system resides at a multi-sport, national level and another 13 countries (54.2 %) reporting that their licensing system is devolved to the sport federation level. For those countries with federation-managed systems, though, many respondents noted that not all sport federations had a related licensing system.

Given the variety of European sport systems, and the different levels of professional and volunteer coaches across the continent, we cannot make a one size fits all recommendation, especially as it relates to having a more centralised or federation-based licensing system. However, countries should have some form of licensing system, and that system should define clear pathways, establish thresholds for licensing and provide guidance on continuous professional development (Duffy et al., 2011). Without such a licensing system, it can become unclear who exactly has a right to coach and can lead to "fragmented career structures" (Duffy et al., 2011).

4.2.2 Recommendation 5: Implement professional or occupational standards for coaches in your country.

A recent European Commission study suggests that there are over 3.5 million qualified coaches in the EU (pwc & CONI, 2016), and this number does not account for the countless coaches who work or volunteer without a formal qualification. These coaches, in turn, reach millions of children, youth and adults every year around Europe.

Despite this importance, only 15 respondents (62.5 %) of the survey indicate having some sort of professional or occupational standards. Given the known impact coaches have across a wide range of societal groups, as well as the role they play in promoting a healthy, active lifestyle, it is important to develop standards that ensure a minimum standard of quality in sport coaching. Most countries interviewed reported that coaches must undergo background checks, which is a positive first step. More comprehensive professional standard that features the defined roles, functions, skills and knowledge of a coach are therefore required. These standards should also clearly set the minimum level of qualification that someone needs to perform a certain coaching role and to gain employment doing so.

4.2.3 Recommendation 6: Align coaching qualifications with your National Qualification Framework.

For the most part, respondents report that coaching qualifications are also aligned with various National Qualification Frameworks (NQF) in Europe. In total, 17 respondents (70.8%) indicate that their qualifications are aligned to their NQF. This is an important step that should be replicated across Europe, as alignment with National Qualification Frameworks is a warranty of quality and enhances the comparability of qualifications within countries as well as around Europe, and therefore also supports greater professional mobility for coaches in the sector. Ideally, all countries will align their coaching qualifications against their respective NQFs, which should, in turn, be aligned with the EQF and therefore support cross-country comparability as well as employment mobility. Indeed, the OECD suggests that such qualification frameworks can help increase transparency, open up progression pathways, and enhance recognition (OECD, 2004).

4.2.4 Recommendation 7: Implement mechanisms in your country to support volunteer coaches.

Volunteers play an incredibly important role in the provision and delivery of sport coaching around Europe. Sport volunteering represents anywhere between 1% and 16% of the overall volunteering population in European countries, while, in sport organisations, 73% of volunteers participate in coaching activities (GHK, 2010). A recent report by the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE) showed that up to 82% of sport organisations engage volunteers (European Observatoire of Sport and Employment, 2019). Despite these high numbers, many sport clubs report that filling sport coaching positions is challenging due to "the new demand for higher skills and qualifications. Many volunteers do not meet these requirements and do not have the time to undertake the necessary training to acquire the skills needed" (GHK, 2010, p. 191).

Results from in-depth interviews also echo this, with many countries reporting that volunteering is poorly supported in sports and sport coaching. However, given the importance of volunteers for the continued operation and growth of coaching, it is clear that support mechanisms are needed. Though these support mechanisms will certainly vary between different countries, they could include things like tax breaks, free coaching courses, stipends, awards or scholarships.

4.3 Diversity and Inclusion

4.3.1 Recommendation 8: Implement relevant, evidence-based national-level policy or programmes to support women in coaching.

Evidence from Europe suggests that women are significantly under-represented within coaching at all levels, including the elite and grassroots levels (Hallmann, 2015; Norman, 2014; Robertson, 2016; Sports Coach UK, 2011). Data from the research report reinforces this evidence. Only 11 respondents (45.8%) – were able to report on the total number of coaches per gender. Of the numbers that were provided by the respondents, we see a significant disparity between male and female coaches. In the reported numbers, women account for 1057698 of reported coaches (28.97%), whereas men account for 2593412 of the reported coaches (71.03%). Furthermore, countries reported highly uneven levels of support for women coaches. Though some countries reported that certain federations or organisations have specific programmes to develop women in coaching, only five countries (20%) indicated having any sort of national-level programme or policy related to the topic. In addition, it is not clear if these programmes (or lack thereof) are based on robust evidence. However, during qualitative interviews related to the research report, respondents provided a variety of answers when asked about the challenges faced by women in coaching, ranging from work-life balance to cultural stereotyping, but

no respondent was able to point to research, data or consultation from within their own country to help support their answers. The issue of women in coaching is also not equally valued across the investigated countries, with one interviewee even stating that "the current issue is not big enough to be supported by regulation".

National-level policies and programmes, therefore, need to be developed and implemented to help counteract this underrepresentation, especially considering that women coaches "can provide inspiration and encouragement to girls and women to take part in sport and sustain their participation" (Ecorys, 2017, p. 49). In addition, given the unique contexts of different European countries, and the myriad of factors influencing the presence of women in coaching, it is important to not only develop national policies and programmes to support women in coaching, but to ensure that those policies and programmes are evidence-based, relevant and truly address the issues present in a given country.

