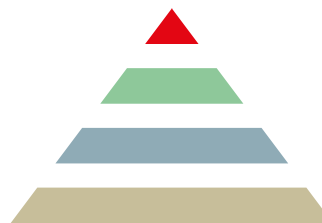




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# PEAK

Policy, Evidence and Knowledge in Coaching

# Handbook for Developing and Implementing Effective Coaching Policies and Good Governance in Coaching in Europe

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# 1 Introduction

This “**Handbook for Developing and Implementing Effective Coaching Policies and Good Governance in Coaching in Europe**” has been developed as part of a multi-year project, “Policy, Evidence And Knowledge in coaching” (PEAK). The PEAK Coaching Policy Project has, through its various stages, added to the body of knowledge regarding the promotion and support of effective coaching policies. Key findings, summarized in nine coaching policy recommendations, have been presented in the PEAK European Coaching Policy Framework . It is one thing, however, to research and publish a quality of coaching model or framework for coaching policies that describe good governance practices required to promote and support Coaching Policy Implementation in Europe. Yet, to impact actual coaching policy changes throughout European countries, this model and framework, built on insight from a European, trans-national perspective, needs to be translated into actual tangible tasks or processes to implement within national contexts. As such, this handbook is intended to provide strategies that can assist key stakeholders with implementation of coaching policies in Europe that have been designed for effectiveness. That way, European sport federations, governments, and coach associations are provided with a toolkit designed to assist in the identification of strengths and areas in need relative to coaching policy in national settings and contexts. To highlight successful change strategies, this handbook also provides two national examples of policy change implementation.

Previous intellectual outputs published by the PEAK project team have focused on development of a methodologically sound theoretical framework for Coaching Policy in Europe. This self-assessment tool created within this framework can be used by national governments or other relevant stakeholders to evaluate the current state of coaching policy in their country. Based on this “needs assessment” they can identify and prioritize areas for improvement. It can also assist governments in assessing the quality of Coaching Policy within various organizations within their jurisdiction.

This “**Handbook for Developing and Implementing Effective Coaching Policies and Good Governance in Coaching in Europe**” as the final intellectual output of the PEAK Project team will serve as a link in fostering and igniting change towards improved coaching policies and governance throughout Europe. In that sense, the idea is for it to provide possible “roadmaps” facilitating change towards better governance and policies in coaching. To achieve this goal, the Handbook, presents specific processes or action items that will help implement coaching policy recommendations proposed by the PEAK framework. To be able to do so, the Theory of Change model (Taplin & Clark, 2012) is used as a blueprint, which provides context and structure to proposed actions and initiatives intended to help improve coaching policy throughout European countries. Chapter 2 will provide more details on why this change model was selected in this context.

A brief outline of the handbook:

The handbook has been divided into fifteen sections. Initially, the Theory of Change (Taplin et al., 2013) is explained. Then, two case studies of successful projects improving coaching policy in Greece and Portugal, respectively, are presented. Insights from successfully implemented projects are designed to inform the following sections. Each subsequent section will focus on one of the PEAK coaching policy recommendations. For each, a Theory of Change strategy has been created that can be used or adapted in national contexts to implement improved coaching policies throughout Europe in the future. While sections 1 through 3 offer general information about the methodological approach adopted in this handbook and provide useful context information, sections 4 through 12 are intended as “stand-alone” texts. Each of these focuses on a specific PEAK Coaching Framework recommendation and can be used by stakeholders and interested readers separately from other sections to learn about possible action items to move coaching policies forward.

As such, this handbook is addressed to those who represent European Sport Federations, national governments, coach associations, and others who are involved in policy making in coaching. These stakeholders can find helpful ideas and strategies to position the findings of the PEAK Project team into action, which can result in improved coaching policies. Those, in turn, can help coaches at all levels of sport involvement delivering quality coaching leadership resulting in enhanced, safe sport experiences for participants at all stages of their athlete pathways.

## 2 Methods

The scope of the European “Policy, Evidence And Knowledge in coaching” (PEAK) project is not solely to gather new (academic) knowledge, provide a status-quo analysis of coaching policy standards and respective assessment tools or disseminating a state-of-the-art framework for sustainably functioning coaching policy regulations. Actually, making a difference for coaches in their respective national contexts through knowledge transfer from theory (i.e., research, evaluation, framework) to practice (implementation of actual policy changes) is an integral part of the PEAK project. This science-to-practice transfer, however, is notoriously difficult to come by: A multitude of factors, limitations, and obstacles - that vary and differ throughout specific contexts in national or regional settings - must be considered. Yet, even if actual change is not easily achieved and there certainly is no “one-size-fits-all” approach which can readily be applied to advance coaching policy throughout all settings, we propose and introduce a Theory of Change (ToC) approach (Taplin & Clark, 2012) to coaching policy practice. ToC has been adopted as a method to describe and illustrate how and why an intended change in a specific context is expected to happen. It is “...in essence, no more than a planned route to outcomes; it describes the logic, principles and assumptions that connect what an intervention, service or programme does, and why and how it does it, with its intended results” (Ghate, 2018).

A graphic of the key steps and parameters essential to a ToC approach is provided in Figure 1.

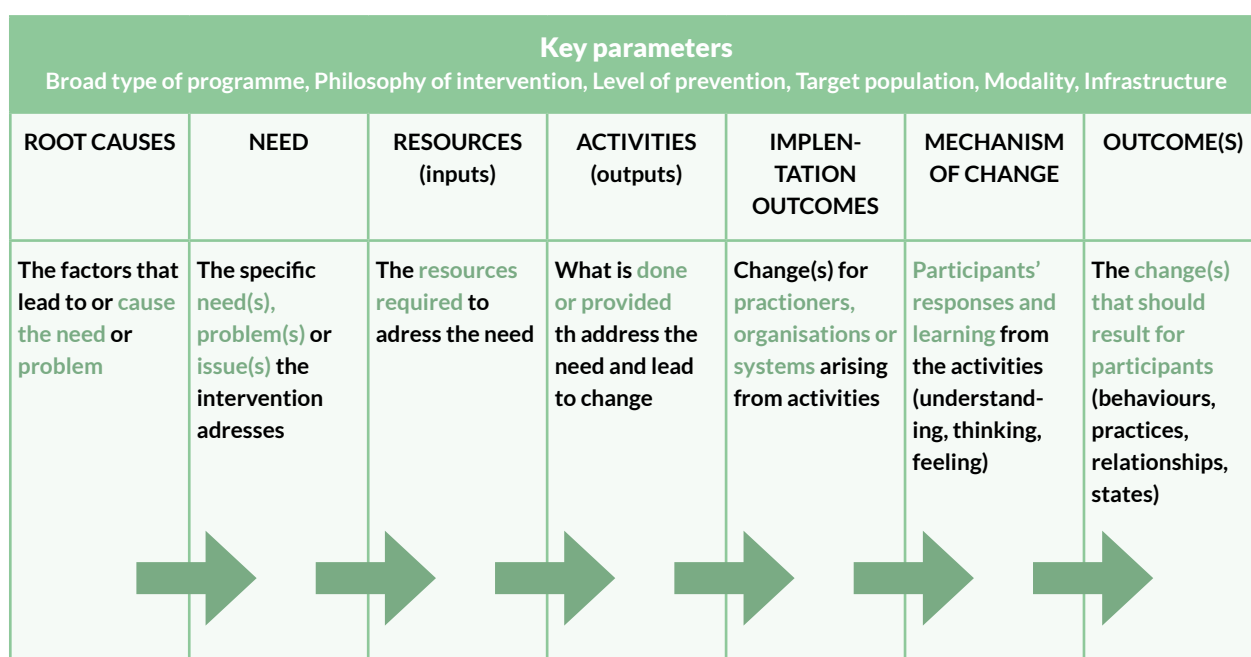


Fig. 1: Schematic Theory of Change model<sup>1</sup>. © 2017, The Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation

A key aspect of change theory is that the process starts with the intended goal. From there it uses backward mapping to create the roadmap to achieve this long-term goal – in reverse order, thus, backward mapping – by filling in respective intermediate goals, outcomes, assumptions, indicators, and preconditions. As such, following a ToC approach, six steps have to be considered:

1 This Figure is covered by the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Reproduced with permission of The Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation; © Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation, all rights reserved From: Ghate, D. (2018) Developing theories of change for social programmes: co-producing evidence-supported quality improvement *Palgrave Communications*, 4(1), 1-13.

1. Identify one's long-term goal and respective assumptions related to it
2. Use backward mapping from the long-term goal: work out what and why regarding necessary preconditions or requirements to achieve goal
3. Analyze what exists in your system without which the theory will not work
4. Weigh and choose most strategic interventions to bring about the desired change
5. Develop indicators to measure progress of change (desired outcomes or performance indicators)
6. Provide summary narrative to explain logic of initiative

This general understanding of ToC can inform the respective information in the following sections. Throughout these sections, the described ToC model is used to highlight coaching policy changes relating to the nine recommendations for coaching policy proposed in the PEAK framework. While some of the recommendations might be connected in specific contexts, an outline of the ToC process for each of the nine framework recommendations can be considered independently from the others. Readers can use the case study and successful practice ideas presented, supported by the ToC model as, catalysts for change in their respective specific settings.

## Summary

This section has provided a basic overview regarding the Theory of Change model and highlighted how the model can be applied in a coaching policy context. To learn more about Theory of Change and adopting this approach, many resources can be found on the internet by doing a search using the keywords "theory of change". Interested readers can then find the respective websites that will best answer questions and serve their specific needs. Additionally, a Theory of Change worksheet that can be used to draft respective project plans has been included in this handbook as Appendix 1.



### 3 Policy Enhancement Process Case Studies

To gain insight into recent European coaching policy processes that have been initiated or advanced, two case study interviews were conducted as part of the preparation process of this handbook. The information was gathered through qualitative, semi-structured interviews. The interview guide used for data collection is presented as Appendix 2. Throughout the handbook, this interview data was used to support the discussion of the nine PEAK Coaching Policy Recommendations (sections 4-12), where specific aspects lend itself to serve as successful examples, or where specific challenges encountered helped highlight specific caveats to consider when implementing coaching policy changes.

