

Good Practice Example: Women Taking Responsibility in Coaching – Team Sports Project Using Mentoring as a Tool in Finland 2014–2018

Background

In Finland, some team sports, together with the Finnish Coaches Association as a coordinator, have started a coaching project, financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The aim of the project is to get more female coaches coaching, and it uses mentoring as a tool.

Objectives of the project

- To increase the number of female coaches
- To try to keep all women in sport (eg after their career as an active athlete)
- To try to find a suitable role for each woman in sport.

Sport federations as partners

The project has the following sports involved as partners: football, floorball, American football, disability team sports, handball, ice hockey, ringette, Finnish baseball and basketball (situation in September 2015). Different sports have joined the project at different times, and it is still open for more sports to join.

Other partners

In addition to the sport federations, the project has the following stakeholders as partners: Finnish Coaches Association (responsible for coordination), Finnish Professional Coaches Association, Finnish Sports Confederation, Ministry of Education and Culture (funding and monitoring).

Project phases and activities

The project has different phases, and each federation follows its own schedule according to the development in their sport.

Phase 1: Empowering, engaging and networking

Objectives

- To engage former (top) female athletes to continue within their sport
- To point out the knowledge they already have
- To show they can still give a lot to sport as coaches.

Activities

a) Specific meetings for each sport: Every sport has their own meetings (1–3), where they invite former and active female athletes and other women who have an interest in coaching. Also, some men who coach women have been present in the meetings.

b) National and regional meetings: Besides the meetings involving people only from one sport, the project has organised meetings for coaches and potential coaches from different sports, so mixing people from different disciplines, in different cities around Finland.

Phase 2: Educating and mentoring

- a) Project has supported women to take part in coaching education and organised women-only education.
- b) Project has educated persons to act as mentors for female coaches in different sports.
- c) Some sports have already started mentoring groups.

Project status in September 2015: Phase 1 is still ongoing in some sports, as the sports have entered into the project at different times. National and regional meetings are still taking place. Some sports (eg football) are already using mentoring as a tool to support female coaches. Some sports have also had their own actions to get more women into decision-making roles and other roles within the sport.

Example of mentoring process: The Football Association of Finland

The project has educated one female mentor for football, who will support and mentor five female football coaches. The mentor has a supporting team of other coaches, trainers and other staff from the Football Association of Finland to assist her as a mentor. The five mentees were selected through an application process. The mentoring activities are planned to take place during one year.

All five coaches to be mentored have background as a top level player and they are in different phases of their coaching career: from a beginner to a head coach of a Finnish league team.

Part of the mentoring process is to create an individual development plan for each coach, to help them to find their own pathway in coaching.

The one-year mentoring programme includes three meetings as a whole group in 2015. These are combined with some important games or events around female football in Finland:

- First meeting took place on the occasion of the Finnish women's national team playing against Sweden in Finland in February 2015.
- Second meeting was combined with the UEFA Study Group Scheme + UEFA Women Under-16 development tournament in Finland in May 2015.
- Third meeting was organised during the Women Under-19 first qualification round in Finland in September 2015.

In addition, the programme includes coach education (Football Association courses, seminars), three visits in every coach's home environment to support the everyday life as a coach. Furthermore, all five coaches are involved in the Football Association's activities during 2015 and they can practise coaching (eg in the regional activities, talent group camps and youth national team camps). During these activities, the five mentees have time to discuss their personal development as a coach.