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MAternity on the bench: proMoting equAlity for women in sports

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Executive Summary

This report presents an analysis of current best practices related to gender equality, pregnancy, motherhood, and return to sport across the MAMA project partner countries (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Portugal, Serbia, and Spain), complemented by additional examples from England and Poland. Although the maturity and scope of existing initiatives vary considerably, the analysis reveals a common trend across Europe: motherhood is increasingly being recognised as an important dimension of athlete welfare and gender equality rather than as an individual challenge to be managed solely by women athletes.

Several cross-country findings emerge from the analysis.

First, gender equality frameworks are generally more advanced than maternity-specific measures. Most countries have introduced policies and initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation, leadership, and inclusion in sport, while dedicated provisions addressing pregnancy, childbirth, and return to sport remain fragmented and unevenly developed.

Second, support systems are gradually evolving from awareness-raising initiatives towards more structural and rights-based approaches. Countries such as Cyprus and Spain demonstrate progress in integrating gender equality into governance structures, funding mechanisms, and policy frameworks, whereas in other contexts support remains largely dependent on symbolic recognition and isolated initiatives.

Third, effective practices consistently rely on collaboration between the sport, health, education, and social sectors. Multidisciplinary approaches involving sport organisations, healthcare providers, educational institutions, public authorities, and civil society actors appear essential for addressing the physical, psychological, social, and organisational dimensions of athlete motherhood.

Fourth, many successful initiatives focus on flexibility and community support. Peer networks, mother-and-child activities, flexible training arrangements, childcare solutions, and supportive environments help reduce barriers and facilitate continued participation in sport before and after childbirth.

The analysis also highlights the growing importance of research and evidence generation. Surveys and studies conducted in several countries have provided valuable insights into the experiences of parent-athletes and have created a stronger foundation for evidence-based policy development.

At the same time, institutional support remains fragmented in many sport systems. In several countries, the experiences of athlete-mothers still depend largely on individual clubs, federations, or isolated programmes rather than on comprehensive national frameworks and formally protected rights.

Emerging examples, particularly from professional football and other high-performance environments, indicate that contractual protection and labour rights are becoming increasingly important. Maternity provisions, employment security, and recognition of motherhood as an athlete rights issue represent significant steps towards making elite sport careers more compatible with family life.

Finally, the analysis demonstrates that cultural change is as important as policy reform. Many initiatives seek to challenge persistent stereotypes portraying motherhood and elite sport as incompatible. Increasing the visibility of athlete-mothers, promoting positive role models, and recognising parenthood as a natural part of athletic careers contribute to more inclusive and supportive sporting cultures.

The findings suggest that Europe is moving towards more maternity-friendly sporting environments, although substantial differences remain between countries and sport systems. The identified best practices demonstrate that meaningful progress requires a combination of policy development, organisational commitment, multidisciplinary support, education, research, and cultural change. Together, these examples provide valuable guidance for developing sustainable and transferable models that enable women athletes to pursue sporting careers without having to choose between elite performance and motherhood.

1. Overview

The MAMA project (*Maternity on the Bench: proMoting equAlity for Women in Sports*) aims to promote gender equality in sport by addressing the challenges faced by women athletes during pregnancy, motherhood, and their return to sport. Despite growing recognition of women's rights and equal opportunities in sport, many athletes continue to encounter structural barriers, insufficient institutional support, and persistent stereotypes that portray motherhood and elite sport participation as incompatible.

This report presents a collection of best practices that have successfully addressed these challenges through policies, programmes, services, educational initiatives, advocacy actions, and organisational measures. The selected examples demonstrate different approaches to supporting women athletes before, during, and after pregnancy, while also contributing to broader objectives of gender equality, inclusion, and athlete welfare.

The best practices included in this report originate from the countries represented within the MAMA project partnership from Greece, Cyprus, Belgium, Portugal, Finland, Austria, Serbia, and Spain. To complement the partnership perspectives and provide additional insight into innovative approaches, two additional best practice from England and Poland has also been included.

The examples presented illustrate how sports federations, clubs, Olympic committees, universities, healthcare providers, public authorities, and civil society organisations can work together to create maternity-friendly sporting environments. Collectively, they provide valuable lessons and practical inspiration for stakeholders seeking to improve support systems for athlete mothers and strengthen gender equality within sport.

2. Methodology

The identification and selection of best practices were conducted in accordance with the objectives and guidelines of the MAMA project. The process was based primarily on desk research, including the review of existing projects, programmes, policy documents, strategies, research publications, and legal frameworks related to gender equality, maternity, and women's participation in sport.

Partners examined initiatives at European, national, regional, and local levels, drawing on examples developed by sports federations, Olympic committees, sports clubs, universities, research institutions, public authorities, and civil society organisations. Particular attention was given to initiatives that demonstrated tangible and measurable impact, sustainability beyond the project lifetime, and the potential for transferability and replication in different sporting and organisational contexts.

The selection process prioritised practices that contributed to structural or policy-level change, strengthened support mechanisms for pregnant and post-partum athletes, promoted equal opportunities, challenged gender stereotypes, and improved the protection of athletes' rights. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence were considered, including documented outcomes, policy changes, institutional reforms, stakeholder engagement, and long-term benefits for women athletes.

To ensure consistency and comparability, each identified practice was documented using a common reporting template. The analysis focused not only on the objectives and activities of each initiative, but also on its outcomes, sustainability, innovation, relevance to the MAMA project objectives, and potential for adaptation in other national and organisational settings.

The resulting collection of best practices is intended to support knowledge exchange, policy development, and the dissemination of effective approaches that contribute to more inclusive, equitable, and maternity-friendly sporting environments across Europe.

3. Context

Across the MAMA project partner countries gender equality is recognised as a fundamental principle within national legal systems and public policies. As members of the European Union (with the exception of Serbia, which is aligning its legislation with European standards through the accession process), these countries operate within a broader framework of European policies promoting equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion, and the protection of women's rights. European institutions have increasingly emphasised the importance of gender equality in sport, encouraging Member States and sport organisations to integrate gender-sensitive approaches into legislation, policies, governance structures, education, and athlete support systems.

The governance of sport in the participating countries typically involves a close interaction between government authorities, educational institutions, and sport organisations. Ministries responsible for sport, education, health, social affairs, and gender equality often share responsibilities related to athlete welfare and participation. Educational institutions play an important role through physical education, coach education, research, and the development of evidence-based practices, while national sport federations, Olympic committees, and clubs are responsible for implementing policies and providing direct support to athletes. This multi-sectoral approach is increasingly recognised as essential for addressing complex issues such as maternity, athlete wellbeing, dual careers, and gender equality in sport.

Although all partner countries have established legal protections against gender discrimination in employment and public life, specific provisions addressing pregnancy and motherhood in elite sport remain relatively limited. In most cases, maternity rights are protected through general labour legislation, social protection systems, and gender equality laws rather than through sport-specific regulations. As a result, the experiences of athlete mothers often depend on the policies and practices adopted by individual sport federations, clubs, funding bodies, and governing organisations.

Recent developments at European level have encouraged greater attention to gender equality in sport governance, participation, leadership, coaching, media representation, and the prevention of gender-based violence (European Commission, 2020; European Commission, 2022). European policy documents increasingly call on Member States and

sport organisations to remove structural barriers that limit women's participation in sport and to create conditions that enable female athletes to reconcile sporting careers with family life (Council of the European Union, 2021).

Within this evolving policy landscape, several countries and sport organisations have begun introducing more targeted measures to support pregnant and post-partum athletes. These include maternity policies, athlete welfare frameworks, return-to-sport programmes, safeguarding mechanisms, and educational initiatives aimed at coaches, medical professionals, and sport administrators. Particularly influential examples have emerged from the United Kingdom, where national sport bodies have developed dedicated guidance and support mechanisms for pregnant elite athletes and athlete mothers.

Despite important progress, significant challenges remain across Europe. Research and policy reviews continue to identify gaps in leadership representation, decision-making structures, access to resources, and the availability of formal maternity protections for athletes (Norman, 2014; Culvin et al., 2021; Nolte et al., 2025). Consequently, the development and dissemination of effective practices remains essential for supporting evidence-based policy development and fostering more inclusive, equitable, and maternity-friendly sporting environments.

The best practices presented in this report should therefore be understood within a broader context of ongoing policy development and institutional change. Together, they illustrate how governments, educational institutions, sport organisations, and civil society actors can collaborate to strengthen support systems for women athletes and promote a sporting culture in which motherhood is recognised not as a barrier to participation, but as a natural part of many athletes' lives and careers.

4. Results

4.1. Austria

The analysis identified a relatively strong institutional framework supporting gender equality and work-life balance in sport. Existing initiatives focus on improving conditions for women athletes through education, policy development, and awareness-raising activities. Particular attention has been given to creating more inclusive sport environments and promoting equal opportunities in coaching, leadership, and athlete development pathways.

While maternity-specific measures remain limited, the broader policy environment provides favorable conditions for combining elite sport and family life. Existing practices contribute to greater recognition of athletes' dual careers and the need for organizational support during major life transitions, including parenthood.

Recommendations

- Develop sport-specific maternity protection policies and return-to-sport protocols.
- Strengthen cooperation between sport organizations and healthcare professionals.
- Introduce childcare support mechanisms during training and competition periods.
- Improve monitoring of athlete experiences related to pregnancy and parenthood.
- Expand research on athlete motherhood and career sustainability.

4.2. Belgium

Belgian initiatives demonstrate a holistic approach to supporting women through pregnancy and motherhood in physically demanding environments. Identified practices focus on maintaining physical activity during pregnancy, supporting women’s wellbeing, and facilitating continued participation in sport and exercise after childbirth.

The initiatives contribute to greater awareness of the importance of pregnancy-specific support services and demonstrate the value of cooperation between sport and health sectors. They also help challenge stereotypes regarding women’s physical capabilities during pregnancy and motherhood.

Recommendations

- Expand successful local programmes into national support models for athlete-mothers.

- Develop sport-specific guidance for elite and high-performance athletes.
- Establish structured return-to-sport pathways supported by multidisciplinary teams.
- Increase availability of childcare and family support services.
- Strengthen dissemination of good practices across sport organizations.

4.3. Cyprus

Cyprus demonstrates one of the most advanced approaches among partner countries. Research identified developments at policy, organizational, and athlete-rights levels.

At the policy level, gender equality has been increasingly integrated into sport governance, funding mechanisms, and strategic planning. At the organizational level, initiatives focus on increasing women's participation in leadership, coaching, and decision-making positions while reducing structural barriers and discrimination.

The most significant progress relates to athlete rights, where maternity protection standards have begun to emerge. These measures include protection of athletes during pregnancy, promotion of contractual security, improved recognition of motherhood as a labour rights issue, and efforts to align national practices with international standards.

Overall, the initiatives contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for women pursuing long-term sporting careers.

Recommendations

- Extend existing maternity protections across all sports.
- Develop comprehensive national guidelines for pregnancy and return to sport.
- Establish monitoring mechanisms to evaluate implementation and outcomes.
- Increase availability of medical, psychological, and social support services.
- Strengthen cooperation between athlete associations, federations, and public authorities.

4.4. Finland

Finland benefits from a strong social protection system that provides extensive family-related benefits applicable to athletes. Existing legislation offers important protections against discrimination and supports parental leave arrangements, contributing to greater security for athlete-parents.

Research initiatives have also generated valuable evidence on the challenges faced by parent-athletes. Findings indicate that balancing elite sport, employment, and family responsibilities remains difficult despite favorable social policies. Athletes emphasized the importance of support networks, flexible training arrangements, and continued engagement with clubs during periods of absence.

Emerging initiatives are also focusing on the development of formal pregnancy and return-to-performance guidelines, reflecting growing recognition of athlete motherhood within sport organizations.

Recommendations

- Translate national family policies into sport-specific support frameworks.
- Develop standardized return-to-sport guidelines across sports.
- Encourage clubs to provide flexible training schedules and individualized support plans.
- Improve childcare support during training and competitions.
- Continue research on athlete-parent experiences and evidence-based interventions.

4.5. Greece

The analysis reveals that support for athlete-mothers in Greece remains largely developmental. Existing initiatives primarily focus on awareness raising, visibility, recognition, and promotion of gender equality in sport governance.

Positive developments include increased recognition of athlete-parents, educational activities addressing gender equality, and efforts to increase women's representation in decision-making structures. These initiatives contribute to changing perceptions of motherhood in sport and promote more inclusive organizational cultures.

However, the absence of formal maternity protection mechanisms, limited support services, and the predominance of amateur and semi-professional athlete status continue to present significant barriers.

Recommendations

- Introduce formal maternity protection standards within sport organizations.
- Develop national return-to-sport guidelines and support services.

- Increase financial support mechanisms for athlete-mothers.
- Strengthen education for coaches and administrators regarding pregnancy and motherhood.
- Promote research and evidence-based policy development.

4.6. Portugal

The identified initiatives in Portugal focus primarily on promoting gender equality, increasing women's participation in sport, and strengthening institutional capacity to address barriers affecting women athletes.

Activities include awareness campaigns, educational programmes, policy development, and promotion of inclusive sport environments. These initiatives contribute to reducing stereotypes, increasing visibility of women in sport, and fostering organizational commitment to equality.

Although maternity-specific measures remain limited, the broader gender equality framework creates favorable conditions for future development of targeted support for athlete-mothers.

Recommendations

- Develop dedicated maternity and parenthood policies within sport organizations.
- Introduce formal guidance for pregnancy and postpartum return to sport.
- Strengthen collaboration between sport, health, and social support sectors.
- Increase visibility of athlete-mother role models.
- Support research focused on motherhood and elite sport participation.

4.7. Serbia

The Serbian sport system currently provides limited and fragmented support for athlete-mothers. The legal status of athletes varies considerably depending on contractual arrangements, resulting in unequal access to maternity-related rights and protections.

While a mechanism exists allowing elite female athletes to retain scholarship support during pregnancy, no comprehensive national framework addresses pregnancy, childbirth, and return to sport. The absence of dedicated policies, structured support programmes, and research initiatives highlights a significant gap in the sport system.

Motherhood is generally addressed through isolated examples of successful athlete returns rather than through institutionalized support structures. As a result, pregnancy and parenthood continue to represent significant challenges to career continuity for many female athletes.

Recommendations

- Develop a national maternity policy for sport.
- Introduce maternity protection clauses in athlete contracts.
- Establish evidence-based return-to-sport guidelines.
- Expand financial support beyond elite athlete scholarship programmes.
- Develop childcare support services and family-friendly sport environments.
- Promote research and data collection on athlete motherhood.
- Increase awareness among clubs, coaches, and federations regarding athlete-mother needs.

4.8. Spain

Spain has demonstrated significant progress in integrating gender equality principles into sport governance and athlete support systems. Existing initiatives focus on strengthening women's participation, improving institutional responses to gender-related barriers, and increasing awareness of challenges affecting women athletes.