In this section, however, each case study, key findings, and lessons learned will be presented and discussed. Insights into the complex process of coaching policy implementation will be offered. In the presentation of data, a similar structure has been adopted as in the PEAK report “EU Mapping & Good Practice Analysis (Harrison & McGeehin, 2021). This analysis provides an additional 18 case studies compiled throughout the PEAK Project, which have also been used in crafting the subsequent sections of this handbook.

The additional Case Study 1 provides information on the “Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and Trainers” (POPA’s) efforts to pass a bill into Greek law, in which the Greek Coaching Association played an active role and that regulates many coaching-specific issues. The current POPA president was interviewed about the organizations’ involvement in this federally governed, top-down process regarding coaching policy, working closely with the federal government and its ministries. This effort ensures that, for the first time in Greek sport, the Voice of Greek Coaches was to be heard in the decision-making process. The new Greek Sports Law passed and published in June 2021 (Greek Government, 2021; LAW No. 4809/19-6-2021) also provides the background for more favorable arrangements for coaches, which can be developed throughout the implementation phase and other future coaching policy initiatives.

In Case Study 2, representatives of the Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association were interviewed. They reported on their experiences of advancing a nationwide policy aimed at improving swimming literacy in children, and the subsequent involvement of changes to swimming coach status, employment, and training. The main partners of the coach association included local municipalities, thus making this more of a bottom-up approach of policy implementation.

#### 3.1 Case Study 1: The Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA)

Relating to:

- PEAK recommendation number 2 (Responsible Organizations);
- PEAK recommendation number 3 (Coach Registry and Research);
- PEAK recommendation number 4 (Coach Education and NQF Alignment);
- PEAK recommendation number 6 (Coach Licensing);
- PEAK recommendation number 7 (Support for Coaches).

##### Reason for selection as a PEAK Project case study:

The POPA project is an example of a coach policy project that made a difference from a central, top-down approach exerted by the Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA) in direct collaboration with the Greek Government and the Ministry of Culture and Sports-General Secretariat of Sports. This process resulted in a new law that passed (LAW No. 4809/19-6-2021, also known as the Sports Bill; Greek Government, 2021), dealing exclusively with coaches’ issues,

## Key information:

- POPA's goal is to enable coaches' input in coach policy making processes;
- POPA was established in 2009 and currently has 12 coaches' associations from 12 different sports as members. It supports efforts to establish coach associations in all sports;
- POPA met with the government and continued to present the needs for good governance in coaching policy;
- Major sports in Greece (like football) have not joined and supported POPA efforts to date;
- Communication with the government about the Sports Bill (LAW No. 4809/19-6-2021) and the needs of coaches started about a year before the bill was voted on;
- POPA was invited to participate in meetings of the legislative committee of the General Secretariat of Sports as well as in meetings of the Educational Affairs Committee of the Greek parliament for formulation of the new law on coaches by submitting and explaining its proposals.

## Details of the Program:

Through the new law passed by the Greek government, several POPA positions and requests on behalf of coaches were adopted and considered and are now provisions of the law involving coaches. These are:

1. The law requires clubs to provide coaching guidance and supervision in every sport and for every athlete, regardless of age.
2. The coaching licensing structure (A, B and C) is required by law
3. The National Research Center of Sport Science (EKAET) will be revived and a National School of Coaches (under the General Secretariat of Sports, with a stand-alone Board) will be established.
4. The coaches will be represented and have voice and vote in every Sport Federation Board.
5. Graduates of the coaching departments of all public and private postsecondary education institutions (a type of an EU educational vocational training institutions that must be respected by all its member countries) will earn a license to practice coaching as a professional, license category C. Up to now, these graduates did not have employment opportunities as coaches despite the fact that they studied for two and a half years.

Additional regulations proposed by POPA that are now provisions of the new law are:

- Coaches can only be employed with a written contract and a minimum wage of 250 Euros;
- Modifications to the qualifications and duties of each coaching category;
- Recognition of university degrees in PE with football specialization for the acquisition of UEFA coaching licenses.

Additional issues that POPA will claim to be added to the law are:

- Lifelong continuing education of coaches;
- Mandatory possession of a speedboat driving license by coaches of all water sports;
- Financial support for all coaches' associations from the General Secretariat of Sports (and not just two, as is the case to date);
- Lifelong training of coaches in first aid.



### Limitations of the Program:

- POPA is the central player connecting the various stakeholders involved in the process, yet the work within POPA rests on shoulders of volunteers
- The success attained with this legislative initiative is crucial, yet needs to be followed up by specific activities in an implementation phase (e.g., establishing a National School of Coaches will take time)
- Not all sports in Greece have a coaching association. Yet, POPA considers the establishment of coaching associations in every sport as a critical factor for the successful implementation of the new law for the benefit of coaches. For this reason, efforts have been made by POPA to persuade coaches to establish coaching associations in every sport that does not have one, so that the voices of coaches can be heard in every sports federation. When this goal is achieved, POPA can be stronger because it will be reinforced with more members.

## 3.2 Case Study 2: Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association (PSCA)

### Relating to:

- PEAK recommendation number 3 (Coach Registry and Research)
- PEAK recommendation number 4 (Coach Education and NQF Alignment)
- PEAK recommendation number 6 (Coach Licensing)
- PEAK recommendation number 7 (Support for Coaches)

### Reason for selection as a PEAK Project case study:

The “Swimming Education” project implemented by the Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association (PSCA; translated project name from Portuguese: Swimming@school), is an example of a coach policy project that started as an effort of PSCA, in close cooperation with the Portuguese Swimming Federation (PSF), to implement it through a top-down approach in collaboration with the Portuguese government. Struggling to advance the project over a 4-year time span, PSCA (and PSF) switched their strategy from a top-down approach, to one of a bottom-up approach. Executing this strategy, they are now collaborating with local governments and municipalities to implement objectives step by step on a local level.

### Key information:

- Swimming@school is co-promoted by PSCA and the Portuguese Swimming Federation in cooperation with local governments /municipalities and their primary education (6-9 year-old children) school clusters
- Basic rationale based on the value of swimming from social, educational and health perspectives as well as a safety perspective (reduce risk of drowning)
- Long history of swimming and swimming coaches research in Portugal, recognized worldwide as leaders in the field
- PSCA was founded in 1977 and is one of the oldest coaches’ association in Portugal; it has held an annual sport science congress since then engaging 600-800 attendees each year
- Very organized coach reference model in Portugal; even basic swimming teachers need license to work; increasing levels with other coaching license levels; clear coaching license system in place as well as coach registry; important to regulate coaching as profession also regarding income

## Details of the Program:

Based on empirical data gathered analyzing the current swimming literacy rate in Portugal the following objectives were proposed:

1. Create a guidance model to ensure our primary schools and public swimming schools are supported to provide the best swimming and water safety provision for all their students;
2. Create a curriculum swimming and water safety resource pack for all stakeholders involved to ensure that each public swimming school is complying with our curriculum requirements;
3. Develop a curriculum training program for swimming teachers with the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality school swimming lessons and according to the proposed curriculum requirements;
4. Create a national children's aquatic competence observatory, based on the annual reports of the swimming schools as well as water competence self-perception measures.

The project will serve to unleash a change in local sports policy and governance that aims at having a direct effect on water competence in young children through an educational training curriculum. This project has the potential benefit because researchers suggest that rural and isolated schools find it most difficult to conduct aquatic activities (Peden, Franklin, & Larsen 2009).

The Swimming@school project will also have a direct impact for coaches and coaching policy. It will directly impact quality management and evaluation/assessment on various levels (pedagogical quality, swimming literacy, ultimately possibly competitiveness in international swimming competitions). While it provides additional opportunities for coaching research it also ensures measures supporting coaches and could increase demand for swimming coaches and trainers, resulting in better employment opportunities.

## Limitations of the Program:

- For the originally pursued top-down approach PSCA as a coaching association, as well as their cooperative partner, the Portuguese Swimming Federation, lack control of what is on the political agenda; thus, they must remain flexible and adapt the approach
- Effect can be gradual, as not all of the 308 municipalities in Portugal are involved from the beginning (the pilot project will involve approx. 10 municipalities)
- Progress to implement the project has been affected by the Corona pandemic, which has led to many pool (and school) closures
- When finances are a limitation for a municipality to offer swimming as part of its PE curriculum, the program can only provide insights from other municipalities that manage to find the funding, not offer direct financial support

