



WHPP Project Overview

breaking the ice: empowering women in hockey



Co-funded by
the European Union

CONTENTS

1	About the project Women's Hockey Partnership for Progress (WHPP)	4
2	The Context of Women in Ice Hockey.....	7
2.1	The historical context.....	7
2.2	The Current State of Women in Ice Hockey	8
	Europe – A Diverse Landscape	8
	The Danube–Balkan Region (Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina)	8
2.3	Social and Cultural Barriers: The societal norms and expectations that limit girls' participation	11
	Gender Norms and Stereotypes.....	11
	Lack of Role Models and Visibility	11
	Family and Community Expectations	11
	Psychological Barriers.....	11
	Structural and Access Barriers.....	11
2.4	Good practices in Nordic counties.....	12
3	Insights Into Gender, Motivation, and Barriers in Women's Ice Hockey.....	13
3.1	Report of key findings: Athletes' survey	15
3.2	Report of key findings: Coaches' survey	18
3.3	What we learned	23
4	Qualitative study on challenges of female ice hockey players in the Balkan area	24
4.1	Results.....	25
4.2	Conclusions: A Journey Marked by Transitions, Obstacles, and Possibilities.....	27
4.3	What we learned: WHPP Can Make a Difference	28
5	A checklist for organising Women Ice Hockey Tournament	29
5.1	Overview of a WHPP Tournament.....	29
5.2	Have the right knowledge	30
5.3	Connect with other teams	31
5.4	Get the proper facilities.....	31
6	Open days.....	32
6.1	Report: Bosnia and Herzegovina	32
6.2	Report: Croatia	34
6.3	Report: Serbia.....	35
6.4	Report: Slovenia	36
7	Key Lessons & Recommendations.....	37
8	Conclusion	38
9	About the project partners	40

DISCLAIMER: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

All photos copyright by the WHPP, except where indicated otherwise.

1 About the project Women's Hockey Partnership for Progress (WHPP)

The Women's Hockey Partnership for Progress (WHPP) is a collaborative project aimed at advancing girls' and women's ice hockey across Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Austria. The project seeks to address gender disparities in the sport, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for female players. By improving access to hockey, developing coaching, and promoting role models, the WHPP aims to inspire a new generation of female athletes.



Main goals of WHPP:

1. **Identify and Address Barriers:** The WHPP aims to recognize and tackle the social, psychological, structural, and competitive barriers that limit female participation in ice hockey. The project focuses on breaking down gender stereotypes and increasing access to the sport for girls and women.
2. **Improve Coaching and Management:** The project works to build a dedicated network of coaches committed to the female game, from grassroots to high-performance levels. By sharing best practices and implementing club-level programs, WHPP enhances the quality of coaching and management tailored to female athletes.
3. **Promote Girls' Ice Hockey:** The project is committed to raising the profile of women's ice hockey in Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Austria. Through increased visibility and promotion, WHPP encourages greater participation and creates more opportunities for girls and women to engage with the sport.
4. **Empower Female Players:** WHPP aims to inspire young female players through role models and leaders in women's hockey. By offering mentorship, real-game experiences, and creating inclusive spaces, the project seeks to empower girls, helping them build confidence and feel a sense of belonging in the sport.

Objectives of the WHPP:

1. **Educational Focus for Coaches and Players:** The project provides workshops and on-ice training sessions designed to help coaches and players address the psychological, social, and physical needs specific to female athletes.
2. **Role Model and Leadership Development:** By connecting young players with experienced female leaders in ice hockey, the project fosters inspiration and growth. Through mentorship programs, girls are encouraged to develop leadership skills and confidence both on and off the ice.
3. **Creating Inclusive Environments:** WHPP is dedicated to establishing inclusive environments where girls feel supported and can play alongside their peers. It creates shared spaces for female players to grow, learn, and bond over their love of the game.
4. **Collaborative Real-Time Learning:** The project organizes real-time competitions, such as mixed-team festivals, where girls can gain valuable game experience and learn from peers in different countries. These events build camaraderie and teamwork among players across the region.
5. **Sharing Best Practices Among Partners:** By collaborating with national ice hockey federations and international organizations, WHPP ensures the exchange of knowledge and practices to elevate female hockey across the partner countries.