Several measures contribute to improving conditions for women balancing sporting careers and family responsibilities. These include policy reforms, educational activities, advocacy efforts, and greater recognition of women's specific needs within high-performance sport environments.

The Spanish experience illustrates the importance of combining policy development, institutional commitment, and awareness-raising activities to promote more inclusive sporting environments.

Recommendations

- Continue strengthening maternity-specific provisions within sport policies.
- Expand practical support services for athlete-mothers.
- Develop standardized return-to-performance frameworks.

- Improve access to multidisciplinary support teams.
- Promote exchange of good practices with other European sport systems.

5. Best practices

5.1. Austria

MAMA National and European best practices	
Name:	Catch'n Serve Ball – Sport for Mothers on the Move
When:	2015 – present
Where:	Nationwide in Austria and in cooperation with other countries in Europe via the international association ICSBF
Who:	Catch'n Serve Ball Austria – Sports Federation
Objectives:	To promote Catch'n Serve Ball in Austria and Europe. The support and empowerment of mothers, as well as integration and inclusion regardless of social status, are fundamental objectives. Specific objectives: - Encouraging mothers to take up the sport - To enable former elite female athletes to return to sport after motherhood - To reach out to women who tend to have limited access to sport - To reverse the stereotype: the mother is the star. - To serve as a role model within the family, particularly for girls (daughters) - Increasing the proportion of women as athletes, coaches and decision-makers (officials) - Empowerment of women - Raising the visibility of mothers in sport
Project participants:	Austrian Federal Ministry of Sport, Sport Austria, ASKÖ, Sportunion, ASVÖ, sports federations such as the Austrian Volleyball Federation, sports clubs, StoP (Association for the Prevention of Domestic Violence), social institutions such as e.g. Caritas and Diakonie, Vienna Chamber of Labour, Company Sports Association, Vienna Education Authority, International Catch'n Serve Ball Sports Federation (ICSBF), CSIT – International Workers and Amateurs in Sports Confederation
Beneficiaries:	- Individuals: mothers, women over 30 without children, women who face significant barriers to accessing sport (single mothers, mothers with a history of migration or displacement, women with disabilities and severely overweight women, mothers facing multiple challenges, former elite female athletes - Numerous sports organisations and clubs with their members - Social institutions
Description:	As women are under-represented in sport at all levels, the competition in Austria and internationally is currently reserved for mothers (of all ages) and

	women over 30 – without children. Mothers are actively encouraged to take on roles as coaches, referees and officials. The men help with childcare, organising events and acting as referees. Motto: "Play, catch, connect for equality in sport!" Key requirements are: 1. low barriers to entry (Catch'n Serve can be explained and played in 5 minutes and is immediately fun) 2. Providing the ideal framework for participation The game is similar to volleyball; the ball is caught and thrown, making it easy to get started – even without any previous sporting experience. Fun and fair play are the main priorities. This applies to competitive sport as well. The same facilities (gym, pitch, ball, beach volleyball court) can be used as for volleyball. 'Serve' means not only serving the ball and continuing play, but also supporting the groups needed to achieve equality in sport. The Catch'n Serve Ball Austria sports federation provides the framework for competitions such as regional leagues, tournaments and national championships. In addition, there is the opportunity to take part in international tournaments, right up to world championships Measures: - Actively approaching mothers and encouraging them to take part during major sporting events, hands-on activities, try-out sessions, etc. - Creating the necessary conditions and framework, such as childcare during training sessions, training courses and competitions, and suitable times for weekly training sessions - Low-threshold access and financial support for women from disadvantaged backgrounds - A safe environment. E.g. a guarantee that no men are present during training sessions with Muslim women - Gender-sensitive training for coaches, referees and officials - More than 85% female decision-makers on the boards of sports organisations - Dedicated departments for equality and violence prevention on the executive board - Amendment of statutes and drafting of a code of ethics in the interests of equality, the advancement of women and human rights
Results achieved:	Results by target indicators in Austria, interim report for the Austrian Ministry of Sport, October 2025: - Around 40,000 people were reached through events, projects and initiatives - 39 weekly training sessions took place - Professionalisation of competition operations, including the database and website - 483 people were registered in the database

	- At least the same number of people played regularly in informal groups known to the federation - Furthermore, Catch'n Serve has now become so well-known that – much like volleyball – it is played for fun on beach volleyball courts, in fields, in school playgrounds - To date, 288 people have been trained as coaches, multipliers and referees - Through the multipliers, at least 2,500 people play Catch'n Serve regularly - A competition structure for 5 leagues has been established - Regular training sessions are held in all federal states of Austria - Empowering women: Female participants in the courses are continuously trained and educated to become coaches. The aim is to empower them – including in other areas of life – and to open up new opportunities for them. Women with a history of displacement or migration, as well as those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, are regularly supported in their training to become coaches. They are encouraged to take part in the training programmes, receive financial support, and learn from experienced trainers during weekly sessions in a 'buddy relationship', whilst also leading their own courses. Over 30 women took part. - The proportion of women on training courses was over 85%. - The proportion of female decision-makers was over 85% within the association and over 85% in the clubs.
Gender equality and inclusion:	Mothers still tend to be the main organisers of their children's and husbands' leisure activities. Due to the multiple demands placed on them, they have little time left to do things for themselves. This is made possible by creating the necessary framework conditions. - Focus, values and target group are clearly aimed to mothers - Competitive sport is reserved for mothers/women - The promotion of gender equality, equal opportunities and human rights, as well as the combating of gender stereotypes, discrimination and structural barriers, is put into practice both 'on paper' (statutes, code of ethics for all members, advertising…) and in the practical implementation of training sessions, events and education.
***Transferability and scalability:**	The concept and measures are based on more than 10 years of practical experience. The key pillars for implementation and transmission are: 1. Methods for raising awareness at major events, amongst interested groups, sports federations and clubs through exhibition matches, interactive stations and try out sessions 2. Well-established training modules as part of two-day seminars covering theory and practice for: - Coaches - Referees - Influencers All modules are held regularly in Austria, mostly in cooperation with sports training and education centres.

	All modules have been adapted for the international federation and have already been delivered in several European countries. There is a desire to expand the programme to other European countries.
Website:	https://www.catchandserve-ball.at/ and https://www.catchandserve-ball.com

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Catch'n Serve Ball – Sport for Mums on the Move
When:	2000 - present
Where:	Local sports club: WSV Catch'n Serve-Ball Liezen, AUSTRIA (Local Liga 1 Süd and nationwide in Austria and in cooperation with other countries in Europe via the international association CSIP)
Who:	WSV GrimmingCatchers Liezen - WSV Catch'n Serve Ball Liezen
Objectives:	To promote Catch'n Serve Ball in local unions, Austria and Europe. The support and empowerment of mothers, as well as integration and inclusion regardless of social status, are fundamental objectives. Specific objectives: - Encouraging mothers to take up the sport - To enable former elite female athletes to return to sport after motherhood - To reach out to women who tend to have limited access to sport - To reverse the stereotype: the mother is the star. - To serve as a role model within the family, particularly for girls (daughters) - Increasing the proportion of women as athletes, coaches and decision-makers (officials) - Empowerment of women Raising the profile of mothers in sport
Stakeholders of the project:	Austrian Catch'n Serve Ball Federation, International Catch'n Serve Ball Sports Federation (ICSBF), CSIT – International Workers and Amateurs in Sports Confederation
Beneficiaries:	- Approx. 25 Individuals (players in the Austrian league): mothers, women over 30 without children, women who face significant barriers to accessing sport (single mothers, mothers with a history of migration or displacement, women with disabilities and severely overweight women, mothers facing multiple challenges - The WSV Liezen sport organisation - Several sponsors (entrepreneur, restaurants, car dealerships, communities...)
Description:	Association for mothers (of all ages) and women over 30 – without children. Mothers are actively encouraged to take on roles as coaches and referees. The men help with childcare, organising events and acting as referees.

	Motto: "Play, catch, connect for equality in sport!" Key requirements are: 1. Catch'n Serve can be explained and played in 5 minutes and is immediately fun. 2. the creation of conditions that encourage participation The game is like volleyball; the ball is caught and thrown, making it easy to get started. Fun and fair play are the main priorities. The WSV Catch'n Serve-Ball Liezen association provides the framework for competitions for the local league SÜD 1, local tournaments. In addition, there is the opportunity to take part in international tournaments, right up to world championships with support of the Austrian Federation for Catch'n Serve-Ball. Measures: - Actively approaching and encouraging mothers to take part in major sporting events. - Creating the necessary conditions, such as suitable times for weekly training sessions, etc. - Low-threshold access and financial support for women from disadvantaged backgrounds - Gender-sensitive training for coaches, referees and officials - Amendment of statutes and drafting of a code of ethics in the interests of equality, the advancement of women and human rights
Results achieved:	- 2000 Course announcement in Liezen - Founding of a local association 2025 - 1 or 2 weekly trainings - Founding of a trainer team - Purchase of own equipment (official Catch'n Serve Ball balls, nets, league jerseys) through sponsoring - Public relations (local newspapers, social media, local radio,…) - Admission of the Austrian league SÜD 1 of the Austrian Catch'n Serve-Ball federation - Admission to the Austrian league 2025 - Registration of approx. 25 players - Participation in the CSIT Championship 2026 in Palujahdi Finland - Referee training 2026 with support of the Austrian Catch'n Serve-Ball Federation
Gender equality and inclusion:	Mothers still are the main organisers of their children's and husbands' leisure activities. They have little time left to do things for themselves. This is made possible by creating the necessary framework conditions. - Focus, values and target group are clearly aimed at mothers - Competitive sport is reserved for mothers/women The promotion of gender equality, equal opportunities and human rights is put into practice (training sessions, events and courses)
***Transferability and scalability:**	- Mothers in Austria and several other countries must take the same responsibilities and fulfil the same tasks. They are struggling with the same problems. Catch'n Serve-Ball is a great opportunity for mothers to create an island among other women with the same need for teamsports and personal success. Surrounded by fun and fairness.

	- - Women have the possibility to take part in competitions with methods for raising awareness at major events, amongst interested groups, sports federations and clubs through exhibition matches, interactive stations and taster sessions. - Mothers have the possibility to get Coaches, Referees and/or Influencers All this points and many more can be reached through the support of sports clubs and are independent of nationalities.
Website:	www.wsv-liezen.at (Website for WSV GrimmingCatchers Liezen is under construction, email: WSVLiezen.catchandserve-ball@gmx.at) Liga 1 SÜD on www.catchandserve-ball.at

5.2. Belgium

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Fam Lille – Prenatal and Postnatal Movement & Recovery Programme
When:	Ongoing programme (implemented in recent years and currently active)
Where:	Lille, Belgium
Who:	Praktijk Fam Lille – multidisciplinary maternal care and wellbeing practice specialised in pregnancy, postpartum recovery, physiotherapy, and movement activities for women and mothers.
Objectives:	The programme aims to support women's physical and mental wellbeing during pregnancy and after childbirth through adapted physical activity, recovery support, and inclusive group-based approaches. Specific objectives include: • Encouraging safe physical activity during pregnancy; • Supporting women's recovery and return to movement after childbirth; • Improving maternal wellbeing and body awareness; • Reducing barriers linked to motherhood and participation in physical activity; • Creating supportive and inclusive environments for mothers.
Stakeholders of the project:	- Praktijk Fam Lille professionals; - Physiotherapists specialised in women's health and pelvic floor rehabilitation; - Prenatal and postnatal movement instructors; - Pregnant women and mothers participating in the programme; - Local maternal wellbeing and healthcare networks.
Beneficiaries:	- Pregnant women; - Mothers in the postpartum period; - Women returning to physical activity after childbirth.

Description:	Fam Lille offers a multidisciplinary programme focused on prenatal and postnatal wellbeing, combining physical activity, physiotherapy, recovery, and community support for mothers. The programme includes: • Prenatal yoga and movement sessions; • Postnatal recovery and fitness classes; • Pelvic floor rehabilitation support; • Mother-and-baby workouts; • Birth preparation sessions; • Small-group activities promoting peer support and social connection. The methodology is based on safe and progressive movement adapted to women's needs during pregnancy and after childbirth. Activities are guided by specialised professionals and combine physical recovery with emotional wellbeing and inclusion.
Results achieved:	The programme contributed to: • Increased participation of women in physical activity during and after pregnancy; • Improved awareness of maternal health and recovery; • Enhanced confidence and wellbeing among participants; • Reduction of social isolation through group-based activities; • Positive participant feedback regarding accessibility, support, and inclusiveness of the programme. The initiative also helped increase awareness about the importance of adapted physical activity for mothers and postpartum recovery.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The practice promotes gender equality by addressing barriers that often limit women's participation in physical activity and sport during pregnancy and motherhood. In particular, the programme: • Provides safe and inclusive environments specifically adapted to women's needs; • Supports women balancing motherhood and active lifestyles; • Encourages equal access to movement and wellbeing opportunities; • Challenges stereotypes suggesting that pregnancy and motherhood prevent women from remaining active; • Promotes women's empowerment, confidence, and wellbeing. By addressing physical, emotional, and social barriers related to motherhood, the programme contributes to more inclusive opportunities for women in physical activity and sport-related environments.
***Transferability and scalability:**	The programme has strong transferability potential because it is based on multidisciplinary and community-oriented methodologies that can be replicated in physiotherapy practices, sport centres, community organisations, and maternal wellbeing services. The approach can be adapted at local, national, and European level through: • Training of specialised professionals; • Partnerships between healthcare and sport sectors; • Group-based and accessible programme delivery models. The initiative demonstrates how integrated maternal wellbeing and movement programmes can support women's continued participation in active lifestyles during and after motherhood.
Website:	**https://www.famlille.be/groepslessen**

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	MAMSSS – Maternal Movement and Wellbeing Programme
When:	2021 – ongoing
Where:	Belgium (mainly Flanders region)
Who:	MAMSSS Belgium – maternal wellbeing and movement initiative supporting women during pregnancy and postpartum through physical activity, education, and community support.
Objectives:	The programme aims to support women's wellbeing and participation in physical activity during pregnancy and after childbirth by creating inclusive, safe, and supportive environments adapted to motherhood. Specific objectives include: • Promoting healthy and active lifestyles for mothers; • Supporting women's physical recovery after pregnancy; • Encouraging safe movement and exercise during and after pregnancy; • Reducing isolation and barriers linked to motherhood; • Raising awareness about maternal wellbeing and women's health.
Stakeholders of the project:	- MAMSSS trainers and maternal wellbeing professionals; - Women's health specialists and physiotherapists; - Local wellness and sport actors; - Mothers participating in the programme; - Community support networks and families.
Beneficiaries:	• Pregnant women; • Mothers in the postpartum period; • Women returning to physical activity after childbirth.
Description:	MAMSSS provides programmes and activities focused on maternal wellbeing, movement, and recovery during pregnancy and after childbirth. The initiative combines physical activity with education, emotional support, and community-building approaches. Activities include: • Adapted movement and fitness sessions for pregnant and postpartum women; • Guidance on safe physical activity and body recovery; • Group sessions encouraging peer support and social connection; • Educational content related to maternal wellbeing and women's health; • Community-oriented activities creating inclusive environments for mothers.
Results achieved:	- Increased participation of mothers in physical activity and wellbeing programmes; - Improved awareness regarding maternal health and movement; - Enhanced social support and reduction of isolation among participants; - Positive feedback from women regarding confidence, wellbeing, and accessibility of the programme;

	- Greater visibility of the importance of supporting mothers in active lifestyles and sport participation.
Gender equality and inclusion:	- Creates safe and inclusive environments specifically adapted to women's needs; - Supports women balancing motherhood and active lifestyles; - Encourages equal opportunities for participation in physical activity; - Challenges stereotypes that motherhood limits women's engagement in sport and movement; - Promotes women's wellbeing, empowerment, and social inclusion.
***Transferability and scalability:**	The practice has strong transferability potential because it is based on adaptable community-oriented methodologies that can be implemented in sport centres, wellness organisations, community groups, and healthcare-related settings. The model can be replicated at local, national, and European level through: • Training of specialised maternal wellbeing professionals; • Partnerships between health and sport sectors; • Community-based delivery approaches adapted to local contexts.
Website:	**https://www.mamsss.be**

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	**Mums en Bubs – Workout for You and Your Baby**
When:	The project has been implemented since **2018** and appears to be ongoing.
Where:	Belgium – mainly in several cities including: • Gent • Brugge • Lokeren • Zele • Zwijnaarde • Aartselaar • Zelzate • Londerzeel • Zomergem
Who:	**Mums en Bubs VOF** Waldamkaai 8, B501 9000 Gent, Belgium
Objectives:	**General Objectives:** • To support mothers in returning to physical activity after pregnancy. • To strengthen the mother-baby relationship through shared exercise activities. • To promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing among mothers. **Specific Objectives:** • Improve postnatal physical recovery. • Strengthen pelvic floor, abdominal, and body muscles after childbirth. • Provide safe and guided physical activity supervised by professionals. • Create social interaction and emotional support among mothers.