## 4 PEAK Recommendation “Definition of Coaching”

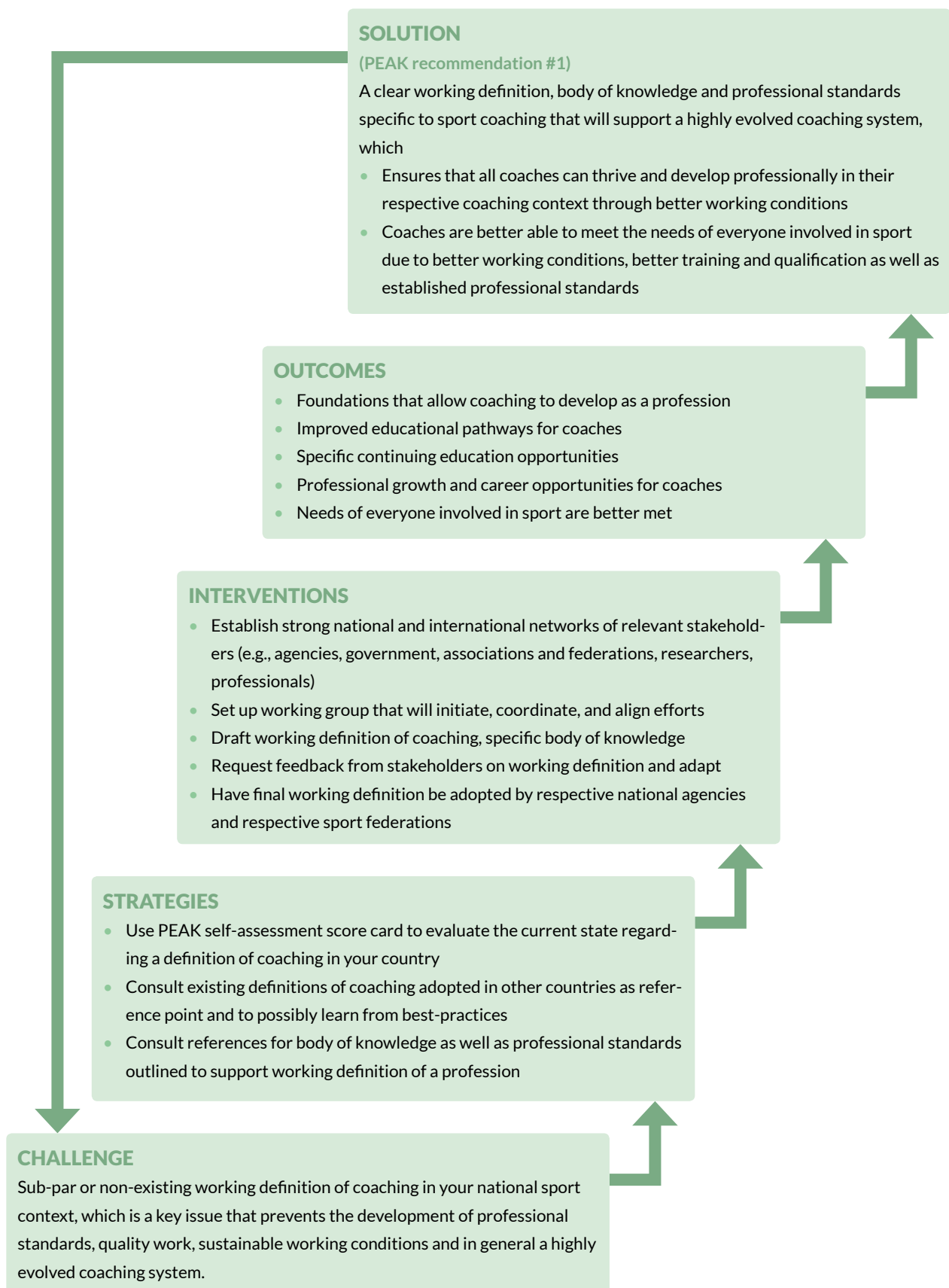
As a first step or foundation for sustainable coaching policy enhancement processes the PEAK framework recommends developing a country-specific working definition of coaching:

PEAK recommendation #1: “Implement a formal or legal, nationally-recognised definition of coaching, specifying the exact sub-sectors to which the definition applies.”

This working definition serves as the foundation for all subsequent coaching policy development by defining coaching and also who is considered a coach. It is imperative, that this definition goes beyond a basic definition to addresses the need for clarity of the body of knowledge and scope of practice as is common in other professions. In both case studies conducted for this handbook the participating -coach associations stressed that, while they adopted a clear definition of coaches, they represent more than sport coaches through their respective efforts. The stance of the Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA) is: “We work on behalf of coaches, but also trainers and physical educators. For POPA, a coach has the highest responsibilities. Trainers and educators assist him or her with the work or work in the basic/non-competitive sport sectors.” (personal interview communication with POPA president Athanasios Villiotis). When interviewed, the representatives of the Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association (PSCA) added: “In Portuguese, the name of the organization is literally Swimming Technicians Associations. Thus, besides coaches we represent professionals in other roles as well (teachers, pool managers) In our context, many professionals work in two of the three roles mentioned (coach, teacher, pool manager), it is important to have this umbrella as an organization.” Additionally, PSCA represents not only swimming coaches, but also coaches in diving, water polo, synchronized swimming, who are all organized under the umbrella of the national swimming federation.

As these examples further illustrate, it is essential to consider the national context and preconditions when creating or redefining a definition of coaching to implement or solidify the foundation of coaching policy and practice in your country and or sport. Based on the current status in Europe described in the PEAK framework as well as lessons from other professions like nursing or engineering presented there (section 4) the following Theory of Change model can be suggested:

## “Definition of Coaching” Theory of Change



As can be seen, the scope of creating a working definition of coaching requires more steps than one might initially think. As suggested by the PEAK research group, developing a broad definition will not be sufficient to ignite sustainable professional development. Additional factors that need to be considered are highlighted through the quotes from the two case study examples provided (cf. chapter 3). Given the multiple roles involved in sport contexts, (e.g., coaches, trainers, physical educators) a definition of coaching needs to provide clear distinctions between these various roles. This will ensure that the specific sectors and sub-sectors where the definition will be applied are clearly defined.

Additionally, a solid working definition should also be supported by a clearly outlined unique body of knowledge and skill set required to be an effective coach. Thus, a set of specific core responsibilities as well as professional standards are key to a basic working definition of coaching. For professions like nursing, engineering, this process has rigorously been applied and helped advance and shape those professions.

It is clear that from the outset, any endeavor to implement a definition of coaching in a national context relies on building a strong network of partners and involving all relevant stakeholders. Only when key stakeholders are involved are they likely to adopt the changes and implement the new definition of coaching in their respective constituencies.

## 5 PEAK Recommendation “Responsible Organization(s)”

The second recommendation proposed by the PEAK Coaching Policy Framework focuses on organizational responsibilities related to coaching:

“Clearly define an organization (or group of organizations) responsible for developing, promoting, and managing coaching in the country.”

Over the past decades the sporting sector has evolved tremendously by impacting the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for coaches. With an increasing number of coaches who coach, i.e., in professional sports, and earn their living by means of sport coaching – based on an established working definition of coaching – comes a need to assign respective responsibilities to relevant organizations in order to put the working definition, body of knowledge and professional standards into action. In other words: to thrive and develop as a profession, coaching needs an organizational structure that meets the demands outlined and set forth by the specific definition of coaching and scope of work in the respective country/context.

The organizational structure for sport coaching should address three important aspects relevant for the profession (PEAK framework, chapter 5): coach education, coach licensing, and coach representation. Establishing organizations that fulfill their respective roles within this system will serve multiple purposes: they can help improve working conditions for coaches, make professional development and sustainable careers possible; and, by implementing clear educational standards, licensing as well as disciplinary systems, they also help safeguard those involved in sport through quality (pedagogical) standards and regulations.

Case Study 1 presented in this handbook (cf. chapter 3.1) offers successful examples of how a national coaching federation can have a profound effect on coaching policy development. The Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA) was founded in 2009 and currently has coaches’ associations from twelve different sports in Greece as members. Even though some sports have tried to undermine the work of POPA, the federation managed to work with the Greek government and the Ministry of Culture and Sports-General Secretariat of Sports in preparing a Sports Bill (Greek Government, 2021; LAW No. 4809/19-6-2021), which addressed many issues for coaches that POPA felt needed to be addressed. For Greek coaches, having POPA as a national organization that lobbies to make sure that “all coaches are being heard in the coach policy making process” has been a game changer that resulted in the new law (Sports Bill, LAW No. 4809/19-6-2021) being passed in June 2021. The new law provides several important changes, including

- Clubs having to provide mandatory coaching guidance and supervision in every sport and for athletes of all ages
- The coaching licensing structure (A, B, C) being required by law (not by ministerial decision, as before)
- Establishing a National School of Coaches
- Improvements for graduates of coaching departments of all public and private postsecondary education institutions, ensuring they receive a license to practice the profession of coach
- Representation of coaches including the right to speak and vote in every Sport Federation Board

Several more specific improvements for Greek coaches have been achieved through POPA’s “Sport Bill” initiative (Greek Government, 2021). As outlined above, the impact of POPA’s initiative clearly relates to all three areas that an adequate organizational structure for professional sport coaches should address (coach education, coach licensing, and coach representation). Through coach representation as the go-to organization for the Greek government and ministries POPA ignited specific changes and opportunities that include advancements relating to coach education and coach licensing.

This effect and progress were possible, even though POPA – as of now – functions solely as an organization operated by volunteers and still has great potential to increase its membership. Yet, the organization, when interviewed for this handbook, also recognized the importance to initiate the work, even if there are obstacles



and resistance: “Our goal is to improve the situation for coaches – you always have to keep this perspective in mind. Then you will make progress if you are persistent – sometimes fast, sometimes slow.”

A Theory of Change model for developing an organizational structure for coaches is presented below.

## Responsible Organizations Theory of Change

### SOLUTION

Clearly defined group of organizations in the country, responsible for:

- Developing coaching
- Promoting coaching
- Managing coaching

### OUTCOME

to ensure

National Coaches Association

- Members are individual coaches or sport specific coaches' associations
- Lobbying for social/public recognition of profession
- Lobbying for improved work conditions, occupational safety, legal support
- Represent coaches in policy making process
- Delivering specific educational programs

National Coaches Regulatory Agency

- In charge of licensing
- In charge of accreditation
- In charge of education and continuing education standards
- In charge of disciplinary actions

### INTERVENTIONS

to result in

- Create synergy effects between existing organizations building on their initiatives and expertise
- Start implementing changes outlined in the strategic plan developed
- Strengthen and expand network supporting organizational development on behalf of professional sport coaches
- Create mutual trust and open lines of communication between various players involved (educational, legal, political, organized sport etc.)
- Adapt/address needs in educational system
- Set up licensing system and registry
- Establish entity that is in charge of disciplinary actions
- Form independent coach association (based on individual coach memberships or membership of sport specific coaches' associations to be able to speak with one strong voice)

### STRATEGIES

to ignite

- Use PEAK self-assessment score card to evaluate the current state regarding representation of coaches in your country
- Compile data on current initiatives and services addressing the following issues for coaches:
  - Employment situation (Contracts, payment, background checks, code of conduct, working hours etc.)
  - Education (Qualification, professional development, continuing education, degrees etc.)
  - Welfare and recognition (Health and medical care, retirement and pensions, licensing, etc.)
- Research best-practice solutions from other countries or contexts/professions
- Create implementation plan to improve organizational structure for professional coaches using, for example, the following guiding questions (PEAK framework, chapter 5):
  - What does this association/initiative offer that does not already exist? (Reason for existence/implementation)
  - How does this association/initiative distinguish itself from existing ones? (Differentiation)
  - 3. What is the connection to the existing system/organizations? (Cooperation)

### PROBLEM/STATUS QUO

to inform

Professional sport coaches (coaches who make their livelihood from coaching), need an organizational structure to address issues related to professional practice and the regulation of coaching and to ensure that their voices are heard in decisions of the sport system relating to coaching

Of course, many context-specific variables must be taken into account when trying to improve the organizational structure for sport coaches. These include existing organizations, country specific cultural norms, political systems, and lines of communication as well as the role of volunteer coaches.