Importance of Promoting Gender Equality and Empowerment in Ice Hockey

Promoting gender equality is a central pillar of WHPP's mission. Historically, female athletes have had limited access to opportunities in sports, and the WHPP is working to reverse that trend by ensuring equal resources, training, and competition opportunities for girls and women.

Empowering young female players through ice hockey goes beyond just their sports development. It helps them build confidence, resilience, and leadership skills, creating strong women both on and off the ice. By prioritizing gender equality and empowerment, WHPP not only elevates ice hockey but also contributes to broader societal change, making the sport a platform for growth, inclusion, and opportunity for all female athletes.

Promoting **gender equality and empowerment** in ice hockey is essential for several reasons. It challenges long-standing gender stereotypes by showing that women and girls are just as capable as men in competitive and physically demanding sports. This shift in perception encourages young girls to pursue their passions without the fear of being excluded or judged, making the sport more inclusive and accessible.

Creating equal opportunities is another key factor. Historically, sports have provided fewer opportunities for women in terms of resources, coaching, and competition. By ensuring that girls and women have access to the same quality of training, equipment, and chances to compete,

projects like WHPP work to create a more equitable playing field. When girls and women are given the same support as their male counterparts, they are able to develop their skills, reach their potential, and pursue careers in ice hockey, whether as players, coaches, or in leadership roles.

Empowering women through sports like ice hockey goes beyond physical development. It instills important life skills such as leadership, resilience, teamwork, and confidence. These are qualities that help girls not only in their athletic pursuits but also in other areas of life, such as education, career, and personal development. When girls and women are empowered in sports, they are more likely to emerge as strong leaders in their communities, serving as role models for future generations.

The mental and physical health benefits of sports cannot be overlooked. Participation in ice hockey helps improve fitness, but it also boosts mental well-being by creating a sense of belonging and accomplishment. Girls who feel included and valued in the sporting community develop positive self-images and are less likely to experience feelings of isolation.

Promoting gender equality in ice hockey also fosters broader social inclusion. When girls see themselves represented in the sport and know that there are programs supporting their participation, they are more likely to feel that they belong and are accepted. This inclusion helps reduce feelings of marginalization and opens up more opportunities for girls to connect with others and build lasting friendships and networks.

Sports, including ice hockey, are powerful platforms for driving societal change. By creating an equal playing field for girls and women, WHPP sends a message that gender equality is important not only in sports but in every aspect of life. When girls succeed and are recognized in sports, it reinforces the idea that women deserve equal opportunities in education, the workforce, and leadership positions.

Role models are another important factor. By empowering women in ice hockey, projects like WHPP provide young girls with examples of strong, successful women who have overcome challenges. This representation is critical for inspiring the next generation to take up the sport, strive for excellence, and continue the cycle of empowerment.

Finally, promoting gender equality strengthens teams and communities. Diverse teams benefit from a wider range of ideas, skills, and experiences, which enhances performance and enriches the sporting environment. Inclusivity leads to better collaboration and stronger bonds, both on the ice and in the wider community, making the sport more dynamic and sustainable.

WHPP project has impact promoting gender equality and empowerment in ice hockey in partner countries and is important because it creates fair and equal opportunities for girls and women, builds strong and confident future leaders, and contributes to the overall health, well-being, and inclusiveness of the sporting community and society as a whole. Empowering women in this way drives positive change not just in ice hockey but in every aspect of life.



2 The Context of Women in Ice Hockey

2.1 The historical context

The history of women in ice hockey reflects broader gender inequalities in sport. For much of the 19th and early 20th century, women's athletic participation was shaped by restrictive gender norms that positioned competitive sport as a male domain. Early female hockey players often operated on the margins: playing recreationally, forming informal teams, or appearing in exhibition games that were often presented as novelties rather than as legitimate competition.