Again, we cannot make specific recommendations that will apply to all European countries, but approaches such as mentoring programmes, women-only coaching programmes, scholarships, stipends, or even gender quotas can be potential solutions to help address the issue.

4.3.2 Recommendation 9: Implement relevant, evidence-based national-level policy or programmes to support diversity in coaching.

Though not an explicit focus of the PEAK Research Report, it is equally important for policymakers to foster diverse and inclusive sport coaching environments for people of all backgrounds. Literature shows that there are important benefits for organizations – in sport or different areas – that integrate different ideas, insights, values and perspectives through hiring qualified individuals from ethnic minorities (Doherty, Fink, Inglis, & Pastore, 2010). Studies also suggest that ethnically diverse role models, such as coaches, can allow ethnically diverse people to communicate and observe successful people of similar backgrounds and "provide a significant key for encouraging behavioural change", including improved sport participation (Payne, Reynolds, Brown, & Fleming, 2003).

Therefore, national-level policies and programmes need to be developed and implemented to help foster this diversity. Sport organisations and governments also need to be aware of the "dominant networks, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies that have become the unquestioned norms and standards from which 'other' racial and ethnic groups are judged" (Rankin-Wright, Hylton, & Norman, 2016). In addition, given the unique contexts of different European countries, and the unique ethnic mix within those countries, it is important to not only develop national policies and programmes to support diversity in coaching, but to ensure that those policies and programmes are evidence-based, relevant and reflect the realities of the targeted groups.

4.4 Data and Research

4.4.1 Recommendation 10: Implement a national register or database of coaches in your country.

Policy-making literature regularly underlines the need for data and evidence to support not only the formulation of policy, but also to assess the quality of implementation and to evaluate if a policy is achieving its objectives (Cloete et al., 2018; European Commission, 2017; Hallsworth & Rutter, 2011; Northern Ireland Executive, 2016). Despite this widely-recognized importance, proper registration and data gathering in sports coaching is a weakness in many European countries. Though 15 countries (62.5 %) in the research report indicated having some sort of national coaching register, the quality of the data reported leaves much to be desired. One country, for example, provided data for full-time, part-time and volunteer coaches. However, the total of those three categories did not equal the numbers they provided for the total number of coaches, or

the number of active or qualified coaches. However, to properly define a sector and elaborate effective policy, gathering basic data is paramount. Countries must, therefore, be able to collect and track reliable data related to the sport coaching workforce in their countries.

4.4.2 Recommendation 11: Actively track coach data, including activity status, coaching qualifications, coaching level, demographics, and employment status.

Beyond merely having a national register or database, that database needs to capture relevant coaching and demographic information that can then help inform policy evaluation and policymaking. In the analysed countries, for example, less than half could provide data related to the working status of their coaches (e.g. full-time, part-time or volunteer), while only one-third of countries could provide data related to the gender of their coaches. These areas, as well as other areas, such as level of coaching or sport coached, should be comprehensively tracked by organisations responsible for coaching, as this data will allow them to gain further insights on the size, scope and nature of their coaching workforce, as well as help evaluate the success or failure of policy initiatives.

5 Next Steps

The above recommendations are a first approximation of the format for European coaching policies. As mentioned from the outset, these recommendations need to be refined with further sub-indicators and clear definitions, and need to be validated through consultation with external experts. Special focus must also be given to the applicability and fit of the proposed recommendations and indicators, especially considering the diversity of sport systems and contexts in Europe. Transferring any set of indicators into a workable index also means carefully weighting each indicator. Given these needs and the work ahead, we therefore propose the following concrete steps:

1. **Refinement of top-level indicators, development of definitions and sub-indicators within the project consortium.** Special attention here should be given to developing clear recommendations and indicators, as well as ensuring their broad applicability across the EU.

2. **Validation of top-level indicators, sub-indicators and definitions through survey of external experts.** Experts should be consulted to evaluate both how important recommendations are and how appropriate they are for their national contexts. Further refinement can also take place through select, in-depth interviews.

3. **Addition, removal and editing of indicators based on feedback from an expert survey.** Recommendations and indicators that are found to be below a certain level of importance and/or appropriateness should be removed while remaining indicators can be weighted in the index based on results from step 2.

4. **Development of self-assessment tool.** Once finalised, recommendations and indicators should be transferred into a self-assessment questionnaire for policymakers. This tool should provide an overall score against which policymakers can benchmark, as well as individual scores for the selected sub-categories, helping identify strengths and weaknesses. Previous work done in the sector, including the Sports Governance Observer and the Quality in Coaching Model can be used to guide this process.

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7 Partners

European Elite Athletes Association (EU Athletes):
https://euathletes.org/

Finnish Olympic Committee:
https://www.olympiakomitea.fi/

Foundation of Sport Education and Information:
https://www.spordiinfo.ee/Tutvustus-2

German Sport University Cologne (GSU):
https://www.dshs-koeln.de/en/institute-of-european-sport-development-and-leisure-studies/

International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE):
https://www.icce.ws/

International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE):
https://www.icsspe.org/

Sport Ireland Coaching:
https://www.sportireland.ie/coaching

Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen (SFISM):
https://www.ehsm.admin.ch/en/home.html