Throughout Europe, the position regarding volunteer coaching varies greatly. For example, Finland even has two separate and closely collaborating coaches' associations. The Finnish Coaches Association, founded in 1975, represents all coaches (paid and volunteers), whereas Professional Coaches of Finland, founded in 2002, represents full- and part-time paid coaches. The POPA in Greece has a clear stance regarding volunteer coaches: "POPA believes that coaches are professionals and have to be professionals – there are no volunteer teachers or volunteer doctors, so to be recognized as a profession there should not be any volunteer coaches" (POPA interview for handbook). As illustrated, when considering a highly evolved organizational structure responsible for coaches, the historically established role of volunteer coaching must be considered.

## 6 PEAK Recommendation “Coach Registry and Research”

The third PEAK Coaching Policy Framework recommendation is intended to facilitate empirical evaluation of coaching. It proposes that countries set up a Coach Registry to facilitate research in coaching by having respective data available on national and regional levels. Recommendation 3 reads:

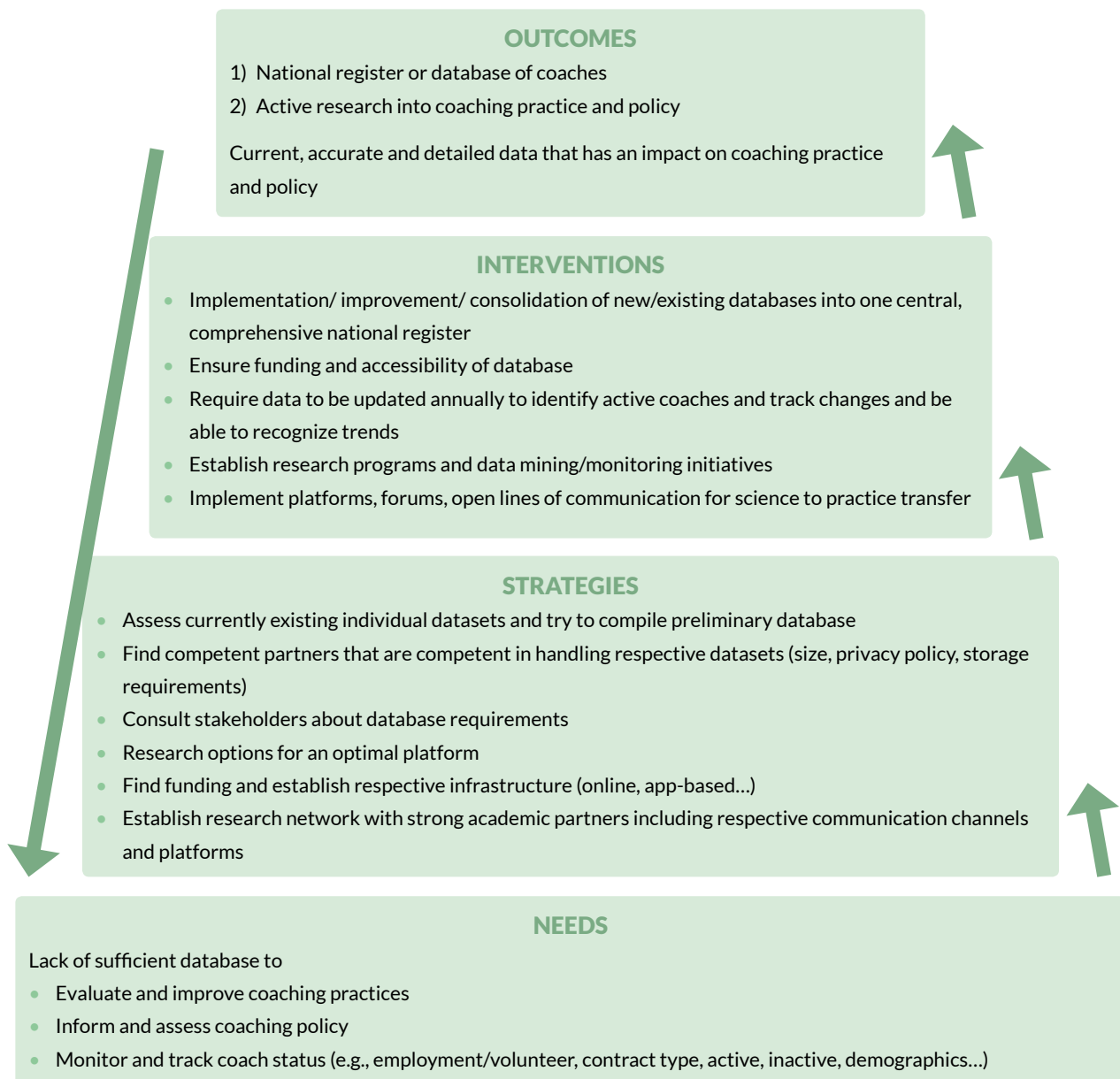
“Implement a national register or database of coaches in your country and ensure ongoing research into coaching.”

In chapter 6 of the PEAK Coaching framework, the authors conclude that coach registration and research are key factors to build strong evidence-based coaching programs as well as support good coach policy development. The role that databases can play in the advancement of sport science has been discussed for some years (Vincent et al., 2009) and is certainly relevant to the field of coaching science as well. Not only is evidenced-based practice, supported by adequate data, necessary to evaluate coaching programs and develop best-practice models. To assess the effectiveness of coach education programs, identify needs and gaps in program delivery, retention rates, coach development, continuing education effects, and demographics of coaches as they relate to diversity and inclusion, it is equally imperative to have data to support decisions.

Given the surge in professionalization seen in sport coaching, having a database that tracks coach development, painting a picture of the current status of coaching in respective regions, sports, levels of sport involvement etc. and informing about best-practices to build upon and shortcomings or trends to address is imperative. Additionally, data can also facilitate policy evaluation of changes and programs that have been implemented, making it possible to assess their effectiveness.

The PEAK coaching framework presents two examples of highly evolved data management systems that have been implemented to monitor sport coaches in the respective countries (Estonia and Belgium/Flanders, PEAK framework, chapter 6). Additionally, the two interviews conducted as part of compiling this handbook have provided additional support for the importance of research to support evidence-based coaching practice and policy programs. The board members of the Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association (PSCA) stressed: “We are very proud to have very good scientists informing swimming practice in Portugal. One of the objectives when funding our organization back in 1977 was to share best-practices and acquire knowledge through science and research.” Not surprisingly, Portugal does also have a national coach registry and data driven evaluation of programs, policies and developments is a cornerstone of the PSCA’s efforts.

A “Coach Registry and Research” Theory of Change model is presented here.



As can be seen in the Coach Registry and Research Theory of Change model presented above, establishing a national registry or database, while already a complex process in itself, is actually only a means to an end. If the second part of the PEAK recommendation is to be implemented, respective research projects and programs, data management, tracking and monitoring all need to be created as well – for which current, detailed, and accurate coaching data are prerequisites. The creation of scientific knowledge and insights based on that data, however, present an equally challenging task. Building the respective networks, funding and programs have to be actively pursued and prioritized to become part of coach development and support professionalization. Again, the interview with the Hellenic Federation of Sport Coaches and Trainers (POPA) provides a successful example of how the Greek coaches’ association embraces science to practice. In the process of consulting with the Greek government and ministries about a new “Sports Bill” (Greek Government, 2021) to address various needs regarding coach education and policies, POPA relied heavily upon data from scientific studies to support and underpin proposals. As Greece has a Coach Registry, POPA had data available to use in studies. Additionally, POPA stressed another reason why a national registry and database are extremely important when trying to advance coach policy and practice: “When trying to get your voice heard, there is strength in numbers. So not only is it important to try and represent as many sport-specific coaching associations as possible as POPA. Being able to highlight how many coaches you are lending a voice to – by having that number based on a current database – is key when negotiating policy changes.”

## 7 PEAK Recommendation “Coach Education and NQF alignment”

PEAK Coaching Policy Framework recommendation four pertains to the field of coach education. It reads:

“Ensure quality of coach education programs in your country that align with your National Qualification Framework.”

A highly evolved coaching system is dependent upon high standards of coach education. Only well trained and educated coaches can play holistic roles in

- creating an optimal sporting environment for an organization or in a respective context/country
- impacting diverse societal groups and people regarding sport participation, performance, or promotion of active, healthy lifestyles
- working and developing people, not just teaching or training sports