The 1920s and 1930s saw the emergence of small women's leagues in North America, although these remained overshadowed by men's hockey and lacked institutional support. Throughout the mid-20th century, limited access to ice time, equipment, and coaching constrained the growth of the women's game. Despite this, early pioneers pushed forward, establishing the foundations for future generations. Their persistence gradually expanded competitive opportunities and increased acceptance of women in the sport.



Photo: HHOF

A major turning point came in 1990 with the first IIHF Women's World Championship in Ottawa, widely regarded as the event that formalised women's international competition. This milestone helped propel the inclusion of women's hockey in the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, offering global visibility and sparking increased participation across Europe and North America.

Yet, as with many sports, women's ice hockey continues to carry the legacy of historical inequality. Despite tremendous progress—rising participation rates, stronger national programmes, and increasing visibility—female players still face barriers related to funding, representation, and resources. As WHPP research confirms, these historical patterns of exclusion continue to shape the experiences of girls and women in ice hockey today, particularly in countries where the sport is still developing.

2.2 The Current State of Women in Ice Hockey

Women's ice hockey has grown significantly in recent decades, yet the development is highly uneven across regions. While countries like Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic have established competitive women's leagues and strong national teams, South-eastern Europe remains at an earlier stage of development, with smaller player pools, limited competitive structures, and cultural barriers that affect recruitment and retention.

Europe – A Diverse Landscape

Across Europe, women's participation continues to rise, supported by IIHF development programmes, national initiatives, and increasing visibility of elite women's leagues. Countries such as Finland and Sweden have professionalised parts of the women's game, offering structured pathways from youth levels to senior national teams. Central Europe—Czech Republic, Germany, Switzerland—has seen steady growth, reflected in strong international performances and more robust domestic leagues.

Despite these advancements, resource allocation remains unequal. Women's teams generally have less access to quality ice time, financial support, and sponsorship. Federations often lack female leadership, and coaching structures remain overwhelmingly male-dominated.

The Danube–Balkan Region (Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

The WHPP partner countries represent a rapidly developing but infrastructurally limited region for women's ice hockey. Across the Danube–Balkan area, the sport faces common challenges: small player bases, scarce ice facilities, and limited visibility in mainstream sport culture. Yet, these countries show strong commitment to building inclusive structures and expanding opportunities for girls.

Austria

Austria is the most developed women's hockey nation within the WHPP partnership. The country hosts the DEBL (women's league) and serves as a key regional hub, enabling cross-border competition for neighbouring countries. Austrian programmes benefit from a more established hockey culture, consistent youth development, and higher female participation than other Balkan partners.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina's women's hockey community is young but vibrant. Clubs such as ŽHK Lavice work actively to promote the sport and engage girls of all ages. WHPP events and training camps have significantly raised awareness of the female game. The Sarajevo Open Day exemplified strong local community engagement, generating new registrations and local media interest. Infrastructure remains a barrier, but motivation and community support are high.



Croatia

Croatia is in a rebuilding phase, with development driven largely by clubs in Sisak and Karlovac. Participation numbers remain modest, but international initiatives like WHPP and IIHF's World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend have improved recruitment. A major challenge is the scarcity of ice rinks, leading to alternative training models such as inline hockey sessions. Despite these constraints, enthusiasm among players and parents is a strong driver of growth.



Serbia

Women's hockey in Serbia remains small but determined. Limited facilities and logistical challenges constrain development, yet clubs are increasingly active in recruitment and cross-border cooperation. Participation in WHPP events contributes essential game experience for players at all levels.