	• Stimulate babies' development through involvement in exercises.
Stakeholders of the project:	- Physiotherapists - Midwives - Osteopaths - Physical education professionals - Independent trainers and coaches - Mothers and families - Community centres and partner locations - Mums en Bubs coordinators and trainers
Beneficiaries:	The main target group consists of: • Mothers after childbirth • Babies aged 3 to 24 months • Families and grandparents participating in family sessions The programme mainly targets women in the postnatal period and supports their physical and emotional wellbeing. Activities are adapted for: • Babies aged 3–12 months ("Koala's" group) • Babies aged 12–24 months ("Kiwi's" group)
Description:	Mums en Bubs is a postnatal fitness and wellbeing programme designed for mothers and their babies. The initiative combines physical exercise, parenting support, and social interaction. The programme includes: • Guided postnatal workouts • Mother-baby fitness sessions • Family sessions • Workshops • Coach training programmes • Online communication through blogs and newsletters Activities are supervised by professionals such as physiotherapists and health specialists. Babies are actively involved in exercises to strengthen emotional bonding and stimulate development. The methodology combines: • Physical rehabilitation • Group exercise • Peer support • Educational guidance • Inclusive family participation The project also trains new coaches through specialised workshops and educational sessions.
Results achieved:	**Quantitative Results:** • Expansion to multiple Belgian cities. • Development of several programme formats and training sessions. • Creation of a network of professional coaches. **Qualitative Results:** • Improved physical wellbeing of mothers after pregnancy. • Increased mother-baby bonding.

	• Greater social inclusion and peer support among mothers. • Increased awareness of healthy lifestyles. • Professional opportunities for female trainers and health professionals.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The project strongly promotes gender equality by specifically supporting women during the postnatal period, a stage where women often face physical, emotional, and social challenges. The programme: • Encourages women's health and empowerment. • Supports equal access to physical activity after childbirth. • Creates inclusive environments for mothers with different backgrounds and experiences. • Reduces social isolation among new mothers. • Includes family participation and promotes shared caregiving responsibilities. The initiative also supports female employment opportunities through coach training and professional development.
***Transferability and scalability:**	The practice has strong transferability potential because: • The programme model can easily be replicated in other cities and countries. • The methodology is adaptable to different organisations and community centres. • Coaches are trained through structured programmes. • The initiative already operates in multiple locations across Belgium. The project can be scaled at local, national, and European level through partnerships with: • Health organisations • Women's associations • Community centres • Municipalities • Maternal health services
Website:	Mums en Bubs Email: mumsenbubs@gmail.com Social media: • Instagram: @mums.en.bubs • Facebook: Mums en Bubs

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	SuperMums Belgium – Prenatal and Postnatal Fitness Programme
When:	2018 – ongoing
Where:	Brussels, Belgium
Who:	SuperMums Belgium, a maternal fitness and wellness initiative led by certified pre- and postnatal trainers specialised in women's health and physical activity during and after pregnancy.
Objectives:	The programme aims to promote women's participation in physical activity during pregnancy and after childbirth by creating safe, accessible, and inclusive sport environments adapted to motherhood.

	Specific objectives include: • Supporting women to remain physically active during pregnancy; • Facilitating a safe return to physical activity after childbirth; • Improving physical and mental wellbeing of mothers; • Reducing barriers linked to motherhood, such as childcare and social isolation; • Encouraging long-term healthy lifestyles for women and families.
Stakeholders of the project:	- Certified prenatal and postnatal fitness trainers; - Maternal health professionals and physiotherapists; - Local sport and wellness organisations; - Community networks of mothers and families; - Women participating in the programme and peer-support groups.
Beneficiaries:	• Pregnant women; • Postpartum women and mothers; • Women returning to physical activity after childbirth. Participants are primarily adult women from the local community in Brussels. The initiative reaches groups of mothers through regular classes, workshops, and community-based activities.
Description:	SuperMums Belgium offers specialised prenatal and postnatal fitness sessions adapted to the different stages of pregnancy and recovery after childbirth. The programme combines physical activity, wellbeing, and social support in a women-centred environment. Main activities include: • Prenatal fitness classes adapted to pregnancy stages; • Postnatal recovery training focused on pelvic floor rehabilitation and core strength; • Mother-and-baby sessions allowing women to participate together with their babies; • Small-group coaching and personalised support; • Community-building activities encouraging peer interaction and mutual support among mothers.
Results achieved:	The programme contributed to: • Increased participation of mothers in regular physical activity; • Improved physical recovery and wellbeing after childbirth; • Enhanced confidence and motivation among participants; • Reduction of social isolation through group-based activities and peer support; • Positive feedback from participants regarding accessibility and inclusiveness of the programme. The initiative also helped create awareness around the importance of supporting women's return to sport and exercise after pregnancy.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The practice directly addresses structural barriers that often limit women's participation in sport and physical activity after motherhood. In particular, the initiative promotes gender equality by: • Offering flexible and adapted sport opportunities for mothers; • Allowing participation together with babies, reducing childcare barriers; • Creating safe and inclusive environments specifically designed for women; • Supporting women's physical and mental wellbeing during and after pregnancy;

	• Challenging stereotypes suggesting that motherhood and active lifestyles are incompatible. The programme contributes to equal opportunities by encouraging women to remain engaged in physical activity despite maternity-related challenges.
***Transferability and scalability:**	The practice has strong transferability potential because it is based on adaptable methodologies that can be implemented in fitness centres, sport clubs, community organisations, and health-related settings. The model can be replicated in other local, national, and European contexts through: • Training of specialised instructors; • Community-based delivery models; • Partnerships between sport and health sectors. The initiative demonstrates how relatively small-scale programmes can create meaningful impact on women's participation and inclusion in sport.
Website:	**https://supermums.be**

5.3. Cyprus

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Gender Equality in Sport Coaching (SheCOACH)
When:	The project started in January 2024 and is currently ongoing, with expected end date in December 2026.
Where:	The project has partners from Cyprus (coordinator), Greece, Spain, Italy, Malta, Austria and Romania.
Who:	Cyprus Basketball Federation (KYPRIAKI OMOSPONDIA KALATHOSFAIRAS)
Objectives:	**General:** To promote gender equality in basketball through structural, educational, and institutional measures targeting participation, coaching, and leadership. **Specific:** □ Increase women's participation in coaching education and technical roles. □ Integrate gender equality into coaching curricula and training systems. □ Strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming in sport. □ Address structural barriers limiting women's long-term engagement in sport.
Stakeholders of the project:	□ Cyprus Basketball Federation (coordinator) □ Symplexis □ Greek Basketball Coaches Association □ Universidad de Murcia □ Federacion de Baloncesto de Castilla La Mancha □ L'Orma SSD SRL □ Sport Coaching Europe □ European Network of Sport Education □ HUB for Innovation Policy SRL

Beneficiaries:	The primary beneficiaries are: • Coaches and coach educators involved in basketball in Cyprus and partner countries • Staff of national and regional sports federations and clubs • Education and training providers (universities, vocational training institutions, private colleges) **Legal status:** • Sport professionals (coaches, educators) operating within federations, clubs, and education institutions • Employees or collaborators within the organised sport and education system **Reach (expected):** • Around **80-100 staff** of coaching education providers trained in gender mainstreaming • At least **15 coaching programmes/curricula** updated to include gender equality content • Around **50 sport and education authorities** reached with awareness on gender mainstreaming • At least **130 sports club stakeholders** (staff, executives, members) engaged • Approximately **30,000 people reached** through dissemination and awareness activities

Description:	**1. Needs Assessment and Research Phase**
	
	• National-level research conducted (survey and interviews) to assess gender equality in coaching with participation from both sport professionals and key stakeholders.
	• Identification of gaps in:
	  ○ Gender equality awareness
	  ○ Representation of women in coaching
	  ○ Integration of gender in coaching education
	
	Methodology: evidence-based approach to ensure interventions respond to real needs
	
	2. Development of Educational Content and Tools
	
	• Design of training modules on gender equality in coaching
	• Development of guidelines and educational materials for coaching education providers
	• Integration of gender equality topics into coaching curricula
	
	Methodology: curriculum development and knowledge transfer
	
	3. Capacity Building Activities
	
	• Implementation of a structure online training programme targeting coaches and coaching education providers. Modules include:
	  ○ Legislation of gender equality in sport
	  ○ Women in leadership positions in sport
	  ○ Inclusive language in sports environments

	○ Gender based discrimination and sexual harassment in sport Methodology: participatory training and skills development **4. Institutional and Policy-Level Actions** • Engagement with sport federations, clubs, and education providers • Promotion of gender mainstreaming in policies and governance structures • Alignment with national and European gender equality frameworks Methodology: multi-level stakeholder engagement **5. Awareness Raising and Dissemination** • Implementation of communication and awareness campaigns • Dissemination of project results to sport organisations and the public • Large-scale outreach (up to 30,000 people expected to be reached) ○ Methodology: knowledge dissemination and advocacy
Results achieved:	The project is currently ongoing. Some of the outputs that have been produced can be found here: https://shecoach.eu/resources/
Gender equality and inclusion:	This practice addresses gender equality primarily by targeting structural barriers in coaching and sport governance, where women remain underrepresented. Through the SheCOACH programme, the Cyprus Basketball Federation together with the partners: • Integrate gender equality into coaching education systems • Build the capacity of coaches and institutions to apply gender mainstreaming in practice • Promote women's participation in leadership and decision-making roles The practice directly tackles gender stereotypes and discrimination by: • Including training modules on gender-based discrimination, harassment, and inclusive language • Challenging traditional perceptions of coaching as a male-dominated field • Raising awareness among sport organisations and clubs It also addresses structural barriers by: • Embedding gender equality into curricula and institutional practices (not only awareness) • Supporting long-term changes in education systems and governance structures

	• Engaging multiple levels of the sport ecosystem (education providers, federations, clubs) While the practice does not include specific measures on maternity, it contributes indirectly by creating more inclusive and stable environments, which are necessary conditions for women to sustain long-term careers in sport.

***Transferability and scalability:**	This practice has high transferability, as it is developed within the Erasmus+ framework and implemented across multiple European countries.
	
	The SheCOACH programme provides:
	
	• A structured training model (modules, curriculum, methodology)
	• A digital learning platform, allowing easy replication
	• A framework for integrating gender equality into coaching education systems
	
	The practice has already been implemented and piloted in partner countries, demonstrating its adaptability to different national sport contexts.
	
	In terms of scalability:
	
	• **Local/National level:**
	  ○ Can be expanded to additional sports federations and coaching education providers in Cyprus
	• **European level:**
	  ○ Can be replicated through Erasmus+ projects and EU cooperation frameworks
	  ○ Supports alignment with European policies on gender equality in sport
	
	The practice demonstrates a scalable model moving from pilot implementation to wider institutional adoption, particularly through integration into national coaching education systems.