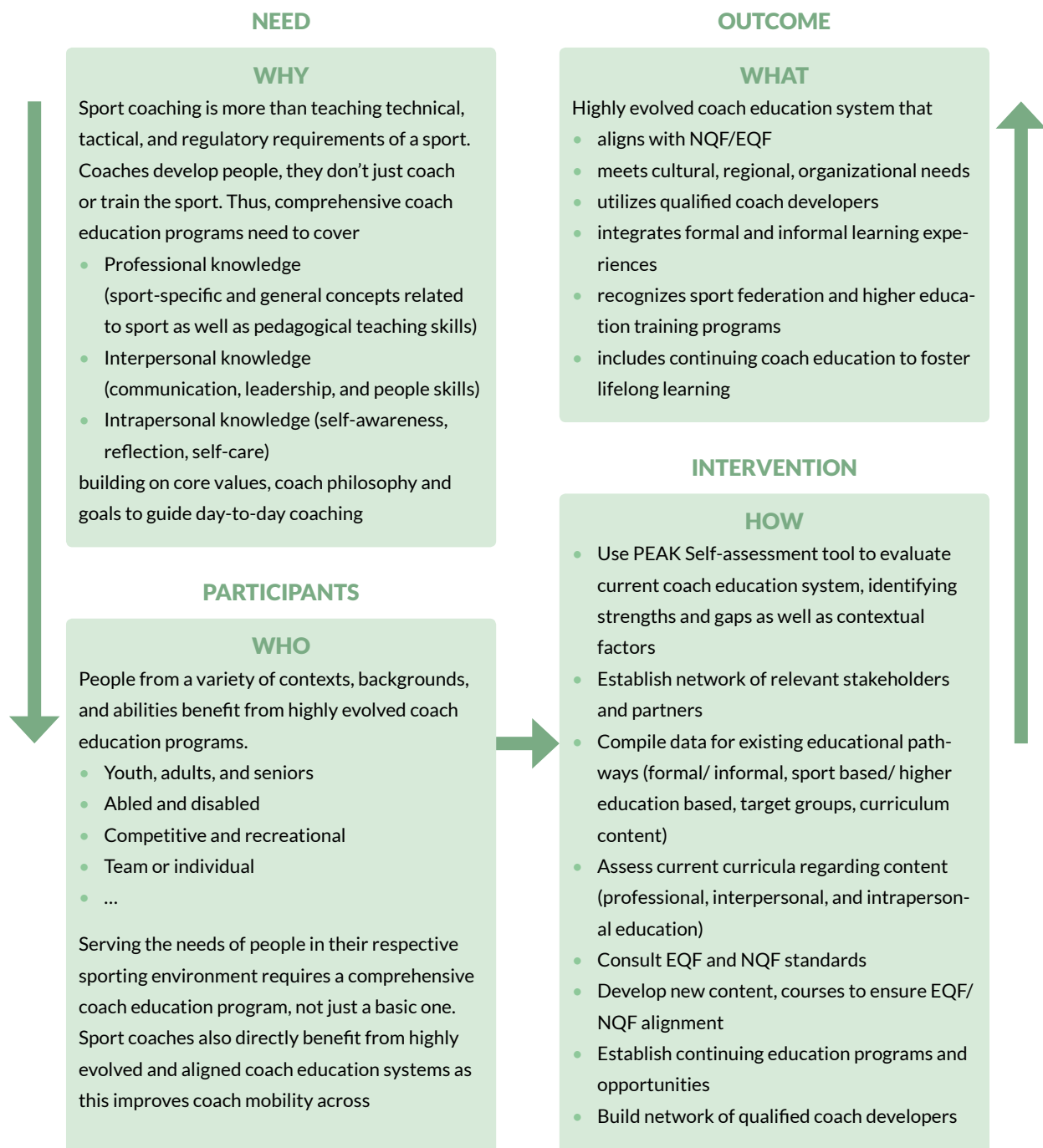
To do so, coaches need to develop skills and knowledge pertaining to more than technical, tactical, and regulatory information about their respective sports. Qualified coaches integrate insights from sport sciences such as anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, psychology, nutrition, motor behavior, and pedagogy into their individual coaching philosophy and expertise.

Considering the professionalization of coaching, where, increasingly, coaches are making a living with jobs in sport coaching, the issue of self-care and job flexibility as well as mobility across different jurisdictions become pertinent topics. While the evolution of coaching into a profession is currently a point of discussion, it highlights the need for well-aligned, quality coach education programs, certainly the major role that sport involvement and coaching experience play regarding the holistic personal development of those involved in sport. This calls for highly skilled and well-educated coaches.

The case study interviews conducted when compiling the present handbook support the importance of comprehensive coach education programs and pathways. This includes evaluation of proposed programs through scientific research, investigating program effectiveness. Part of the Swimming@school project initiated by the Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association (PSCA) in close cooperation with the Portuguese Swimming Federation included in the development of a curriculum training program for swimming teachers, ensuring graduates acquire skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality school swimming lessons according to the proposed curriculum requirements. Aligned with PSCA's long-standing history of evidence-based practice and high-level sport science research a first pilot phase of program delivery included rigorous evaluation of content delivery and learning achievements. This highlights that coach associations as driving forces in advancing coaching policy recognize the importance of quality coach education programs as well as the need to make evidence-based decisions and evaluations.

Below a Theory of Change model for “Coach Education and NQF Alignment” is presented.

## “Coach Education and NQF Alignment” Theory of Change model



As outlined in the model presented above, considering the major impact sport coaches have across a multitude of developmental, social, and health related facets of human behavior the need to establish highly evolved, effective, holistic, and well-aligned coach education programs becomes apparent. Indeed, not only those involved in various sporting contexts can benefit from establishing those kinds of educational systems. The coaches themselves can also benefit on multiple levels. Of course, quality education has value in and of itself. Quality education programs also provide coaches with self-care tools and skills, however, to prevent and manage burnout and stress. Additionally, a comprehensive approach to aligning existing programs or pathways of coach education, creating offers that help align them with national or international qualification standards, increases coaches' flexibility and mobility. A fact that, given the high level of international mobility especially in competitive sport environments today, cannot be underestimated. An example of international as well as national alignment of coach education programs was shared by the Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and



Trainers (POPA) when interviewed while preparing this handbook. POPA's successful efforts in contributing to a new Sports Bill (Greek Government, 2021) that was passed in June 2021 by the Greek government resulted in the decision to establish a National School of Coaches under the General Secretariat of Sport. The Sports Bill also ensures that graduates of coaching departments in all public and private post-secondary education institutions will receive licenses to practice coaching (C level) in the future – a perfect example of improvements to existing pathways resulting in better career advancement opportunities for coaches. An additional specific issue addressed by the Greek sports law is the recognition of university degrees in PE with football specialization for the acquisition of UEFA coaching licenses. Thus, the Greek Sports Bill also serves as a successful example for creating synergy between higher education and sports-based educational pathways.

## 8 PEAK Recommendation “Safe Sport”

Safe Sport is what PEAK Coaching Policy Framework recommendation five focuses on. It states:

“Implement safeguarding policies and programs to prevent harm and help ensure everyone in sport has a positive sport experience.”

Given the huge influence that coaches have, especially in youth sport, and the large amount of time they interact with youth athletes, especially in competitive sport settings, it is not surprising that the issue of creating and maintaining safe sporting environments has received increased attention over the last decades. Coaches and administrators or staff are responsible for creating specific sporting cultures in a given context and usually are the ones who have the closest working and emotional relationship with their athletes. They play a crucial role in safe sport. High-profile cases of child-abuse and child-sexual abuse in multiple countries like Germany, Ireland, and the US have made clear that abuse on several levels is a pertinent issue in sporting contexts. Along with media coverage in high-profile cases, researchers (Ohlert et al., 2020; Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018) have published numerous studies on athletes’ experiences of violence and abuse in organized sport). One of those publications regarding athlete safety suggests that as much as one in seven athletes experiences unwanted sexual attention. These numbers highlight the importance of safe-sport initiatives as they relate to coaches and coaching practices. The PEAK framework (chapter 8) provides information on several safe-sport initiatives that the Council of Europe (CoE) engaged in over the last two decades. Through its projects the CoE helped with raising awareness, creating benchmarks, and developing educational resources focused on safe sport. Numerous best-practice collections and training materials are among the intellectual outputs, which can be implemented when establishing specific safe-sport initiatives. Those initiatives and training programs should not only focus on coaches, but also include other staff and administrators, especially those working with youth and children as athletes.

However, it is not only coaches, staff and administrators that are responsible for creating a specific sporting environment and culture. Peer athletes or parents must be considered as well when discussing safe sporting environments. While peers might be especially prone to engage in bullying or cyber-bullying behaviors based on the high social media exposure that everyone is exposed to nowadays, parents can contribute to an unsafe sporting culture as well. A “winning-at-all-costs” attitude, jealousy and envy regarding achievements, development, and attention all can lead to high levels of stress for youth athletes that harm their sporting experiences as well.

As such, safe-sport educational programs do not only need to target coaches, but also athletes and parents; and training materials that support the development of safe sport within the sport coaching context might also have to deal with how coaches create safe sporting environments with regards to peer interactions and parent involvement and conduct.

A Theory of Change model for “Safe Sport” is presented below.

## Theory of Change model “Safe Sport”

### IF

Basic requirements of safe sport are addressed, such as

- Issues prevalent in unsafe, abusive sporting environments (e.g., sexual & physical abuse, psychological abuse, stress, bullying, cyber bullying...) are acknowledged and discussed openly
- Independent research and studies are funded to monitor safe sport issues, identifying critical factors leading to abusive contexts and systems
- Codes of conduct, ethical codes, policies, and practice guidelines are established and implemented, soliciting necessary expertise and support from legal, legislative, or other authorities.
- Specific processes and support to enforce codes of conduct and deal with transgressions are put in place.
- Templates and tools are developed and distributed to help with educational efforts as well as case management

### AND

Additional steps are being taken, such as:

- Coach education programs address the importance of safe sporting environments and teach tools to ensure a holistic safe sporting approach
- Resources are provided to prevent peer-athletes as drivers of abuse sporting environments and climates
- Screening systems are created and implemented to monitor safe sport issues
- Safe Sport-organizations or hotlines, independent from sport-based resources, are implemented to offer support and help independent from the sporting system

### THEN

Safeguarding policies and programs are in place, creating a safe-sport culture and sporting environment that:

- prevent harm,
- help ensure everyone in sport has a positive sport experience
- provide tools and resources to manage incidents
- recognize the importance of safe-sport resources outside of sport organizations
- support athlete, coach and sport-participant well-being and mental-health

While it is, undisputedly, imperative to address and prevent abusive behaviors in sporting environments – as they have been much too prevalent – an aspect not previously discussed is the fact that safe sport initiatives should not only focus on preventing, reducing, protecting from, and effectively handling unsafe or abusive practices or incidents. Effective safe sport environments need to go beyond protection from abuse, creating a sporting culture that embraces athlete and coach well-being. Mental health of coaches and especially athletes has also been a topic that received enormous media attention in recent years, with the Tokyo 2020 (held in 2021) Olympic experiences of US gymnast Simon Biles and Japanese tennis super star Naomi Osaka serving as two examples. As such, coaching policy development initiated by clubs, associations, federations, or confederations also needs to address mental health issues pro-actively as these are integral parts of safe sporting environments and performance cultures.

Finally, an emerging issue regarding safe sport seems to be the need to establish resources such as hotlines, points of contact, or confidential, independent clearing houses outside of the sport system. In Germany, “Athleten Deutschland“, Germany’s first independent athlete association, whose mission is to represent, protect and elevate the rights and interests of German elite level athletes, recently has lobbied with the German government to create such an independent center for safe sport<sup>2</sup>. In their opinion only a center for safe sport that operates independently of organized sport can adequately manage controversial cases of abuse and unsafe environments.