Slovenia

Slovenia has made notable progress in recent years, with growing involvement of clubs such as HK Olimpija, HDK Maribor, and HK Triglav. The organisation of women's league matches, youth tournaments, and promotional events increases visibility, although challenges persist: lack of dedicated ice time, limited female teams, and dependency on mixed-gender training environments. WHPP initiatives have strengthened club cooperation and provided valuable education for coaches and role models.



2.3 Social and Cultural Barriers: The societal norms and expectations that limit girls' participation

Despite increasing visibility, girls and women in many European countries continue to face deep-rooted social and cultural barriers that shape their access to ice hockey. These include:

Gender Norms and Stereotypes

In many communities, ice hockey is still perceived as a “male sport,” associated with physicality, toughness, and aggression. Girls who express interest may encounter discouragement—from peers, parents, or coaches—based on beliefs that hockey is unsuitable for them. These stereotypes influence self-confidence, participation rates, and the types of opportunities offered to girls.

Lack of Role Models and Visibility

A central theme from the WHPP research is that girls rarely see women in hockey roles—whether as players, coaches, referees, or administrators. The absence of visible role models reduces motivation and reinforces the perception that the sport does not belong to them.

Family and Community Expectations

Girls often face pressures to prioritise school achievement, feminine-coded activities, or domestic responsibilities over sport participation. In some regions, socio-economic factors or concerns about safety, transportation, or time availability also limit girls' participation.

Psychological Barriers

Low confidence, fear of judgement, and discomfort entering male-dominated spaces are commonly cited barriers. Girls in mixed-gender environments may feel scrutinised or unwelcome, particularly during adolescence.

Structural and Access Barriers

Social norms intersect with practical obstacles:

- Limited rink availability
- Fewer female teams and leagues
- Coaching environments dominated by men
- Higher financial burden on families

These barriers collectively shape girls' early experiences and contribute to dropout rates around age around 14 to 16 years of age - a critical development stage identified within WHPP partner countries.

2.4 Good practices in Nordic counties

Nordic countries offer some of the most effective models for developing girls' and women's ice hockey. Their good practices demonstrate how structured support, visibility, and inclusive policies can accelerate growth in emerging hockey nations.

1. Early and Inclusive Recruitment

Finland and Sweden invest heavily in introducing girls to hockey at a young age. "Try hockey for free" events, cooperation with schools, and marketing featuring female players help normalise participation and reduce cultural barriers.

2. Clear Development Pathways

Nordic systems ensure continuity from beginner to elite levels—mixed-gender entry programmes, dedicated girls' leagues at U12–U18, and competitive senior leagues. This structure keeps girls engaged through adolescence and provides long-term motivation.

3. Support for Female Coaches and Leaders

Federations actively promote women in coaching by offering certification programmes, mentorship, and leadership training. Having women in visible coaching and management roles strengthens female representation and creates safer, more supportive environments.

4. Integrated School–Sport Models

Collaboration between schools and clubs allows flexible training schedules, structured strength and conditioning, and access to professional support services. This approach reduces dropout rates and helps girls balance sport and education.

5. Strong Visibility and Media Promotion

Nordic federations consistently highlight women's hockey through live-streaming, social media, and national campaigns. Increased visibility raises interest, attracts new players, and strengthens the public perception of women's hockey as a serious sport.

6. Cooperation Across Clubs and Regions

Shared training camps, inter-club tournaments, and regional collaboration ensure regular competition and help smaller clubs maintain player motivation and skill development.

7. Cultural Emphasis on Equality

Perhaps the most influential factor is the broader societal support for gender equality. Norms that value women's participation in sport create an environment where girls feel welcomed, capable, and encouraged to pursue hockey.

3 Insights Into Gender, Motivation, and Barriers in Women's Ice Hockey

The WHPP project aims to strengthen the development of women's ice hockey by addressing structural barriers, cultural stereotypes, and gaps in support that affect both athletes and coaches. During the first year of the project, two surveys were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the current environment in which women participate and work within ice hockey. These surveys included **13 ice hockey coaches (female and male)** and **52 female ice hockey players**.