Website:	https://shecoach.eu/

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Gender Mainstreaming Law (2026) and National Gender Equality Strategy (2024–2026): Integration of Gender Equality into Sport Governance in Cyprus
When:	National Gender Equality Strategy: 2024–2026 (ongoing) Gender Mainstreaming Law: adopted in 2026 (currently in early implementation phase)
Where:	Cyprus (national scope, including all publicly funded sport structures)
Who:	□ Commissioner for Gender Equality of the Republic of Cyprus □ High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming □ Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth

	□ Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO)
Objectives:	**General:** To institutionalise gender equality across all public policies, including sport, through legally binding gender mainstreaming mechanisms. **Specific:** □ Introduce mandatory gender mainstreaming in public policy, including sport governance and funding. □ Ensure that sport organisations integrate gender equality criteria in decision-making and resource allocation. □ Promote work-life balance measures, including support relevant to motherhood and caregiving responsibilities. □ Address structural inequalities such as gender pay gaps and underrepresentation of women in sport leadership.
Stakeholders of the project:	□ Government ministries and public authorities □ Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO) □ National sports federations and clubs receiving public funding □ Cyprus Olympic Committee □ Gender Equality Commissioner and advisory bodies □ Civil society organisations and advocacy groups
Beneficiaries:	□ Women and girls in Cyprus, including female athletes at elite, semi-professional, and grassroots levels. □ Sports organisations required to align with equality standards. □ Indirectly, future generations of women in sport.
Description:	This best practice consists of a combined legal and policy framework that introduces structural change in how gender equality is implemented in sport. **1. Gender Mainstreaming Law (2026)** The law establishes a **binding obligation** for all public authorities to integrate gender equality into: • Policy design • Budgeting processes • Programme implementation **Concrete application to sport:** • Public funding in sport must consider gender equality criteria • Sports bodies receiving state support are expected to demonstrate compliance with equality objectives • Monitoring is supported through national governance mechanisms, including the High-Level Group **2. National Gender Equality Strategy (2024–2026)**

	The strategy operationalises the law through targeted actions relevant to sport: • Increasing women's participation and leadership in sport organisations • Addressing gender pay disparities, with national evidence indicating that male athletes may earn significantly more than female athletes • Promoting work-life balance policies, including measures relevant to motherhood and caregiving • Supporting awareness and education actions to challenge stereotypes about women in sport **3. Governance and Implementation Mechanisms** • Establishment of a High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming to oversee implementation • Integration of gender equality into national reform and funding priorities in sport • Alignment with EU gender equality frameworks and funding principles
Results achieved:	**Qualitative:** • Transition from voluntary initiatives to a legally binding framework for gender equality • Recognition of gender inequality in sport as a structural policy issue • Increased institutional pressure on sports organisations to adopt formal equality measures **Quantitative:** • Adoption of a national law affecting all publicly funded sectors, including sport • Implementation of structured actions under the 2024–2026 strategy • Use of national data (e.g., gender pay gap in sport) to inform policy interventions
Gender equality and inclusion:	This practice addresses **systemic barriers** affecting women in sport, including: • Economic inequality (gender pay gap) • Underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making • Lack of formal structures supporting work-life balance and motherhood

	Incorporating gender equality into law, funding, and governance, the practice creates enabling conditions for: • Development of maternity protection measures in sport • Equal access to opportunities and resources • Long-term institutional and cultural change It directly challenges the structural perception that women's sport is secondary and less deserving of investment.
***Transferability and scalability:**	This practice has high transferability at European level: • Gender mainstreaming laws can be adapted by other EU Member States • The model links legal obligation with sport policy and funding, making it scalable • It can be integrated into EU funding conditionality and national sport governance systems It provides a foundation for future targeted measures, including maternity protection policies similar to collective agreements seen in other European contexts.
Website:	National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024-2026 (Section 8:Gender and Sports, page 27): link Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026: link1, link2, link3

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	PASP (Cyprus Footballers' Association) Advocacy, Maternity Policy Implementation, and Structural Reforms for Women Footballers in Cyprus
When:	□ Advocacy and actions intensifying from 2021 onwards □ FIFA maternity regulations introduced globally in 2021 and 2024 □ National-level promotion and implementation ongoing □ Key legislative reform: April 2023
Where:	Cyprus (national football system – national teams and domestic leagues)
Who:	□ PASP (Cyprus Footballers' Association) in collaboration with Cyprus Football Association (CFA) and FIFPRO/FIFA.
Objectives:	**General:** To improve working conditions and ensure equal rights for women footballers in Cyprus, including the introduction of maternity protection aligned with international standards. **Specific:** □ Introduce maternity protection mechanisms in football employment. □ Align national practices with FIFA/FIFPRO regulations. □ Improve financial and contractual security for women players. □ Address structural inequalities affecting career sustainability and motherhood.

Stakeholders of the project:	□ PASP (lead actor) □ Female footballers □ Cyprus Football Association □ FIFPRO and FIFA □ Government and sport authorities
Beneficiaries:	□ Female footballers in Cyprus (elite and semi-professional) □ National team players □ Future generations of women athletes
Description:	This practice emerged **in response to documented structural inequalities** in women's football in Cyprus, including financial instability, lack of contracts, and absence of maternity protection, which limited athletes' ability to sustain long-term careers and consider motherhood. In this context, PASP implemented **a** multi-level intervention combining advocacy, policy development, and alignment with international standards**.** **1. Introduction of Maternity Protection Standards** PASP promoted and disseminated **FIFA/FIFPRO maternity regulations**, establishing minimum standards applicable to women footballers: • Minimum 14 weeks maternity leave (including at least 8 weeks post-birth) • Salary protection (minimum 2/3 of salary) during maternity leave • Full salary during pregnancy (unless voluntarily agreed otherwise) • Protection against contract termination due to pregnancy • Right to remain registered or re-register after maternity leave • Medical autonomy in deciding whether to continue playing These measures provide a clear and structured maternity protection framework, previously absent in Cyprus for female footballers. **2. Development of PASP Maternity Policy** • PASP developed a national Maternity Policy, aligned with FIFPRO guidelines • The policy serves as a reference framework for clubs and governing bodies • Establishes minimum standards for protecting players' rights during pregnancy and motherhood. Specifically the policy aims to introduce: 1) protection of contracts during pregnancy, 2) safeguards against dismissals, 3) recognition of maternity as part of athletes' rights. While still in development/advocacy phase, it represents a first concrete step toward maternity protection in Cyprus football. **3. Legislative Reform (2023) – Equal Benefits Law** Following PASP advocacy and the #EqualRights campaign: • The Cypriot Parliament adopted a **legal amendment (April 6, 2023)** passed with **44 votes in favour**

	Concrete outcome:
	
	• Elimination of inequalities in:
	  ○ Allowances
	  ○ Travel expenses
	  ○ Daily compensation
	• Equal treatment between male and female national team players
	
	4. Regulatory Changes (CFA Licensing System 2025–26)
	
	To address the crisis in women's football:
	
	• Mandatory requirement for men's top-division clubs to:
	  ○ Maintain a women's team or girls' academy
	• Introduction of quota system:
	  ○ Minimum 6 Cypriot-eligible players in starting lineup
	• Enforcement mechanism:
	  ○ €500 fine per missing player

Results achieved:	**Immediate outputs (concrete changes):** • Introduction of maternity protection standards aligned with FIFA regulations • Development of a formal Maternity Policy by PASP • Adoption of equal benefits law (2023) • Implementation of regulatory requirements for clubs **Observed / emerging impact:** **Qualitative:** • Increased recognition of maternity as a legitimate labour rights issue in sport • Strengthened position of players through collective representation • Improved alignment of Cyprus with international standards (FIFA/FIFPRO) **System-level impact:** • Shift from absence of protection → initial framework for maternity rights • Creation of preconditions for career continuity after pregnancy • Increased institutional pressure for further reforms (e.g., contracts, full implementation)
Gender equality and inclusion:	This practice addresses **core structural barriers** affecting women athletes, including: • Income instability • Lack of contractual protection • Absence of maternity safeguards

	By introducing maternity standards and improving financial conditions, it contributes to: • Making motherhood more compatible with a football career • Reducing the risk of forced early retirement due to pregnancy • Promoting equal opportunities in sport
***Transferability and scalability:**	□ Highly transferable through FIFA/FIFPRO regulatory frameworks □ Applicable to countries with semi-professional women's leagues □ Can evolve into collective bargaining agreements through players' unions, similar to other countries.
Website:	PASP Maternity Policy in line with FIFPRO: link PASP Equal Rights Movement: link

5.4. Finland

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Finnish National Ballet Maternity Guidelines
When:	The programme is currently in the design phase.
Where:	Finnish National Ballet, Helsinki, Finland.
Who:	Finnish National Ballet
Objectives:	Following a review of current practices, a need for formalised guidelines and recommendations was made. These will cover pregnancy and return to ballet.
Stakeholders of the project:	Physiotherapy department of the Finnish National Ballet.
Beneficiaries:	Dancers who work in the Finnish National Ballet will be the main beneficiaries. There are currently no formal guidelines for how to continue training and dancing during pregnancy or how to return to dancing during motherhood.
Description:	The project is still in the design phase, but the physiotherapy department is currently leading on the project. Specifically providing guidelines for training and dancing during pregnancy and how to safely return to performance following childbirth.
Results achieved:	Currently the protocols are not in place, but once they are this will create a formalised policy that is clear and transparent.
Gender equality and inclusion:	Pregnancy is a fundamental right and should not create career disruption burdens that are borne by mothers alone. Providing formal guidelines will ensure that potential mothers can feel safe and supported by their employers.
***Transferability and scalability:**	These guidelines do not exist in many professional sports / performance environments in Finland. This initiative is one of a few that has started to provide support to mothers and pregnant athletes. They will hopefully contribute to a unified approach in the country towards return to sport.
Website:	

Link of the project/programme (if available)	

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Finland National Social Security Policies
When:	Reforms were made to the policy in 2022 to make it gender neutral. This policy impacts most professional athletes in Finland.
Where:	Finland
Who:	KELA – Finland's social security service
Objectives:	The purpose of the new family leave policy in Finland is to make: - the distribution of childcare-related leaves more equal between spouses; - the treatment of different family configurations more equal in the eyes of the law; and - the family leave and financial support system more flexible so that it takes into account the differing needs of different types of families and family situations.
Stakeholders of the project:	Finland's social security provider
Beneficiaries:	All working families in Finland, including those who derive their income from sports.
Description: *Dtailed of the project/programme (please specify the activities/sessions/modules and methodologies implemented)*	Since August 1, 2022, Finland has implemented a gender-neutral family leave policy that applies to all employees, including professional athletes with employment contracts: Pregnancy Leave: A birth-giving parent is entitled to 40 working days of pregnancy allowance starting 14 to 30 days before the due date. Parental Leave: Each parent is entitled to 160 working days of parental allowance, of which 63 days can be transferred to the other parent or another caregiver. Employment Security: Under the Equality Act, an athlete cannot be dismissed or discriminated against due to pregnancy or family leave, even if they are on a fixed-term contract. For professional athletes in Finland, Kela (the Social Insurance Institution) treats players effectively the same as employees for benefit purposes. Eligibility is generally based on either permanent residence or employment that meets a minimum monthly earnings threshold of €800.02 (as of 2026). Athletes who meet the income requirements can access the standard suite of family benefits: Pregnancy Allowance: Paid for 40 working days (approx. 6.5 weeks), typically starting 14–30 days before the due date. Parental Allowance: Available for 160 working days per parent. If you have no reported income or earn less than €10,664/year, you receive a minimum rate of €31.99 per day. For professional athletes earning more, the amount is calculated based on annual income. Maternity Grant: A one-time benefit provided as either the famous Maternity Package (baby box) or a tax-free cash payment of €210

	Employer Role: If your sports club continues to pay your salary during leave, Kela pays the daily allowance directly to the club rather than the athlete. Special Pregnancy Allowance: If your sport involves physical risks that cannot be mitigated (such as high-impact contact) and your club cannot offer alternative duties, you may be eligible for this allowance earlier in the pregnancy. This requires a statement from an occupational health physician. Self-Employed Athletes: Athletes operating as individual entrepreneurs (using YEL insurance) have their benefits calculated based on their reported YEL income rather than actual athletic earnings. Social Security Coverage: For professional athletes, pension and accident insurance are compulsory if annual income from sports exceeds €12,550.
Results achieved:	
Gender equality and inclusion:	This specific way to use the paternity leave days was designed to let fathers take independent responsibility for childcare. The fact that women still take the majority of available childcare leaves has an indirect effect on women's labor market status. Women, for example, encounter pregnancy and childcare-related discrimination. Long leaves affect women's pension levels later on in life and they also affect women's career trajectories.
***Transferability and scalability:**	This is a nationwide policy so it is difficult to reflect it in other sporting contexts. However Finnish employers are now compelled to review their policies and collective bargaining agreements to reflect legistlation.
Website:	

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Finnish Floorball union survey of parenthood in Floorball
When:)	2025 to 2026
Where:	Nationwide in Finland's top floorball leagues
Who:	Finnish Floorball Union / Suomen Salibandiliitto
Objectives:	In Finland, the birth rate is declining, and parents are having children at a later age. There is little research data on the reconciliation of elite sports and family life. The floorball association have explored how top-level floorball players experience combining parenting and elite sports and what factors affect continuing their careers after the child's birth. The goal of this research was to obtain first-hand information regarding barriers facing parent-athletes. Exploring these barriers can open doors to ensure better practice is implemented at club and union levels and provide policy guidance.
Stakeholders of the project:	Finnish floorball union. Aula research
Beneficiaries:	The aim of the survey was to explore the barriers and enablers that are associated with parenthood and elite level sport. The results of the survey

	have revealed key areas where the floorball union, clubs and other sports can provide for parents.
Description:	A survey was conducted by a research group. The target group was floorball players in the top two divisions for both men and women. 99 responses were gathered, representing 10% of all players.
Results achieved:	The results of the study show that the impact of parenting on the athlete career is significant. More than half of the players who have stopped or considered ending their careers indicated that parenting has affected their decisions. Several respondents explained that sports, work and family life are incompatible without significant compromises. Almost all those who experienced mental loads said it was related to the fragmentation of schedules and the constant feeling of inadequacy. The guilt of the use of time between family and sport was familiar to 86% of respondents. According to the study, the support network is one of the most significant factors that allow for career continuation. Without the help of loved ones, many experienced that playing would not have been possible at all. The role of clubs and coaches was also emphasized. The study highlighted that during absences, players contact with their clubs had been lost. Female athletes raised a particular challenge in connection with the return after childbirth. Motherhood had had a negative impact on physical performance, which made it even more difficult to continue training and competition. Despite the challenges, the study provides an important message: parenting and elite sports can be combined. Successful experiences were mainly related to functional support arrangements, flexible and planned everyday life, and open communication with team and coaching. Many respondents even felt parenting as a positive enabler. As many as 53 percent of women considered parenthood to have had a positive effect on their mental performance.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The clubs can have a significant impact on the situation by providing individual training programs, flexible training arrangements and adequate support in the return phase, especially for female athletes after pregnancy and childbirth. When a player feels he is not forgotten during his absence, the sequel will be greatly facilitated. The study highlights several concrete measures that could facilitate the daily lives of mother-athletes. Organizing childcare for training, flexibility in team everyday life and systematic sharing of best practices could lower the threshold to continue your career. Equally important is the development of culture in the direction that the athlete knows that she is also important to the team during the absence.
***Transferability and scalability:**	The Salibandy Association hopes that the study will provoke more discussion on the Finnish sports field. The challenges of uniting parenthood and elite sports are not sport-specific, but affect athletes at all levels.
Website:	

5.5. Greece

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Hellenic Olympic Committee – Athlete-Parents Recognition & Support Initiative

When:	2021 (Tokyo 2020 cycle) – 2024 (Paris 2024 cycle), ongoing initiative
Where:	Athens, Greece
Who:	Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC) – Gender Equality Committee
Objectives:	**General Objective:** To promote gender equality and inclusion in sport by supporting athletes who are parents and ensuring that parenthood, particularly motherhood, is not perceived as a barrier to elite athletic performance. **Specific Objectives:** • To recognize and reward elite athletes who combine sports careers with parenthood • To provide financial and symbolic support to athlete-parents • To increase visibility of parenting athletes, especially women • To challenge stereotypes related to motherhood and elite sport participation • To contribute to broader gender equality strategies within sports governance
Stakeholders of the project:	• Hellenic Olympic Committee • Gender Equality Committee members • National sports federations • Olympic and elite athletes • Policy stakeholders and sport governance bodies
Beneficiaries:	• Primary beneficiaries: Elite athletes who are parents (both men and women, with particular relevance for women athletes) • Secondary beneficiaries: Sports organizations and policymakers • The initiative targets a selected number of awardees per Olympic cycle
Description:	The initiative consists of formal award ceremonies organized by the HOC Gender Equality Committee, recognizing athletes who are also parents. The awards are accompanied by financial incentives (allowances or grants) and public acknowledgment. The initiative is embedded within the broader gender equality strategy of the HOC and is linked to European-level projects such as Erasmus+ initiatives. It aims to normalize the dual identity of athlete and parent, highlighting real-life examples of individuals who successfully combine both roles.
Results achieved:	**Quantitative results:** • Implementation of award ceremonies in at least two Olympic cycles (Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024) • Number of athletes recognized per cycle (limited but targeted group) **Qualitative results:** • Increased visibility of athlete-parents • Strengthening of inclusive narratives in sport