While the importance of safe sporting environments for protecting from abuse has received more recognition and seen more progress over the last decades, several areas, especially related to athlete and coach well-being, still need more attention – also as they relate to coaching policy development on local, regional, national, and international levels.

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2 <https://athleten-deutschland.org/wp-content/uploads/Anregungen-fuer-ein-Unabhaengiges-Zentrum-fuer-Safe-Sport-Athleten-Deutschland-Februar-2021.pdf>

## 9 PEAK Recommendation “Coach licensing”

The focus of recommendation six of the PEAK Coaching Policy Framework lies on Coach Licensing. It reads:

“Implement a national, multi-sport licensing system for coaches that actively supports coach development in your country.”

The labor market for sport coaches has seen continuous growth internationally over the last decades. This is true for coaching in competitive, elite sporting environments as well as in recreational, youth sport, exercise, or physical education settings. Traditionally, sport federations or organizations were in charge of coach education programs. But with the growth of the labor market and the concurrent push for professionalization, regulation of coach education has seen a change towards being based on federal laws and governmental agencies. This shift also affected respective coach licensing schemes. More rigorous systems replaced previous ones led by sport federations independently; for many coaching fields licensing requirements and programs were introduced for the first time.

Having a strong, transparent coach licensing system is not simply intended to add more administrative hurdles to a field developing as a growing profession. With no coach licensing system in place, it remains unclear who can coach, what educational requirements are necessary in specific context or sporting levels, what kind of ethical guidelines coaches need to adhere to and what continuing education requirements need to be fulfilled in order to be able to continue coaching. All this can lead to fragmented career structures for coaches – the exact opposite to the professionalization that a growing sport coaching labor market requires.

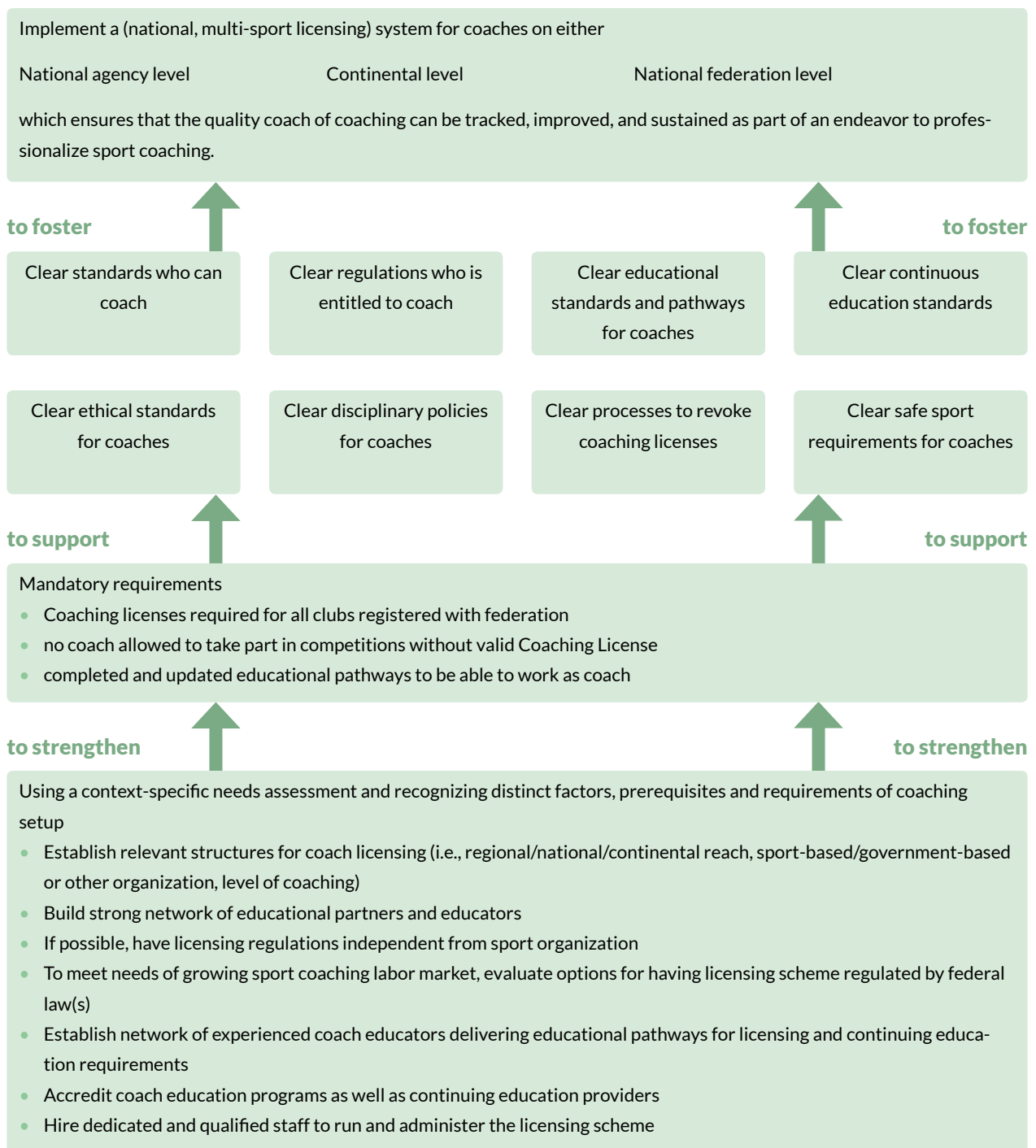
As such, creating a strong, transparent, coach licensing system that fits context specific needs and prerequisites will ultimately help to ensure quality coaching and safe sporting environments for everyone involved in sport, and that the quality of coaching can be assessed, evaluated, improved, and sustained.

The interviews with coaching associations conducted when compiling this handbook highlight the importance of strong coach licensing systems for sustained professionalization of coaching as well. The efforts by the Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA) resulting in a new “Sports Bill” (Greek Government, 2021) being passed in June 2021 by the Greek government also included specific measures pertaining to coach licensing. POPA successfully lobbied with the Greek government to require by law that the coach licensing structure in sporting environments needs to include A, B, and C levels. Previously this licensing structure was only required by ministerial decision, carrying less weight and, when in question, less consequences in cases of dispute or conflict. For POPA, the specific measures adopted by the new law relating to coach licensing specifically, advance coach policy significantly in the associations attempt to continuously improve the situation for sport coaches in Greece.

Additional measures regulated by the new Greek Sports Bill related to coach licensing ensure that graduates from coaching departments of all public and private postsecondary education institutions (a type of EU educational Vocational Training Institutions that must be respected by all its member countries) will receive a license to practice the profession of coach, at the C license level. Previously, those graduates did not have employment opportunities as coaches despite the fact that they studied for two and a half years. The Sports Bill also aligns Greek university degrees in PE with a football specialization with UEFA’s coach licensing system, illustrating how licensing systems can be improved by creating synergies between national and continental as well as sport-based and higher education-based coach qualification pathways. Finally, POPA successfully lobbied for lifelong training of coaches becoming mandatory, required by the new law. This change to compulsory continuing education will have a huge impact on sustainable professional development in sport coaching.

Below a Theory of Change model for “Coach Licensing” is proposed.

## “Coach Licensing” Theory of Change model



As can be seen in the proposed Theory of Change model of “Coach Licensing”, the benefits of such measures span across many levels and intersect with the creation of coach registries as well as quality education pathways and their respective alignment with national or international standards. Ultimately, the specifics of the historical, cultural, regional, and sport-specific context need to be considered when planning on implementing and/or improving coach licensing systems. A critical component pertaining to advancing coach licensing schemes seems to be the decision to make valid coaching licenses mandatory for clubs/organizations to hire someone as a coach, and for coaches to be able to take part in any form of competition. Only when these requirements are introduced can coach licensing unfold its full potential of 1) improving quality of coaching for the benefit of more positive sport experiences of those engaged in various sporting environments; and 2) sustained professional development for the sport coaching as a profession with clear career pathways.



The interview with the Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association (PSCA), conducted for this handbook, underpins this conclusion. PSCA stressed: “There is a very organized coach reference model in place in Portugal. Even basic swimming teachers need a license to work. With increasing levels of sport involvement (e.g., more competitive settings, higher levels of coaching licenses) are required. We are very proud to have such a clear licensing system in place, for us this is an important component to regulate coaching as a profession.”

As such, coach licensing seems to be a crucial cornerstone of coaching policy when it comes to sustainable professionalization and quality management for sport coaching.

## 10 PEAK Recommendation “Support for coaches”

The seventh PEAK Coaching Policy Framework recommendation focuses on providing support for coaches. Recommendation 7 reads:

“Implement mechanisms in your country to support volunteer and paid coaches.”

A central theme relevant when considering coaches’ need for support pertains to their status as either a professional (i.e., paid full- or part-time contracted) coach or a volunteer coach. When interviewed for this handbook, the president of the Hellenic Federation of Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA) stressed the importance of this issue as it relates to coaching evolving and being recognized as a true profession: “POPA believes that coaches are professionals and have to be professionals to deliver the best services possible. There are no volunteer teachers or volunteer doctors, either. So, to be recognized as a profession in sport coaching there shouldn’t be any volunteer coaches.”

In reality, however, in many countries coaching remains a hybrid, part professional/ part volunteer, occupation. Historically, in many countries sport coaching was originally an all-volunteer occupation, and even today with a certain degree of professional development having occurred many sport clubs and organizations rely heavily on volunteers for service delivery (PEAK framework, chapter 10). Although an overarching theme of coaching policy development is continued professionalization of sport coaching, reality calls for volunteer coaches’ recognition as a cornerstone of many sporting environments. In many countries, without volunteer coaches, many sporting activities could not happen; people involved in multiple sporting environments, from recreational to elite levels, would not be able to benefit from opportunities for positive development, holistic personal growth, and a more healthy, active lifestyle.