The purpose of these surveys was twofold. First, to explore the **characteristics, motivations, work conditions, and gender-based perceptions** of ice hockey coaches working in women's hockey. Second, to identify the **barriers, stereotypes, and enabling conditions** that shape the experiences of female athletes in the sport. Together, these insights provide an evidence-based foundation for promoting gender equality, improving organisational support, and enhancing participation opportunities for girls and women across all levels of ice hockey.



Survey Methodology:

Participants:

Female players: A total of 52 female ice hockey players completed the survey. The group represents a multinational sample from five countries: Croatia (31%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (25%), Slovenia (21%), Serbia (13%), and Austria (10%). Most players are young athletes, with the majority currently enrolled in secondary school (47%) or primary school (29%), while a smaller share have reached university or vocational college levels. Overall, the sample reflects a diverse and predominantly youth-oriented player population actively engaged in women's ice hockey across the region.

Coaches: A total of 13 coaches participated in the survey. Similar to the players, they come from the same five countries represented in the WHPP project (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, and Austria), reflecting a shared regional context for women's ice hockey development.

Regarding gender, the coaching sample consists of both male and female coaches:

- 62% male (8 coaches)
- 38% female (5 coaches)

Procedure:

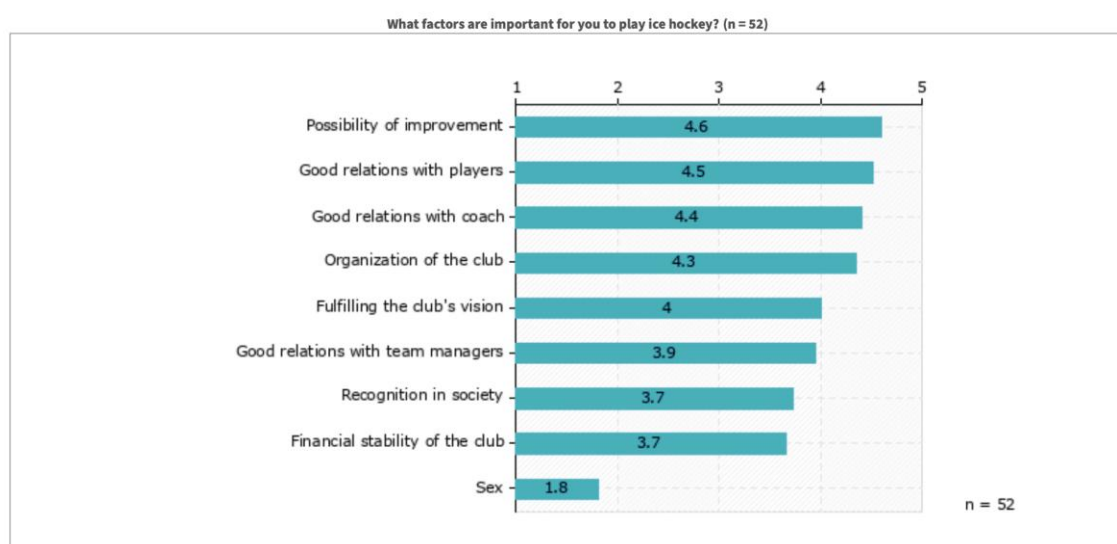
Both surveys were conducted via structured questionnaires during the first year of the WHPP project. The questionnaires:

- Included Likert-scale responses (1–5)
- Were administered anonymously
- Focused on themes relevant to the WHPP framework, including:
 - Gender equality and coaching environment
 - Motivational factors
 - Barriers and stereotypes
 - Working/playing conditions
 - Dual-career aspirations

3.1 Report of key findings: Athletes' survey

The majority of ice-hockey players have completed either secondary or primary education, reflecting a relatively young athlete population still in school or early in their academic paths. Higher levels of education are less common: 15% have completed university studies and 8% have completed higher vocational or professional college.