	• Recognition of parenting as compatible with elite sport • Reinforcement of gender equality discourse at national level
Gender equality and inclusion:	The initiative directly addresses gender inequality by: • Promoting equal recognition of women athletes who are mothers • Challenging stereotypes that motherhood is incompatible with high-performance sport • Supporting inclusion through institutional recognition • Contributing to a more family-friendly sport environment
***Transferability and scalability:**	• Highly transferable to national federations, clubs, and Olympic committees • Easily scalable as a national grant or recognition scheme • Low-cost implementation with high symbolic and policy impact • Can be integrated into broader gender equality strategies
Website:	https://www.hoc.gr/en/hocnews/the-hoc-gender-equality-commission-awarded-the-athletes-parents-in-tokyo-2020-2

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Hellenic Olympic Committee Gender Equality Action Plan / Erasmus+ GAMES Project – National Gender Equality Action Plan
When:	Project's Timeframe: 2022 – ongoing Event: December 2023
Where:	Greece (national level)
Who:	Hellenic Olympic Committee
Objectives:	**General Objective:** To institutionalize gender equality in sports governance and promote inclusive and equitable participation in sport. **Specific Objectives:** • To ensure gender-balanced representation in decision-making bodies • To integrate gender equality policies within sports organizations • To strengthen institutional capacity on gender issues • To support women athletes, including those facing maternity-related challenges

	• To align national sport governance with European gender equality standards
Stakeholders of the project:	• Hellenic Olympic Committee • European partners (Erasmus+ GAMES project consortium) • National sport federations • Coaches, administrators, and policymakers • Gender equality experts
Beneficiaries:	• Women athletes • Sports administrators and decision-makers • Coaches and staff • Broader sport ecosystem
Description:	The Gender Equality Action Plan is part of the Erasmus+ GAMES project and includes a structured set of measures aimed at improving gender equality in sport governance. Key actions include: • Promoting gender-balanced representation in committees and leadership positions • Organizing training workshops and educational sessions on gender equality • Developing policy tools and internal governance frameworks • Implementing targeted actions supporting women athletes, including actions contributing to a more inclusive environment for athlete-parents.
Results achieved:	**Quantitative results:** • Implementation of training sessions and workshops • Adoption of gender equality measures within governance structures **Qualitative results:** • Improved awareness and knowledge among stakeholders • Institutional commitment to gender equality • Development of a national policy framework
Gender equality and inclusion:	The practice addresses gender equality by: • Tackling structural barriers in decision-making • Promoting equal opportunities in governance • Supporting inclusion of women at all levels • Creating a more equitable and inclusive sports environment

***Transferability and scalability:**	• Highly transferable to other national Olympic committees and federations • Can be adapted at regional, national, and European levels • Provides a strong foundation for policy development and replication
Website:	https://games-project.com/progresses-of-the-hellenic-nocs-gender-equality-action-plan/

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	GWomen Sports Summit / Annual Women in Sports Conference
When:	Annual event (latest: 2025)
Where:	Piraeus, Greece
Who:	Gazzetta (media organization), supported by public authorities and stakeholders
Objectives:	**General Objective:** To promote women's presence, participation, and leadership in sport through awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement. **Specific Objectives:** • To raise awareness about gender equality issues in sport • To provide a platform for dialogue on challenges such as maternity • To promote role models and success stories • To foster collaboration between stakeholders • To influence public perception and media narratives
Stakeholders of the project:	• Athletes • Coaches and sports professionals • Media organizations • Public authorities • NGOs and advocacy groups
Beneficiaries:	• Women athletes • Sports stakeholders • General public • Media audiences
Description:	The GWomen Sports Summit is a two-day annual conference that brings together stakeholders from sport, media, and public life. Activities include:

	• Panel discussions • Keynote speeches • Sharing of personal experiences • Presentation of research findings The event covers topics such as gender equality, mental health, leadership, and maternity in sport.
Results achieved:	**Quantitative results:** • Annual organization of the event • Participation of multiple stakeholders **Qualitative results:** • Increased awareness of gender-related issues • Enhanced public dialogue • Strengthened networks among stakeholders
Gender equality and inclusion:	• Addresses gender stereotypes through public dialogue • Promotes visibility of women in sport • Encourages inclusive narratives and representation
***Transferability and scalability:**	• Easily replicable in other countries and contexts • Can be adopted by federations, municipalities, or NGOs • Scalable as an annual or regional event
Website:	https://specials.gazzetta.gr/gazzetta-women-sports-summit-2025/

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Guide of Rights – Maternity and Employment / DIONE Project – Guide of Rights
When:	2021
Where:	Greece
Who:	Public bodies / research institutions
Objectives:	**General Objective:** To inform and empower women regarding their maternity and employment rights. **Specific Objectives:**

	• To provide clear and accessible information on maternity rights • To support women in balancing work and family life • To enhance awareness of legal protections • To reduce discrimination related to pregnancy and motherhood
Stakeholders of the project:	• Government bodies • Legal experts • Research institutions • NGOs
Beneficiaries:	• Working women (including athletes in semi-professional or professional settings) • Organizations supporting women's rights
Description:	The guide provides comprehensive information on: • Maternity leave rights • Employment protection • Legal frameworks It serves as a reference tool for women navigating pregnancy and employment.
Results achieved:	**Quantitative results:** • Publication and dissemination of the guide **Qualitative results:** • Increased awareness of rights • Improved access to information • Empowerment of women
Gender equality and inclusion:	• Addresses legal and structural inequalities • Promotes equal treatment in employment • Supports inclusion through access to rights
***Transferability and scalability:**	• Highly transferable to sport-specific contexts • Can be adapted into training materials • Scalable across sectors and countries
Website: *Link of the project/programme (if available)*	https://symplexis.eu/maternity-and-employment-a-guide-to-ones-rights/ - https://www.facebook.com/dione.EU.project/posts/748885203886148/

5.6. Portugal

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	**Desporto + Igual** Sport + Equal
When:	The Sport + Equal program did not emerge as a single initiative with a specific creation date, but rather as a set of measures and projects that began to be implemented from 2022–2023 in Portugal, within the framework of public policies for gender equality in sport. In particular, one of its main pillars — the NEW LEADERSHIPS program | For a More Equal Sport — had its first edition launched in February 2023, marking the concrete start of this strategy on the ground. From there: 2023 - 1st edition of the program (effective start of practical implementation) 2024 - 2nd edition, consolidating the project 2025 - 3rd edition, demonstrating continuity and expansion Thus, it can be said that Desporto + Igual began to take shape and gain visibility from 2023, integrating initiatives such as: the training program New Leaderships the National Gender Equality in Sports Award other institutional measures related to equality The Desporto + Igual program had its practical start in 2023, with the launch of the first structured initiatives, since then establishing itself as a continuous strategy to promote gender equality in sports in Portugal.
Where:	Portugal (National)
Who:	For **Desporto + Igual** initiative, the coordinating entity is: **Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) – Portugal** (Portuguese: *Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género*) This is the public body responsible for promoting gender equality policies in Portugal, including those related to sport.
Objectives:	The main objectives of Sport + Equal are to ensure equal access to sport for all genders at every level, from grassroots participation to high performance, and to increase female participation and long-term engagement in sporting activities. It also aims to promote balanced representation in leadership, coaching, and decision-making roles, while eliminating gender stereotypes, bias, and discrimination within sport environments. Furthermore, Sport + Equal seeks to create safe, inclusive, and respectful conditions for all participants, encourage sports organizations to adopt and implement gender equality policies, and raise awareness by promoting positive role models that inspire lasting cultural change.
Stakeholders of the project:	Award-winning projects within the scope of Sport + Equality

	The award itself has highlighted concrete examples of good practices with direct impact on women: "Strong Like a Woman" Campaign (Clube 9.8 Gravity) Promotes female participation in traditionally male sports, such as climbing, through women-only events, integration into technical teams, and reduction of access costs. SYnergia Academy – Gender Equality in Youth Sports Focuses on empowering girls and women for leadership, mentoring with female athletes, and combating stereotypes from a young age. "7 Pillars – Women's Football" Plan (FC Ferreiras) Ensures equality of resources between male and female teams, promotes the presence of women as coaches and managers, and creates intergenerational mentoring programs.
Beneficiaries:	The beneficiaries of Sport + Equal include primarily young people—especially girls and women—as well as athletes, coaches, referees, and sports managers. The initiative also targets sports organizations, such as clubs and federations, by promoting inclusive policies and practices. Although some specific actions involve small groups (e.g., leadership programmes with around 16–20 participants per edition), the overall impact is broader and indirect, reaching the wider sports community and society by fostering more equal and inclusive sport environments.
Description:	The Sport + Equal program plays a decisive role in promoting gender equality in the sports sector in Portugal, with a special focus on the empowerment and enhancement of women. Historically underrepresented in multiple dimensions of sport — from participation to leadership and decision-making — women have faced structural barriers that this program actively seeks to combat. To address these challenges, Sport + Equal operates through a set of complementary initiatives, including the National Gender Equality in Sport Award, which recognizes organizations that implement inclusive practices, and capacity-building programmes such as “New Leaderships for an Equal Sport,” aimed at empowering young women for leadership roles in sport. Its methodology is based on a multi-level approach that combines recognition, training, and awareness-raising. On the one hand, it promotes institutional change by encouraging sports organizations to adopt equality policies and good practices. On the other, it invests in education and capacity-building by supporting the development of skills, leadership, and participation among women and young people. Additionally, it works to increase visibility and challenge gender stereotypes by highlighting role models and disseminating successful experiences. Through this integrated approach, Sport + Equal contributes to a gradual but sustained cultural transformation towards a more inclusive and equitable sports sector.
Results achieved:	Although there are not detailed number available, Sport + Equal establishes itself as a good reference practice, by promoting not only the inclusion of women in sports, but also their empowerment as agents of change, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive society.
Gender equality and inclusion:	Sport + Equal addresses gender equality in a comprehensive manner, promoting equal opportunities, combating stereotypes, and confronting structural barriers. In this way, it contributes to the construction of a more

	inclusive, fair, and representative sports environment, where women can participate fully and on an equal footing.
***Transferability and scalability:**	Sport + Equal is a highly transferable good practice, thanks to its flexibility, social relevance, and alignment with international policies. Its implementation in other contexts will depend mainly on institutional commitment and adaptation to local specificities, always keeping the central objective: promoting the empowerment of women and gender equality in sport.
Website:	programa-novas-lideranças–para-um-desporto-+-Igual; - IPDJ premio–desporto-mais-igual - IPDJ Prémios – Prémio Desporto + Igual - CIG
MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for Women's Football in Liga BPI – Pregnancy and Maternity Protection Regime
When:	Signed on October 30, 2025. The program/agreement is currently in force and is ongoing.
Where:	Portugal (National scope, applied to all clubs competing in Liga BPI).
Who:	Professional Football Players' Syndicate (SJPF - Sindicato dos Jogadores Profissionais de Futebol)
Objectives:	• General: Eradicate precarious employment in sports, combat "false amateur contracts," and guarantee parity of rights and social protection in women's football. • Specific: Ensure the financial and professional stability of athletes during pregnancy; prohibit dismissal for maternity-related reasons; guarantee full payment of salaries; and oblige clubs to provide medical assistance and physical conditions for family reconciliation (such as breastfeeding spaces).
Stakeholders of the project:	Players' Syndicate (SJPF), Portuguese Football Federation (FPF), Liga BPI Clubs (employers), and FIFPRO (International Federation of Professional Footballers, which supported the international guidelines).
Beneficiaries:	Professional female football players competing in the top Portuguese league (Liga BPI). The legal status covers employed workers (with sports employment contracts). The agreement reaches hundreds of female players registered in the Portuguese first division teams.
Description:	This is a binding normative framework (collective bargaining) that regulates the profession. The main activities and modules implemented through the agreement's clauses include: • Employment and Wage Maintenance: Automatic renewal of contracts that end during maternity leave (minimum of 14 weeks) and a 100% salary guarantee during pregnancy. • Role Adaptation: The possibility for the athlete to request alternative, non-physical services within the club during pregnancy. • Logistical and Physical Support: Implementation of rules for flexible training schedules for mothers, mandatory infrastructure for breast milk pumping and breastfeeding, and adaptation of training plans to the menstrual cycle.

Results achieved:	• Qualitative: Provided psychological security, allowing athletes to plan for motherhood without the fear of their sports careers ending abruptly (putting an end to "anti-pregnancy clauses"). It created a status of true respect and professionalization for women in sports. • Quantitative: Direct application of a mandatory minimum wage and 100% unemployment/maternity protection for all players under contract in Liga BPI, pulling dozens of women out of a grey area of false independent contractor receipts or mere expense allowances.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The practice directly attacks the biggest structural barrier for women in high-performance sports: the biological and professional penalty of motherhood. The agreement combats gender discrimination by making dismissal due to pregnancy illegal and destroys the stereotype that a female athlete's career ends when she decides to become a mother, promoting equal opportunities compared to male athletes
***Transferability and scalability:**	This agreement is highly transferable and serves as a blueprint. At the national level, it has massive scalability potential to be replicated by unions of other professional women's sports in Portugal (such as basketball, volleyball, or roller hockey). At the European level, the document is pioneering and can be adapted by women's football leagues in other countries that still operate in a semi-amateur regime, serving as a basis for the creation of standardized public policies.
Website:	https://sjogadores.pt/?pt=news&op=OP_SHOW_DETAIL&id=14194

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Gender Equality Seal in Sport
When:	The programme was launched in 2024 and is ongoing.
Where:	Portugal
Who:	Coordinated by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) and the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ)
Objectives:	The main objective of this programme is to promote gender equality in sport by recognising and rewarding sports organisations that implement inclusive and equitable practices. Specific objectives include: • Encouraging equal opportunities for women and men in sports participation and leadership • Promoting gender-balanced representation in decision-making positions • Preventing discrimination and gender-based violence in sport • Raising awareness about gender equality within sports organisations
Stakeholders of the project:	• Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)

	• Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ) • Sports clubs and federations • Local authorities • Coaches, staff, and volunteers • Civil society organisations
Beneficiaries:	The main beneficiaries are sports organisations, athletes, coaches, and staff. Indirectly, the programme benefits the wider community by promoting inclusive sports environments. It targets organisations of different sizes across Portugal.
Description:	The Gender Equality Seal in Sport is a certification awarded to sports organisations that demonstrate good practices in gender equality. Organisations apply voluntarily and are evaluated based on criteria such as: • Equal access to sports participation • Gender balance in leadership and decision-making • Inclusive communication and representation • Policies against discrimination and harassment The programme includes assessment, monitoring, and recognition phases. Awarded organisations receive public recognition and visibility, encouraging continuous improvement
Results achieved:	• Increased awareness of gender equality in the sports sector • Growing number of organisations applying for the seal • Improvement in internal policies related to equality and inclusion • Greater visibility of women in sport Qualitatively, it has contributed to cultural change within organisations, promoting more inclusive environments. In the first edition (2024–2026) of this award, 10 organisations were recognised out of a total of 31 applications submitted.
Gender equality and inclusion:	This initiative directly addresses gender equality by promoting equal opportunities and reducing structural barriers in sport. It challenges gender stereotypes by encouraging female participation and leadership. It also promotes inclusive environments free from discrimination and harassment.
***Transferability and scalability:**	This practice has strong potential for transferability to other countries and contexts. The model of certification and recognition can be adapted to different sports systems. It can be scaled at national and European levels, contributing to broader equality policies in sport.
Website:	https://ipdj.gov.pt/selo-da-igualdade-de-genero-no-desporto https://ipdj.gov.pt/-/selo-da-igualdade-de-genero-no-desporto-resultados-da-primeira-edicao https://ipdj.gov.pt/

5.7. Serbia

In the Republic of Serbia, there are initiatives aimed at improving the position of women in sport, but it is important to emphasize that projects specifically and systematically focused on the issue of motherhood in sport are still rare. The topic of motherhood of female athletes is mostly considered indirectly, through broader programmes of gender equality, empowerment of women in sport, and the development of their professional careers within the sports system. Nevertheless, certain national and international programmes represent a significant infrastructural basis and potential partners for the development of future initiatives specifically directed at this area.