While it is important to recognize the distinction between paid and volunteer coaches and how their needs for support might differ, there also seems to be an underlying theme that needs to be addressed. Regardless of paid or volunteer coaching roles, any sport coach stands to benefit from increased lobbying efforts to have coaches’ impact and significant contributions to individuals and groups developing their full physical, social, and emotional potential publicly and socially more readily recognized. While this lobbying could result in more stable, more readily available, and less precarious working environments and opportunities for paid coaches, volunteer coaches would benefit as well. For them, public recognition would go a long way in improving motivation and feeling as making a valued contribution.

Below, a Theory of Change model pertaining to “Support for Coaches” is presented.

## SOLUTION

Implementation of national mechanisms to support volunteer and paid coaches to help

- enhance recognition of sport coaching as a profession
- ensure greater retention of coaches in the field
- improve quality of coaching provision

## OUTCOMES

- Increasing recognition and support for professional coaches to sustain successful careers
- Increasing recognition, guidance, support, and quality of volunteer coaches
- Support programs that meet the needs of paid and volunteer coaches, housed in the specific cultural, legal, developmental context of the country/sport
- Continued move to professionalization of the field of sport coaching

## STRATEGIES & INTERVENTIONS

- Create events that celebrate coaches' achievements and contributions publicly (e.g., regional, national or international days of recognition, awards)
- Establish national standards to foster volunteer involvement that help organizations to attract, manage, recognize, and retain volunteers and improve their experience
- Support volunteer coaches by employing qualified Coach Developers, specifically hired to assist volunteers; or through special training programs and funding schemes that serve to support volunteer coaches
- Help professional coaches navigate challenges specific to their work environments (contracts, working hours, stress load, etc.)

## CHALLENGES

- Many volunteer and paid coaches feel undervalued and under-supported.
- Lack of support and public recognition of sport coaching.
- Many sporting environments see high coaching turnover.
- Lack of support undermines quality of coaching provision.
- Managing the needs of the diverse coaching continuum from full-time professional coach to volunteer coach.

Aside from lobbying efforts and strategies to increase public recognition of sport coaches in all roles – paid or volunteer – it seems imperative to implement strategies supporting volunteers. Given the fact that they do not hold specific contracts, agreements, specialized qualifications, specific training, and guidelines, volunteers are especially prone to feel under-valued, under-supported and to subsequently disengage from their volunteer coaching role. It seems imperative that specific programs, standards, and training opportunities are created to support volunteer coaches, specifically. As long as sporting environments still rely on a large number of volunteers to facilitate coaching environments, not providing these kinds of resources can lead to less opportunities for sport involvement, further exacerbating the trend to less active lifestyles, more sedentary behavior, and social disconnect in many societies worldwide. It seems that only with strong support for volunteer coaches, sustainable coaching policy development towards professionalization of sport coaching will be feasible.

## 11 PEAK Recommendation “Women in coaching”

PEAK Coaching Policy Framework Recommendation #8 highlights the importance to address gender inequalities that undoubtedly are still very prevalent in the often male-dominated sporting environments and organizations. It reads:

“Implement relevant, evidence-based national-level policy or programs to support women in coaching.”

While gender equality has essentially been attained when considering sport participation by athletes on the field (almost 50% of athletes competing at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games were female; PEAK framework, chapter 11) in many ways sport remains male dominated on multiple levels, lacking gender equality and gender equity. For example, while participation for women and girls has improved significantly, female professional athletes still experience a significant pay gap when it comes to sponsorship opportunities and prize money, especially. The pay gap can also be seen for many women coaches or when comparing payment of coaches of men’s to those of women’s teams.

A significant issue from a coaching policy perspective remains that many barriers for women to be appointed or hired in leadership positions in sporting environments or organizations persist. Against the backdrop of the global recognition of the importance of gender equality by United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #5<sup>3</sup> – “Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.” – addressing gender inequalities in sport becomes a critical aspect of advancing sport coaching policy as well.

The interviews with coaching associations conducted when compiling this handbook illustrate the need for additional action and activities supporting women in coaching. For example, representatives from the Portuguese Swimming Coaches Association (PSCA) confirmed that in their organization, and thus when considering the swimming coaches profession in Portugal, currently men significantly outnumber women. “Successfully implementing our current project Swimming@school, aimed at improving swimming literacy and water safety through a grassroots approach implemented in municipalities and their respective primary education school clusters, can ultimately increase the demand and working conditions for swimming coaches and trainers. Thus, women coaches can also benefit.” Facing multiple challenges when lobbying for and trying to implement coaching policy changes specific support for women coaches is often still not a priority.

The Hellenic Federation for Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA) when interviewed also acknowledged that coaching policy specifically focusing on support for women coaches is – for now – “a weak point for our organization”. The POPA president added: “Currently, our priority is to establish a solid foundation and framework for all coaches. Having many of our positions on coaching policy requirements implemented in the recently passed new Sports Bill<sup>4</sup> by the Greek government has been a huge step and success. With this primary focus on creating a solid foundation of coaching policy we feel that we are now in a position to shift our attention to activities for women in coaching.”

A Theory of Change model for “Women in Coaching” is proposed below.

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3 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

4 cf., Greek Government (2021)

## Theory of Change model “Women in Coaching”

### IF DURING EMERGING STAGE...

Sport organizations commit to basic intentions such as

- Documenting and acknowledging traditionally existing inequalities in sport coaching/leadership
- Recognizing the importance and need to implement gender equity policies
- Creating gender equity policies that provide clear goals and benchmarks to improve gender balance in coaching
- Adapting language and content used in sport organizations’ communication to reflect gender balance
- Promoting successful women coaches to serve as role models for future female coaches and to reduce gender stereotypes among boys and men

### AND DURING THE MATURE STAGE...

Sport organizations put into action

- specific, evidence-based, and monitored support programs for women coaches (e.g., education programs, mentorships, leadership internships, child support strategies)
- adapted hiring procedures that reduce gender bias in male dominated contexts (e.g., requirement to interview a minimum number of female candidates, privilege minority candidates in cases of equal qualifications)
- gender requirements and quotas for specific teams or events with both female and male competitors
- changes to work environments and the organizational culture to ensure they support women coaches (e.g., creating supportive, knowledge-sharing, risk-taking work environments that value adopting a growth mindset approach; providing protection from discrimination and abuse; adopting policies relating to pregnancy and childcare)

### THEN A HIGHLY EVOLVED COACHING SYSTEM IS CREATED:

Women in coaching are supported by relevant, evidence-based national-level policies or programs, that create

- a more diverse and balanced coaching workforce
- a larger and richer talent pool of coaches
- more choices and positive experiences for athletes
- more diverse leadership (which has been shown to result in improved corporate performance in business settings)

As described in the Theory of Change model above, change in coaching policy relating to women in coaching requires a step-by-step approach. First, organizations must acknowledge the need for change and commit to basic intentions and measures. Only with a shift from this emerging stage to a mature policy stage can real action and subsequent changes toward reduced gender inequities for women be expected. During the mature phase organizations implement more specific measures addressing the educational, developmental, and structural needs of women to increase their representative within their workforce. Even more challenging, however, are the necessary changes in policies related to the working environment. The ultimate challenge relates to the shift in workplace- and organizational culture required when striving for gender balance within an organization.

Seeing the lack of progress in creating opportunities and adapting working environments for women in coaching a concerted effort by multiple constituents underpinned by a strong policy foundation seems to be recommended. The positive effect that specific gender requirements and quotas in teams or events for both male and female athletes have had in recent years (PEAK framework, chapter 11) seems to suggest that adopting similar strategies in sporting environments where women are still underrepresented could help closing the gender gap for women in coaching.

## 12 PEAK Recommendation “Diversity in coaching”

The ninth recommendation proposed by the PEAK Coaching Policy Framework focuses on diversity in coaching:

“Implement relevant, evidence-based national-level policy or programs to support under-represented groups in coaching (e.g., race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, ability status, age, religious beliefs, disability, etc).”

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) is a topic that has been receiving increasing attention in sport and other policy fields. As such, it is also relevant when considering coaching policy for the 21st century. At the core, diversity in coaching reflects an organizational culture within sport clubs, associations, federations, confederations, or other entities that values, equity, diversity, and inclusion. For coaching policy, there is need to address D&I from multiple perspectives.

First, diversity and inclusion are important when considering the prevalence of dominant networks, knowledge, attitudes, norms, standards, and ideologies that have formed historically in the often male-dominant sporting arenas. Research is emerging that supports the notion of improved performance based on enhanced decision making in organizations actively promoting and fostering diversity and inclusion (e.g., Ohunakin et al., 2019). These D&I efforts would be reflected in a diverse setup of coaches, staff, administrators, educators, or volunteers throughout a sport organization.

A second aspect of D&I as it pertains to coaching and coaching policy is the need to focus on enabling and supporting coaches with respect for diversity and inclusion. Equally important, coaches need to foster and encourage equity, diversity, and inclusion within their teams and among their participants. Thus, strategies to be able to meet D&I requirements need to be considered when creating, revising, or updating coach education programs or continuing education opportunities. In today’s societies that are characterized by an increasing multicultural, ethnic mix throughout basically all aspects of day-to-day life, coaches that embrace the value and ideas of diversity and inclusion can act as (ethnically diverse) role models, which allows ethnically diverse participants to benefit. Having actual role models, they can relate to and encourage behavioral change that leads to improved sport participation.

As can be seen, diversity in coaching is a coaching policy field that is very complex and transcends multiple layers, including the multifaceted aspect of organizational sport culture.

For coaching associations interviewed when compiling this handbook, diversity of coaching was not a policy field that they were able to focus on so far. The Hellenic Federation for Sports Coaches and Trainers (POPA) acknowledged that coaching policy specifically focusing on diversity in coaching is – for now – “a weak point for our organization”. The POPA president stated: “Currently, we are establishing a solid foundation and framework for all coaches. Having many of our positions on coaching policy requirements implemented in the recently passed new Sports Bill<sup>5</sup> by the Greek government has been a huge step and success. With this primary focus on creating a solid foundation of coaching policy we feel that diversity in coaching can now become an aspect we start to focus on.”