Key Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Ice Hockey



The most important factor, with a score of 4.6, is the presence of a safe and respectful environment within the team and club structure. This indicates that female players highly value protection from harassment, discrimination, or inappropriate behaviour—highlighting the need for strong safeguarding policies and supportive team culture.

Two other key factors, both scoring 4.5, include good relationships with coaches and good relationships with teammates. These results suggest that social cohesion and trust within the training environment are central to women's engagement and motivation in ice hockey. Positive interpersonal relationships appear to be foundational to the athlete experience.

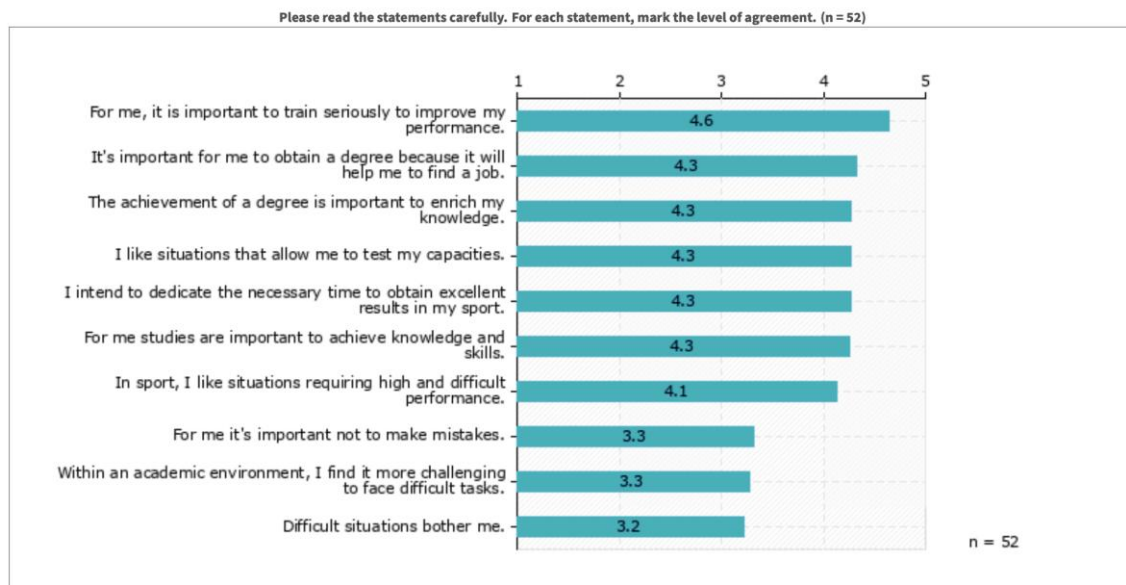
Players also rated club organisation (4.4) and enough training hours (4.3) as highly important. Well-structured training programmes, predictable scheduling, and effective management are seen as necessary conditions for their development and consistent participation.

A safe training environment and support from family are also valued (both 4.0), reflecting the need for both physical security in facilities and emotional/organisational support at home.

Lower-rated but still relevant factors include the financial costs of sport participation (3.7) and availability of sport equipment (3.7). These results indicate that while financial barriers are present, they are not perceived as the most pressing issues compared to social and organisational factors.

The lowest-rated factor is age (1.8), suggesting that players do not see age itself as a strong limiting factor for participating in women's ice hockey.

Academic Motivation, Sport Commitment, and Personal Attitudes



The statement with the highest agreement is “For me, it is important to train seriously to improve my performance” (4.6). This confirms that female players place great importance on commitment, discipline, and ongoing improvement in their sport.

A strong academic orientation is also evident. Statements such as “It’s important for me to obtain a degree because it will help me to find a job”, “The achievement of a degree is important to enrich my knowledge”, and “For me studies are important to achieve knowledge and skills” all score 4.3. These results highlight a clear recognition that education plays a central role in securing future professional opportunities beyond sport.