One of the most significant organizations in this context is the Institute for Women's Sport, which systematically works on improving the position of girls and women in sport through programmes of education, promotion of female role models, and encouragement of sports participation. The programmes of this organization have included several thousand girls across Serbia and have contributed to the visibility of women's sport at the national level. Although their primary focus is not directly directed at the motherhood of female athletes, the issue of balancing professional and family roles of women in sport fits within the broader strategic framework of their activities.

A significant contribution to improving the position of women within sports structures is also provided by the international project *FAMS – Fostering Female Management Leaders in Sports* (https://fams-project.eu/), in which the Faculty of Sport from Serbia participated. This project is aimed at strengthening gender equality in sports governance structures, developing educational programmes for female athletes, and increasing women's participation in decision-making processes. The particular importance of the project is reflected in the fact that it indirectly opens space for consideration of topics such as career interruptions, return to sport after a break, and the balance between private and professional life, which also includes the issue of motherhood as an important segment of women's sports careers.

A similar contribution is provided by the *Erasmus+ project FEMCoach – Female Sport Coaching Training Programme* (https://www.femcoach.org/), which is aimed at developing women's coaching careers and improving gender equality in the coaching profession. This project is particularly relevant in the context of the transition of female athletes from

competitive to coaching careers, which represents a frequent professional pathway for women after the period of motherhood. In addition, the *Her World Her Rules* programme (https://about.fiba.basketball/en/regions/europe/activities/women-in-basketball/her-world-her-rules), implemented in Serbia through the activities of the movement led by Marina Maljković, is aimed at increasing girls' participation in basketball and promoting women's sport among the youngest population. Although it is not directly related to the topic of motherhood in sport, its importance is reflected in expanding the base of female athletes who will later, in the later stages of their careers, face the issue of balancing professional development and family responsibilities. Taken together, these initiatives represent an important basis for the development of future policies and programmes supporting athlete-mothers in Serbia.

5.8. Spain

MAMA National and European best practices	
Name:	II Collective Agreement for Professional Women Footballers — Liga F (II Convenio Colectivo de las Futbolistas de la Primera División Femenina de Fútbol Profesional)
When:	First Agreement: 2020 (still producing effects). Second Agreement signed: January 2024. Published in the Official State Gazette (BOE): 25 April 2025 (BOE-A-2025-8349). Currently ongoing — covers seasons 2024/25 and 2025/26.
Where:	Spain national scope. Applies to all clubs in Liga F, the Primera División Femenina de Fútbol Profesional.
Who:	Liga F (professional women's football league) as coordinating employer entity, jointly with trade unions FUTPRO, Futbolistas ON, and CCOO.
Objectives:	The agreement sets minimum labour standards for professional female footballers in Spain, with specific objectives to: guarantee contractual continuity for players who become pregnant; mandate physical and psychological support during and after pregnancy; require clubs to provide on-site childcare and dedicated breastfeeding infrastructure; create a working group to develop further maternity protections beyond those already in the text.
Stakeholders of the project:	Liga F (professional league, employer side). FUTPRO — Sindicato de Futbolistas Profesionales (signatory union). Futbolistas ON (signatory union). CCOO — Comisiones Obreras (signatory union). Spanish Ministry of Labour (registration and BOE publication). Club medical and physiotherapy teams (responsible for on-site implementation). Note: AFE and UGT did not sign the II Agreement.
Beneficiaries:	All players contracted in Liga F. Approximately 300 players hold active professional contracts across 16 clubs in the 2024/25 season. Players in lower tiers are indirectly affected, as the agreement sets a precedent for future negotiations at those levels.
Description:	The II Collective Agreement is the result of two rounds of collective bargaining (2019-2020 and 2022-2024). It is legally binding and enforceable through

	Spanish labour courts. On maternity and conciliation, it introduces: Contract protection — a player who becomes pregnant in her final contract year has the explicit right to extend her contract by one year under identical conditions. The club cannot refuse this. This reinforces the right introduced by Organic Law 2/2024 (Ley de Paridad). Team integration — clubs must maintain the player's full integration throughout pregnancy, adapting training without isolation. On-site nurseries — all Liga F clubs must provide creche or nursery services for players' children under three years old, during both training and match days. First mandatory childcare in any Spanish sports collective agreement. Breastfeeding rooms — clubs must designate and equip a dedicated breastfeeding room within their facilities. Post-natal recovery programme — Liga F commits to making post-natal physical and psychological recovery specialists available to returning players. Mental health provision — each club's medical team must include a mental health professional. Working group on maternity — a joint working group (clubs + unions) to develop additional protective measures. Minimum salary: EUR 22,500 gross/season (2024/25), rising to EUR 23,500 (2025/26). Illness and injury covered at 100% from day one. Training fund: EUR 70,000 per season, with individual grants of up to EUR 1,000 per player.
Results achieved:	Measurable results: 97% of Liga F players voted in favour of the II Agreement. The agreement is legally binding and enforceable. Mandatory nursery and breastfeeding room provisions entered into force upon BOE publication (April 2025). Minimum salary increased 10.7% between the I and II Agreements. The EUR 70,000 annual training fund was operative from the 2024/25 season. Qualitative results: For the first time in Spanish professional sport, a collective agreement treats maternity as a structural issue requiring club-level infrastructure, not a personal matter. The agreement is already referenced in discussions about a potential collective agreement for the second division (1RFEF Femenina). Several players who previously faced contract non-renewals following pregnancy have cited the agreement as the legal basis for their position.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The II Agreement directly addresses structural barriers that historically forced female athletes to choose between their career and motherhood. Structural change: the automatic contract extension right overturns the common practice of non-renewal following pregnancy. By making the extension legally enforceable, it removes the primary financial disincentive to motherhood in professional football. Tackling stereotypes: the post-natal recovery programme and mental health provision challenge the expectation that players should return to performance as if pregnancy had not happened. They formalise the understanding that pregnancy requires specific professional support, not just reduced activity. Equal treatment: the salary provisions, particularly the 100% illness guarantee and the seniority increment, reward career longevity rather than penalising it. Inclusion: the nursery obligation on match days removes a practical barrier — players with young children were previously unable to travel with the team without arranging private childcare.
***Transferability and scalability:**	Within Spain: the agreement already serves as a reference model for second-division negotiations and for unions in handball, volleyball, and futsal seeking their first collective agreements. The specific provisions on nurseries, breastfeeding rooms, and post-natal support can be adopted directly as templates. Across Europe: the agreement has attracted attention from women's football associations and unions in France, Germany, and the Netherlands. The key transferable elements are: (a) the contract extension mechanism, which requires only a modification of employment law or a sectoral agreement; (b) the working group structure, which allows ongoing development of protections without reopening the full agreement; (c) the mandatory childcare infrastructure requirement. The Liga F model

	demonstrates that a professional women's sports league can negotiate and implement maternity provisions without requiring prior legislative change — though the Spanish legal context (Law 39/2022 and LO 2/2024) created a supportive framework.
Website:	https://www.ligaf.es | BOE-A-2025-8349 (Official State Gazette, 25 April 2025)

MAMA National and European best practices	
Name:	II Collective Agreement for Women's Basketball Players — Liga Endesa (II Convenio Colectivo para las Jugadoras de Baloncesto de la Liga Femenina)
When:	First Agreement: 2007. Second Agreement signed: 22 February 2024. Published in the Official State Gazette (BOE): 8 May 2024 (BOE-A-2024-9300). Currently in force — runs July 2023 to June 2024, with automatic annual renewal.
Where:	Spain — national scope. Applies to all clubs in the Primera División Nacional de Baloncesto Femenino (Liga Endesa / Liga Femenina).
Who:	Asociación Nacional de Baloncesto Femenino (ANBF) as coordinating employer entity. Sindicato de Jugadoras de Baloncesto (SIJUBA) as the players' union.
Objectives:	Establish minimum labour conditions for women's basketball players in Spain, with specific objectives to: formally prohibit discrimination based on pregnancy, breastfeeding, or childcare status; require clubs to take active protective measures for players who choose to become mothers; introduce a protocol for the prevention and response to sexual harassment and harassment based on sex (new in the II Agreement); provide explicit protections for players who are victims of gender-based violence.
Stakeholders of the project:	ANBF — Asociación Nacional de Baloncesto Femenino (clubs, employer side). SIJUBA — Sindicato de Jugadoras de Baloncesto (players' union). Spanish Ministry of Labour (registration and BOE publication). Club medical teams (responsible for conciliation and psychological support). Spanish Basketball Federation (FEB — regulatory context).
Beneficiaries:	All players contracted in the Primera División Nacional de Baloncesto Femenino, including affiliate players called up to first-team squads at least 12 times per season. Approximately 200-250 players active under this agreement per season across 16 clubs.
Description:	Women's basketball reached its first collective agreement in 2007, one of the earliest in any European women's sport. The II Agreement (2024) significantly strengthens the maternity and equality provisions. Anti-discrimination framework: the agreement explicitly classifies any unfavourable treatment linked to pregnancy, breastfeeding, or childcare as direct sex discrimination, giving players a concrete legal basis for challenges through labour courts. Maternity protection obligation: clubs must take all necessary measures to protect players who decide to become mothers (pregnancy, adoption, fostering), with no form of coercion or penalisation permissible. Conciliation measures include: schedule adaptation; economic assistance for childcare; psychological support via club medical team. Gender-based violence provisions (new in II Agreement): clubs must adapt schedules, provide financial support for the victim and her children where possible, and ensure access to psychological services. Harassment protocol (new in II Agreement): the first formal Protocol for the Prevention and Response to Sexual Harassment and Harassment Based on Sex in Liga Endesa women's basketball. Working conditions: minimum salary EUR 16,000 gross/season; full-time contracts as general rule; maximum 35

	working hours/week; clubs fund all travel, meals, and accommodation for official matches.
Results achieved:	Measurable results: the agreement is legally binding and registered with the Ministry of Labour. The harassment protocol is operational across all Liga Endesa clubs since entry into force. The gender-based violence provisions are the first in any Spanish women's sports collective agreement to address this issue explicitly. Qualitative results: the anti-discrimination framework has clarified the legal position of players who previously had no clear recourse when contracts were not renewed following pregnancy. The II Agreement establishes a significantly stronger equality baseline than the I Agreement (2007). It is the second most-cited model (after Liga F) in discussions about extending collective bargaining to other women's sports in Spain.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The II Agreement addresses gender equality through three mechanisms. Anti-discrimination: by naming pregnancy, breastfeeding, and childcare as protected categories and classifying adverse treatment as direct sex discrimination, the agreement gives players a concrete legal tool previously absent. Structural barrier removal: the maternity protection obligation and the explicit ban on coercion address the well-documented informal pressure on female athletes not to become pregnant, communicated through contract non-renewals or exclusion from team activities. Violence and harassment: the gender-based violence provisions and the new harassment protocol address forms of discrimination structurally connected to the same gender power dynamics. Their inclusion in a collective agreement signals the clubs' direct institutional responsibility, not simply reliance on general criminal or labour law.
***Transferability and scalability:**	Within Spain: the agreement serves as a reference for handball, volleyball, and futsal unions exploring their first collective agreements. The anti-discrimination framework and harassment protocol are particularly relevant as standalone elements that could be incorporated into federation regulations even without a full collective agreement. Across Europe: the agreement is notable for its gender-based violence provisions and harassment protocol, both ahead of most European women's sports agreements. FIBA Europe has highlighted these two elements in discussions about minimum standards for women's professional leagues. Scalability: most maternity and equality provisions involve schedule flexibility, procedural obligations, and access to existing club medical services — not major new expenditures. This makes the model accessible to leagues operating with limited resources.
Website:	https://www.feb.es | BOE-A-2024-9300 (Official State Gazette, 8 May 2024)