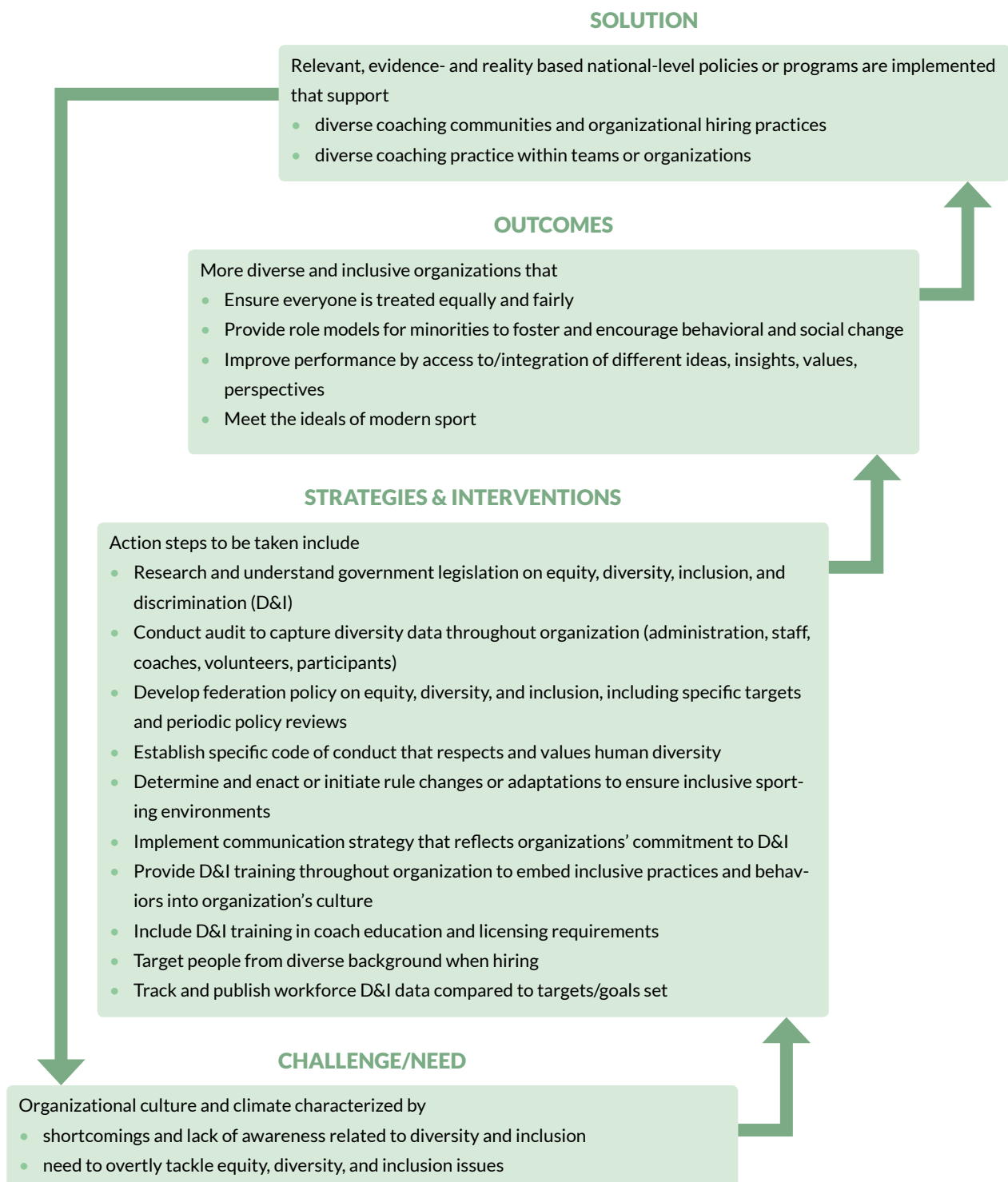
A Theory of Change model for “Diversity in coaching” is proposed below.

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5 cf., Greek Government (2021)



## Theory of Change model “Diversity in Coaching”



While diversity in coaching has not been a “hot topic” that coaching associations or sport organizations have addressed extensively in the past, modern sport embracing the ideal of diversity and inclusion while require future changes and efforts in this field of coaching policy.

Aside from the opportunities for more positive sporting experiences for all participants – regardless of differences in ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, education, and religion – that coaches, coach associations and sport organizations should embrace, several factors underpin the importance of highly evolved D&I coaching policies. Organizations that meet D&I challenges will stand a chance to benefit

from improved performance. Finally, increasing mobility and migration in our fast-changing world we live in today, lead to multicultural, increasingly ethnically mixed populations. These changes also affect sport clubs and organizations as they can only sustain or grow their membership base if they successfully understand, embrace, and tackle diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in their sport context.

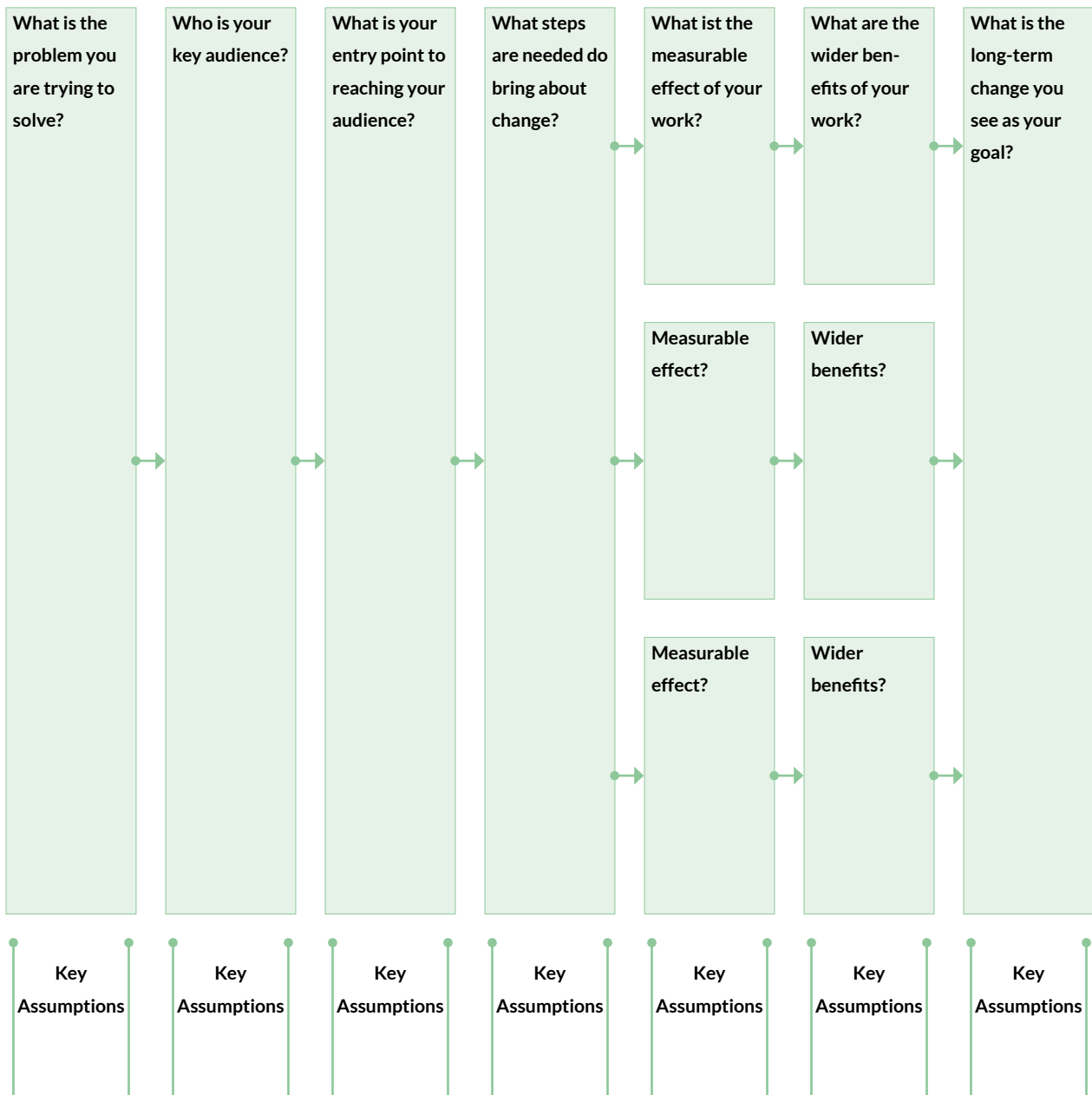
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## 14 Appendices

## 14.1 Appendix 1: Worksheet “Theory of Change”



Worksheet by “Development Impact & You” (Accessed at <https://diytoolkit.org/tools/theory-of-change/>)

## 14.2 Appendix 2: Interview Guide Coaching Associations

### Interview Guide

#### The Federation (Organization/Association)

- What is the name, structure, goal of federation (organization/association)?

#### The Interviewee

- What is the position within the organization/association?
- What are his/her responsibilities?
- What is the role in the current coaching policy project?
- What is his/her personal (coaching) background?

#### The coaching policy project

- What is the main goal of the project?
- What are the benefits from the organization's perspective?
- What is the impact on coaches/coaching policy?
- How was it initiated?
  - Top Down or Bottom Up?
- Who are the main drivers?
- What are the main obstacles?
- What is the timeframe?
- Where are you now? What have you achieved, what still has to be resolved?

#### The stakeholders involved

- Who is the organization working with?
- Who is coordinating work of the stakeholders?
- Who are the driving forces?
- Who are slowing things down?

#### The lessons learned

- What are things that you have learned about policy making for coaching?
- What are best practice examples – that could help other projects?
- Where are obstacles – that other projects could avoid, prepare for?

#### The PEAK recommendations

- How does your project relate to the PEAK areas for coaching policy?
  - Definition of Coaching
  - Responsible Organization(s)
  - Coaches' Association
  - Coach Registry and Research
  - Coach Education and NQF Alignment
  - Safe Sport
  - Coach Licensing
  - Support for Coaches
  - Women in Coaching
  - Diversity in Coaching

#### Conclusion

- Anything that comes to mind we haven't discussed so far?
- Anything policy makers, stakeholders need to hear as far as advancing coaching policy?

## 15 Partners

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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>