MAMA National and European best practices	
Name:	Plan ADOP — Maternity Provisions for Paralympic Athletes (Spanish Paralympic Committee)
When:	Plan ADOP has operated since 2001. Maternity provisions have been progressively strengthened from 2016 onwards. Currently ongoing — the 2026 edition covers the Milan-Cortina 2026 and Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic cycles.
Where:	Spain — national scope. Administered by the Spanish Paralympic Committee (CPE). Athletes may be based anywhere in Spain or training abroad.
Who:	Comite Paralimpico Espanol (CPE — Spanish Paralympic Committee), in partnership with the Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD).
Objectives:	Plan ADOP is a high-performance support programme for Spanish Paralympic athletes. Its maternity provisions have three specific objectives: ensure that pregnancy does not result in the loss of economic support,

	access to services, or programme status; provide a funded pathway for post-natal return to sport and competition; establish that maternity is a supported life event within a high-performance programme, not an interruption that ends programme participation.
Stakeholders of the project:	Comite Paralimpico Espanol (CPE — programme administrator). Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD — public funder). Club and federation medical teams (post-natal return-to-sport support). Spanish Paralympic athletes and their families. COE Maternity and Sport Commission (cites Plan ADOP as a reference model).
Beneficiaries:	All athletes included in Plan ADOP. The 2026 edition covers 191 athletes and technical staff. Targeted at elite Paralympic athletes with real medal prospects at the next Paralympic Games, across a wide range of sports and impairment categories. Non-biological maternity (adoption, fostering) is also covered.
Description:	Plan ADOP provides monthly grants, medical support, nutritional guidance, physiotherapy, psychological services, and competition funding to Spain's top Paralympic athletes. Maternity provisions: Grant continuity — from the moment an athlete communicates her pregnancy to the CPE, she continues to receive her full monthly grant without interruption until eight months after the birth of the child, regardless of whether she is able to train or compete. The grant is not reduced, suspended, or conditioned on any activity requirement. Status preservation — pregnancy does not trigger an exit review or reassessment. All associated services (medical, nutritional, physiotherapy, psychological) continue uninterrupted throughout pregnancy and the eight-month post-natal period. Return-to-sport fund — after the eight-month period, an athlete returning to competition can access up to EUR 500 to cover participation costs (travel, accommodation, registration fees) during the reinstatement phase, reducing the financial barrier to competitive return. Scope — the 2026 edition covers 191 athletes and technical staff preparing for Milan-Cortina 2026 and Los Angeles 2028.
Results achieved:	Measurable results: grant continuity of up to eight months post-birth has been in place for multiple programme cycles, benefiting multiple athletes per cycle. The 2026 edition covers 191 athletes, all with access to maternity provisions as standard programme terms. No athlete has been removed from Plan ADOP due to pregnancy since the current provisions entered into force. Qualitative results: several Spanish Paralympic athletes — including multiple medallists — have publicly cited Plan ADOP's maternity provisions as a decisive factor in continuing their career after having children. The programme is regularly cited by the COE Maternity and Sport Commission as a model for Olympic and non-Paralympic sports programmes. The provisions address a unique intersection of disability, gender, and parenthood absent from most other sports support frameworks.
Gender equality and inclusion:	Plan ADOP's maternity provisions address a particular form of structural exclusion: elite disabled female athletes face both the gender-related barriers common to all female athletes and the additional precarity associated with disability, making private childcare and career interruptions more costly. Removing economic barriers: the eight-month grant continuation removes the primary financial incentive to choose between a competitive career and maternity. For athletes whose income depends on their ADOP grant, this is the difference between a viable and an unviable choice. Challenging incompatibility narratives: the programme's formal stance — that pregnancy is a supported event, not a reason to exit — directly challenges the assumption in many sports cultures that elite sport and motherhood are incompatible. For Paralympic athletes, who already face significant stereotyping about physical capability and life choices, this signal carries particular weight. Inclusion: by covering adoption and fostering alongside biological maternity, the programme acknowledges the diversity of paths to

	parenthood, including those more common among people with certain disabilities.
***Transferability and scalability:**	Within Spain: Plan ADOP is referenced in discussions about the Olympic equivalent (Plan ADO) and in negotiations around federation-level support for high-performance athletes. The eight-month grant continuity model is the most-cited specific measure for potential adoption in other programmes. Across Europe: national Paralympic Committees in several European countries have studied the CPE model. The key transferable elements are: (a) the grant continuity mechanism, which requires only a policy decision by the programme administrator; (b) the service continuity guarantee (medical, physiotherapy, psychology), which relies on existing programme infrastructure; (c) the return-to-sport fund, which involves relatively small amounts (EUR 500) but addresses a specific barrier at a critical transition point. For the MAMA project: Plan ADOP demonstrates that the most effective maternity protections in elite sport are not those requiring the largest investment, but those that remove specific barriers at specific moments — pregnancy announcement, post-natal return, and first competition after absence.
Website:	https://www.paralimpicos.es/plan-adop

MAMA National and European best practices	
Name:	CSD Annual Grants for Female Athletes — Maternity and Conciliation Programme (Ayudas a Mujeres Deportistas — Consejo Superior de Deportes)
When:	The programme has operated since 2016. Annual calls published each year. Currently ongoing — the most recent call was 2025 (covering 2024 activity). The 2025 call budget: EUR 449,229.98.
Where:	Spain — national scope. All athletes with a valid Spanish sports federation licence and accredited High-Level (DAN) or High-Performance Athlete (DAR) status.
Who:	Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD — Higher Sports Council), the main Spanish public body for sport policy, under the Ministry of Culture and Sport.
Objectives:	Three specific objectives: reduce the economic impact of maternity on athletes' careers through direct financial support at the point of birth, adoption, or fostering; support ongoing reconciliation of elite sport and childcare through nursery and carer cost contributions; enable athletes to invest in academic training during their career, reducing the long-term professional risk of career interruption due to motherhood.
Stakeholders of the project:	Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD — funder and programme administrator). Spanish sports federations (manage athlete accreditation; inform athletes of the call). National coaching centres — CARs and CTDs (liaise with athletes on application processes). Beneficiary athletes and their families.
Beneficiaries:	High-Level Athletes (DAN) and High-Performance Athletes (DAR) with a valid federation licence. Three target groups: (1) athletes who gave birth, adopted, or began a fostering arrangement in the previous year (Grant Line 1 — Maternity); (2) athletes with children under three enrolled in nurseries or with a professional carer during training periods (Grant Line 2 — Conciliation); (3) athletes pursuing regulated academic studies leading to an official national qualification (Grant Line 3 — Academic training).
Description:	The CSD grants programme is one of the few mechanisms in Spain reaching female athletes outside professional collective agreements — primarily DAN/DAR-accredited athletes in individual sports (athletics, swimming,

	cycling, combat sports, equestrian) who have no collective bargaining framework. Grant Line 1 — Maternity grant: awarded to DAN athletes who gave birth, adopted, or began a fostering process during the previous calendar year. Covers biological and non-biological maternity. Grant Line 2 — Conciliation grant: awarded to DAN and national team athletes with children under three enrolled in nurseries or with a professional carer during training. Directly addresses the daily practical cost of maintaining a training schedule while caring for a young child. Grant Line 3 — Academic training grant: for DAN and DAR athletes pursuing regulated academic studies leading to an officially recognised qualification. Supports career resilience for athletes who may need to interrupt or adjust their careers due to pregnancy or parenthood. Eligibility: valid sports federation licence and DAN/DAR accreditation. Applications submitted through the CSD's electronic office. Budget: EUR 449,229.98 for the 2024 call (programme 336A, budget concept 486.06).
Results achieved:	Measurable results: annual budget of approximately EUR 450,000 distributed across three grant lines each year since 2016. The programme covers athletes across all Olympic and non-Olympic sports with DAN/DAR accreditation — a broader scope than any collective agreement. Grant Line 2 has been cited by athletes in individual sports as the only formal institutional support available to them for childcare costs during their competitive career. Qualitative results: the programme signals that the Spanish state recognises maternity as a specific risk factor in elite athletic careers. Several Olympic and Paralympic athletes have cited the grants as enabling them to return to competition after childbirth without having to choose between childcare costs and training expenses. The academic training grant addresses a long-term career security concern disproportionately relevant for female athletes, who statistically retire earlier and earn less from sport than male counterparts.
Gender equality and inclusion:	Direct economic support: the maternity and conciliation grants address the most immediate financial barrier to combining elite sport with motherhood — the cost of childbirth, childcare, and career interruption during a period of reduced income. Reaching athletes outside collective agreements: the programme's most important gender equality contribution is its scope. While collective agreements cover only professional leagues (Liga F, Liga Endesa), the CSD grants reach individual sport athletes — gymnasts, swimmers, cyclists, judokas, rowers — for whom no sectoral protection exists. These athletes are disproportionately women in Olympic sports where professional structures are absent. Long-term career equity: the academic training grant addresses the structural inequality that female athletes face at the end of their careers — they retire younger, with less accumulated savings, and with less post-sport employment infrastructure than male counterparts. Enabling academic study during a career reduces this long-term disadvantage.
***Transferability and scalability:**	Within Spain: the CSD model could be extended to athletes without DAN/DAR status, who currently fall completely outside all maternity support frameworks. A lower-threshold version of Grant Lines 1 and 2, available to all licensed athletes, would significantly expand coverage. Across Europe: several EU countries have national sports councils or equivalent bodies that fund elite athlete support programmes. The CSD model is directly adaptable: it requires a budget allocation, a clear eligibility criterion (federation licence and elite accreditation), and an annual call process. None of these elements require legislative change. For the MAMA project: the programme is particularly relevant for countries where collective bargaining in women's sport is absent or nascent. It demonstrates that public institutions can provide a safety net for maternity in sport independently of whether private-sector employers have negotiated protections.

Website:	https://www.csd.gob.es — Annual call published each year in the BOE (Resolution of the CSD on grants for female athletes, programme 336A concept 486.06)

MAMA National and European best practices	
Name:	Legislative Framework Reform: Sports Act 39/2022 and Organic Law 2/2024 — Maternity Rights for Professional Female Athletes in Spain
When:	Sports Act 39/2022: published 30 December 2022, in force from 1 January 2023 (BOE-A-2022-24430). Organic Law 2/2024 (Ley de Paridad): published 1 August 2024, amendments to Royal Decree 1006/1985 in force immediately (BOE-A-2024-16230). Both are permanent legislation — ongoing with no end date.
Where:	Spain — national scope. Applies to all sports federations, professional leagues, and professional athletes operating under Spanish labour law.
Who:	Spanish Parliament (Cortes Generales) as the legislative body. Ministry of Culture and Sport as the proposing body. Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD) responsible for monitoring federation compliance.
Objectives:	The two pieces of legislation together pursue the following objectives in relation to maternity in women's sport: make conciliation planning mandatory for all Spanish sports federations and professional leagues; protect elite athlete status (DAN) from loss due to pregnancy or post-natal inactivity; introduce an automatic contract extension right for professional athletes who become pregnant in the final year of their contract; explicitly grant professional female athletes all conciliation rights available under general labour law; declare null and void any contractual clause permitting termination on grounds of pregnancy or maternity.
Stakeholders of the project:	Spanish Parliament (legislative body). Ministry of Culture and Sport and Consejo Superior de Deportes (proposing and implementing bodies). All Spanish sports federations and professional leagues (subject to compliance obligations — approximately 60 with professional or semi-professional women's competitions). Trade unions (FUTPRO, SIJUBA, AFE and others — active in the consultation process). COE (Spanish Olympic Committee) and CPE (Spanish Paralympic Committee — contributed to the legislative debate).
Beneficiaries:	All licensed female athletes in Spain are directly or indirectly affected. Most concrete immediate beneficiaries: professional female athletes under contract (contractual provisions of LO 2/2024); DAN-accredited athletes (status-retention provision of Law 39/2022). Indirectly: all female athletes whose federations are required to produce conciliation plans.
Description:	The two legislative instruments together constitute the most significant reform of the legal framework for women in Spanish sport since the adoption of the Workers' Statute. Sports Act 39/2022 — key maternity provisions: Mandatory conciliation plans — all professional leagues and sports federations must draft and publish a specific conciliation and co-responsibility plan with concrete maternity and breastfeeding protection measures. Failure to produce a plan is an administrative infringement. DAN status protection — female athletes with High-Level Athlete status retain it and all associated benefits (tax reductions, access to national sports centres, priority in public sector employment) throughout pregnancy and the post-natal period, regardless of competitive inactivity. Voting rights — athletes retain their right to vote in federation assemblies even if they do not meet standard licence or minimum activity requirements during pregnancy or the post-natal period. Annual equality report — federations and leagues must publish an annual

	equality report and maintain an anti-harassment and anti-discrimination protocol. Organic Law 2/2024 (Ley de Paridad) — amendments to Royal Decree 1006/1985: Article 6 bis (new) — Contract extension — in the event of pregnancy or adoption, a professional female athlete may extend her contract by one year under identical conditions. If pregnancy occurs in the final year of the contract, the extension is automatic — the club cannot refuse it. Article 7 bis (new) — Conciliation rights — female athletes are explicitly granted all work-life conciliation rights available under general labour law, including parental leave, reduction of working hours for childcare, and schedule adaptation. Exercising these rights cannot be grounds for contract termination.
Results achieved:	Measurable results: Sports Act 39/2022 created a legal obligation for all Spanish federations to produce conciliation plans — approximately 60 federations with professional or semi-professional women's competitions are directly affected. The automatic contract extension right (LO 2/2024) has been cited in at least two Liga F cases where players used it in 2024/25 contract negotiations. The null-clause provision has given legal backing to union challenges against non-renewal clauses in individual contracts. Qualitative results: the legislative reform created a public and institutional statement that maternity in women's sport is a policy issue, not a matter for individual clubs and athletes to resolve privately. The mandatory conciliation plans provision has prompted several federations to engage with the issue formally for the first time. The DAN status protection removed a specific anxiety for elite individual sport athletes considering pregnancy — namely, the loss of tax and access benefits associated with DAN status.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The two laws together represent the most direct legislative intervention against gender discrimination in professional sport in Spain's democratic history. Null clauses: the explicit nullification of pregnancy-based termination clauses removes the most direct contractual mechanism for excluding women from professional sport on grounds of maternity. Systemic change: the mandatory conciliation plan requirement moves maternity from an individual negotiation between a player and her club to a structural obligation on the institution (the federation or league). This is the definition of systemic change as described in the MAMA guidelines — it shifts the burden from the individual to the institution. Precedent: the legal framework creates a floor that applies regardless of whether an athlete has union representation or is in a sport with a collective agreement. For athletes in individual sports, or in sports without any collective framework, the Sports Act and LO 2/2024 are the only formal protections available.
***Transferability and scalability:**	Within Spain: the legislation applies to all federations. The key challenge is enforcement — the CSD has limited capacity to verify compliance with conciliation plan obligations across all relevant federations. Across Europe: both instruments are relevant as legislative models for countries reviewing or drafting sport legislation. Key transferable elements: (a) the mandatory conciliation plan obligation — a low-cost, high-signal measure that any national sports law can incorporate; (b) the DAN status protection — applicable in any country with a formal elite athlete accreditation system; (c) the contract extension right — requires amendment of the relevant employment law or sports labour decree, with no public expenditure required. For the MAMA project: Spain's legislative experience demonstrates that policy-level change in women's sport does not require a separate women's sport law. It can be achieved through targeted amendments to existing sports legislation and employment law — an important message for partner countries where comprehensive legislative reform is not politically feasible.
Website:	BOE-A-2022-24430 (Law 39/2022, 30 December 2022) | BOE-A-2024-16230 (Organic Law 2/2024, 1 August 2024) | https://www.boe.es

5.9. Additional examples England and Poland

MAMA National and European best practises	
Name:	Rugby Football Union Maternity Policy
When:	The policy was announced in 2023 and is now part of all contracts for centrally contracted England Rugby players
Where:	England
Who:	The Rugby Football Union and the Rugby Players Association
Objectives:	To provide a '*supportive environment for players after having children as well as establishing policies to support players during pregnancy*'
Stakeholders of the project:	The Rugby Football Union and the Rugby Players Association
Beneficiaries:	Centrally contracted rugby players with the England Rugby National team
Description:	The RFU will support the right of the player who wishes to continue to be involved in the team, while ensuring that the safety of the player and the unborn child are considered first. A full risk assessment will be undertaken when a player first advises of pregnancy which will be a significant factor in determining what duties can be safely performed during pregnancy. The policy also provides opportunities for players due to go on maternity leave (26 weeks on full pay), to move into other safe employment within the rugby network, e.g., community coach, until the player goes on maternity leave. If at any point during pregnancy or whilst on maternity leave, contracts are renegotiated or extended, the player who is pregnant or on maternity leave will be included in all discussions and have their contract extended for a period of not less than 12 months. Any player returning to the squad following maternity leave who has been selected to participate in the programme within 12 months of giving birth (or the main caregiver following adoption), and required to travel for training camps, may travel with their infant, provided that a support person travels to assist in the care and supervision of the infant. Where that infant is less than 12 months old, the player will be supported by the RFU to have their infant and support person travel with them for competitions with all travel and accommodation costs met by the RFU. While this will ordinarily be the period immediately before and after a match this will be extended for any overseas travel in consultation with the wishes of the player. There will be a similar provision made for any player who would prefer for their infant to remain in the home environment.
Results achieved:	The policy is now standard part of England contracts, providing safety and security for players and normalising athlete-motherhood.
Gender equality and inclusion:	"The policy will help normalise motherhood in sport and give players the best possible chance of returning to play should they wish to do so in a secure and safe way."
***Transferability and scalability:**	This policy provides a great template for other national federations looking to offer maternity policies for their athletes.
Website:	

MAMA National and European best practices	
Name:	Catch'n Serve Ball – The Championship Road of the Polish Women's Team
When:	2025 – present
Where	The city of Łomianki (Poland) and in cooperation with other countries in Europe via the international association ICSBF
Who:	Osa Łomianki Catch'n Serve Ball – Sports Club
Objectives:	To promote Catch'n Serve Ball in Poland and Europe. The support and empowerment of mothers, as well as integration and inclusion regardless of social status, are fundamental objectives. Specific objectives: - Encouraging mothers to take up the sport - To enable former elite female athletes to return to sport after motherhood - Participation in national and international sports competition - To reach out to women who tend to have limited access to sport - Increase in tourism activity, breaking down fears of cultural differences and language barriers - To reverse the stereotype: the mother is the star. - To serve as a role model within the family, particularly for girls (daughters) - Increasing the proportion of women as athletes, coaches and decision-makers (officials) - Empowerment of women - Raising the visibility of mothers in sport
Project participants:	- The University of Physical Education in Warsaw (Poland) - The Multiplicity of the city of Łomianki (Poland) - Sports Clubs - International Catch'n Serve Ball Sports Federation (ICSBF) - CSIT – International Workers and Amateurs in Sports Confederation
Beneficiaries:	- Individuals: mothers, women over 30 without children, women who face significant barriers to accessing sport (single mothers, mothers with a history of migration or displacement, women with disabilities and severely overweight women, mothers facing multiple challenges, former elite female athletes - Sports organisations and clubs with their members - Social institutions - Business institutions – sponsorships agreements - Local market and service providers.
Description:	**Project Description** The project focused on the development and promotion of a women's sports initiative through the Catch'n Serve Ball discipline, supporting the Osa Łomianki team on their "Championship Road" toward participation in the International CSIT Championships in Nastola, Finland (March 12–15, 2026). This international event was dedicated to mothers of all ages and women over 30, offering a unique opportunity for inclusive participation in sport at a global level.

	As part of the programme, after a 2 day Catch'nServe Ball multiplier seminar organized in Warsaw (Poland) in May 2025 by the International Catch'n Serve Ball Federation a women's Catch'n Serve Ball section was established in Łomianki. The core objective was to provide regular, team-based sports activities for women while introducing and developing skills in this relatively new and dynamic sport. All sessions were offered free of charge to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. **Activities and Sessions:** • Weekly team training sessions focused on learning the rules, techniques, and tactics of Catch'n Serve Ball • Physical conditioning exercises aimed at improving strength, coordination, and overall fitness • Practice matches and internal tournaments that built team cohesion and competitive readiness • Participation in international tournaments, including a key event in Berlin (October 24–26, 2025), which provided valuable international experience • Organization of a local international sports event in Łomianki on March 8, 2026 (International Women's Day), promoting the sport and women's participation **Supportive and Inclusive Environment:** A unique feature of the programme was its family-friendly approach. Mothers were able to attend training sessions with their children, who were provided with a dedicated play area equipped with toys and sports equipment. This enabled women to engage in physical activity without childcare barriers. **Methods and Approach:** • Non-formal education through sport, emphasizing learning by doing and peer support • Team-building exercises that fostered trust, communication, and collaboration • Leadership development by encouraging participants to take on roles such as team captains, coordinators, statisticians, or assistant trainers • Mentoring and knowledge-sharing led by experienced members, including international federation representatives • Promotion of intercultural exchange and international cooperation through participation in global events **Impact and Outcomes:** The project strengthened both the physical and mental well-being of participants while creating a supportive community of women. It encouraged social interaction, the exchange of life and sports experiences, and the formation of new friendships. Additionally, it promoted the empowerment of women by strengthening their role both on and off the sports field, fostering confidence, leadership, and active participation in community life.
Results achieved:	Results by target indicators in Poland, interim report of the official Facebook Fanpage, September 2025-April 2026: - 141 265 - he total number of times project-related content—such as reels, posts, stories, and promotional materials—was displayed or played across communication channels. - 27590 - The number of Meta accounts that viewed your content at least once. This may include reels, posts, stories, live video broadcasts, and advertisements. - 707 - The number of plays of reels that lasted for at least 1 minute. For a single playback instance, replays are not counted. This metric

	is calculated based on the total minutes of the reel that were actually watched, rather than the elapsed playback time. - 32 weekly training sessions took place. - 2 training groups regularly practising. - 43 people were registered in the database Osa Łomianki Catch'n Serve Ball sport section. - Participation in 3 international events. - Participation in the World Championships in Finland with the final ranking 13 place. - 2 new Catch'n Serve Ball clubs in two other cities. - Furthermore, Catch'n Serve has now become so well-known that – much like volleyball – it is played for fun on beach volleyball courts, in fields, in school playgrounds - To date, 7 people have been trained as coaches, multipliers and referees - Osa Łomianki is the only sports club that offers a team sport activity for adult women.
Gender equality and inclusion:	The project actively promoted gender equality and equal opportunities by creating an inclusive and accessible space dedicated specifically to adult women, including mothers, who are often underrepresented in organised team sports. By offering free participation and a family-friendly training environment, the initiative helped remove structural barriers such as financial limitations and lack of childcare, enabling broader access to regular physical activity. A total of 32 weekly training sessions were conducted, with 2 training groups practising regularly. In total, 43 participants were registered in the Osa Łomianki Catch'n Serve Ball sports section, demonstrating strong engagement and outreach among women in the local community. Notably, Osa Łomianki remained the only sports club in the area offering a structured team sport activity exclusively for adult women, directly addressing a significant gap in local sports provision. The project challenged gender stereotypes by encouraging women to take on active, visible roles in sport—not only as players but also as leaders. Participants were empowered to develop leadership competences, and to date, 7 individuals were trained as coaches, multipliers, and referees. This contributed to breaking traditional perceptions of women's roles in sport and supported long-term capacity building. Inclusion was further strengthened through international participation. The team took part in 3 international events, including the World Championships in Finland, where they achieved 13th place. These experiences promoted intercultural exchange, confidence-building, and visibility of women in sport on an international stage. The project also contributed to the wider development and accessibility of the discipline. As a result of its success, 2 new Catch'n Serve Ball clubs were established in other cities, expanding opportunities for women beyond the local context. Moreover, the sport itself gained significant popularity and visibility—similarly to volleyball, it began to be played informally in public spaces such as beach courts, open fields, and school playgrounds, further supporting inclusion and community integration.

	Overall, the initiative effectively addressed gender inequality in sport by creating equal opportunities, reducing barriers to participation, promoting leadership among women, and fostering a more inclusive and diverse sporting environment.
***Transferability and scalability:**	The concept and measures are based on a 8 month practical experience. The key pillars for implementation and transmission are: 1. Methods for raising awareness at major events, amongst interested groups, sports federations and clubs through exhibition matches, interactive stations and try out sessions 2. Organize regulary training sessions. 3. Well-established training modules as part of two-day seminars covering theory and practice for: - Coaches - Referees - Influencers All modules are easy to implenet by other sport clubs in Poland and international. All modules have been adapted for the international federation and have already been delivered in several European countries. There is a desire to expand the programme to other European countries.
Website:	- https://ksosa.pl// - https://www.facebook.com/osa.lomianki.CnSB?locale=pl_PL - https://www.catchandserve-ball.com

6. Recommendations

Across all partner countries, awareness of gender equality in sport has increased considerably, and important progress has been made in promoting women's participation, leadership, and inclusion. However, maternity remains one of the least developed policy areas within sport systems.

The research identified several common challenges:

- Lack of maternity-specific policies and regulations.
- Insufficient financial and contractual protections.
- Limited return-to-sport support mechanisms.
- Inadequate childcare and family-support services.
- Persistent stereotypes regarding motherhood and elite sport.
- Limited research and evidence on athlete-mother experiences.

At the same time, the analysis revealed growing recognition that motherhood should not represent the end of an athletic career and that institutional support can significantly improve athlete wellbeing, career longevity, and gender equality outcomes.

Future efforts should focus on:

1. Developing national and organizational maternity policies for sport.
2. Establishing minimum standards for maternity protection and contractual security.
3. Creating evidence-based return-to-sport frameworks.
4. Providing multidisciplinary support involving coaches, medical professionals, psychologists, and physiotherapists.
5. Introducing childcare and family-friendly measures within sport organizations.
6. Expanding research and monitoring systems focused on athlete motherhood.
7. Promoting education and awareness to challenge stereotypes and normalize motherhood within elite sport.
8. Strengthening cooperation between sport organizations, policymakers, healthcare providers, and athlete representatives.

Such measures would contribute to creating sport environments in which women can pursue both athletic excellence and motherhood without being forced to choose between the two.

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ANNEX

GREECE

The limited identification of best practices in the area of maternity in sport in Greece—compared to examples such as FIFA or clubs like AC Milan—is primarily due to structural and institutional limitations.

First, many women athletes do not have a stable professional status, as they are often classified as amateur or semi-professional. As a result, standard labour protections related to maternity, such as paid leave or financial support, are not effectively applied.

Second, there is a lack of sport-specific policies and regulatory frameworks within sports organizations. Unlike international bodies that have introduced formal measures (e.g. contract protection and mandatory maternity provisions), Greece has not yet developed a systematic approach.

Third, limited knowledge, absence of guidelines, and lack of structured support systems (medical, coaching, and psychosocial) further hinder the development and implementation of such practices.

Finally, cultural factors and persistent stereotypes around motherhood and athletic performance continue to influence the policy environment, reinforcing the perception that maternity is incompatible with a sports career.

Overall, the limited number of identified best practices is not due to a lack of interest, but rather the result of combined structural, economic, and cultural barriers that have so far prevented their systematic development.

SERBIA

The legal status of athletes in the Republic of Serbia is regulated through a combination of general labour law regulations and specific regulations related to the field of sport, with the **Law on Sport** having the character of a special legal framework (*lex specialis*). Such a normative structure determines the specific status of athletes in relation to classical employment relationships, which is particularly reflected in the rights and obligations of female athletes during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Professional athletes in Serbia may establish an employment relationship with a sports organization, most commonly a club, through an employment contract specifically adapted to the nature of sports activity. Unlike most other fields of work, the contract of a professional athlete is concluded exclusively for a fixed term, in accordance with sports cycles and the duration of competitive engagements. Although this contract provides certain employment-related rights, such as social insurance and salary, working conditions significantly differ from the classical employment regime, as they are aligned with the dynamics of the training process and the competition calendar.

In addition to employment contracts, various forms of sports contracts that do not imply the establishment of an employment relationship are widely present in practice. These primarily include contracts on participation in sport, contracts on sports development, as well as scholarship contracts for young athletes. These forms of engagement are particularly present among young athletes and athletes in developmental categories, but also in certain professional sports. Their specificity lies in the fact that they do not provide the full scope of rights arising from employment relationships, which further complicates the position of athletes in the event of career interruption due to pregnancy or parenthood.

An additional complexity of the legal status of athletes arises from the fact that their employment relationship, even when it exists, differs from a classical employment relationship in terms of the organization of working time, the manner of using leave, disciplinary responsibility, and the possibility of transfers during the duration of the contract. The specific characteristics of a sports career, such as the time-limited nature of the competitive period and dependence on sports performance and results, affect the instability of the professional status of athletes compared to other professions.

Athletes in individual sports also have a special status, as they may operate as independent professionals, that is, as self-employed individuals. In such cases, they do not have a classical relationship with an employer but generate income through prizes, sponsorship contracts, and other forms of financial support, while being personally responsible for regulating their social and health insurance.

Within the normative framework of sport in the Republic of Serbia, the issue of motherhood of female athletes appears very limited and fragmented, and one of the rare examples of its recognition can be found in the regulation governing the system of state funding of elite athletes through scholarships. Within the regulations related to the national categorization of elite athletes and the scholarship system, the possibility is provided for the status of a female athlete and the right to a scholarship to be preserved during the period of pregnancy, which represents one of the rare institutional support mechanisms in this field. These regulations define the conditions and procedures for awarding scholarships to elite athletes categorized through the national categorization system, as well as the period for which the scholarship is approved and paid.

All the above-mentioned specificities of the legal status of athletes in Serbia directly affect the position of female athletes during pregnancy and after childbirth. Since their professional status is not always based on a classical employment relationship, but often depends on various forms of contractual engagement of limited duration, rights during pregnancy and parenthood are not systematically regulated in a unified manner. Precisely for this reason, there is no unified model of institutional support for athlete-mothers in Serbia, which indicates the need for the development of normative solutions and policies that would contribute to the creation of sports environments adapted to motherhood and to the long-term sustainability of women's sports careers.

In Serbia, there is an infrastructural basis for the development of gender equality policies in sport, reflected in the activities of certain organizations, projects, and initiatives aimed at improving the position of women in sport. However, there is no specialized initiative that systematically and continuously addresses the issue of motherhood in sport, nor are these issues institutionally regulated through national programmes, regulations, or strategic documents.

Particularly noticeable is the absence of:

- a national programme supporting female athletes during pregnancy
- systemic guidelines for returning to sport after childbirth
- institutional policies aimed at developing sports environments adapted to motherhood
- scientific research projects primarily focused on athlete-mothers

The topic of motherhood in sport in Serbia mostly appears through individual examples of successful returns of elite female athletes to the competitive system after childbirth, but without systemic institutional support that would transform such practices into a standardized support model.

Although there is a certain organizational and project-based foundation for improving the position of women in sport, the issue of motherhood of female athletes in Serbia has still not been recognized as a separate area of public policy or research activity, which indicates significant room for the development of future initiatives and examples of good practice.