Players also show high motivation for self-development in sport. They express agreement with “I like situations that allow me to test my capacities” and “I intend to dedicate the necessary time to obtain excellent results in my sport” (both 4.3). This demonstrates that they value challenge, progress, and high performance.

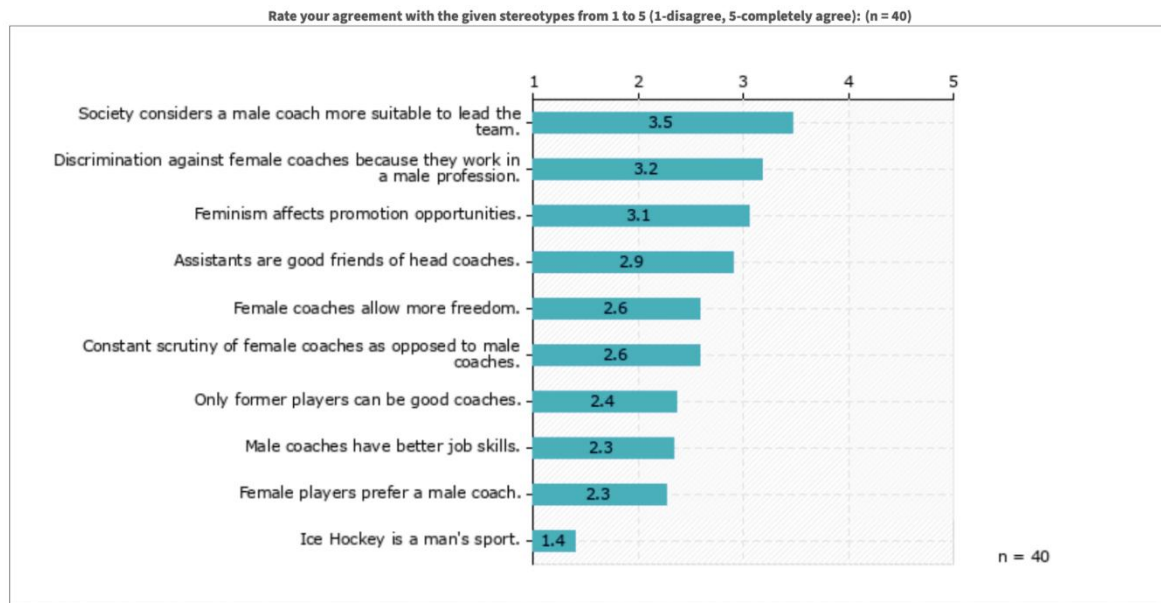
The statement “In sport, I like situations requiring high and difficult performance” scores slightly lower but still high (4.1), indicating that players enjoy demanding sport environments but may experience some limits when pressure increases.

Less strongly endorsed statements relate to mistakes, academic challenges, and difficult situations. For example:

- “It’s important not to make mistakes” – 3.3
- “Within an academic environment, I find it more challenging to face difficult tasks” – 3.3
- “Difficult situations bother me” – 3.2

These moderate scores suggest that while players are motivated and resilient, they may still experience stress or discomfort in high-pressure or difficult scenarios, especially in academic settings.

Agreement With Coaching and Sport Stereotypes



The statement with the highest agreement is “Society considers a male coach more suitable to lead the team” (3.5). This indicates that players are aware of a societal bias that positions men as more natural leaders in sport, reflecting persistent cultural norms within ice hockey.

Players also perceive discrimination against female coaches (3.2) and believe that feminism affects promotion opportunities (3.1). These responses highlight that players recognize structural and cultural barriers affecting women in coaching roles, including slower career progression and external criticism linked to gender expectations.

Moderate agreement is expressed with statements such as “Assistants are good friends of head coaches” (2.9) and “Female coaches allow more freedom” (2.6), suggesting mixed or context-dependent perceptions about interpersonal dynamics or coaching style differences.

Lower levels of agreement appear in statements suggesting stronger stereotypes. For example:

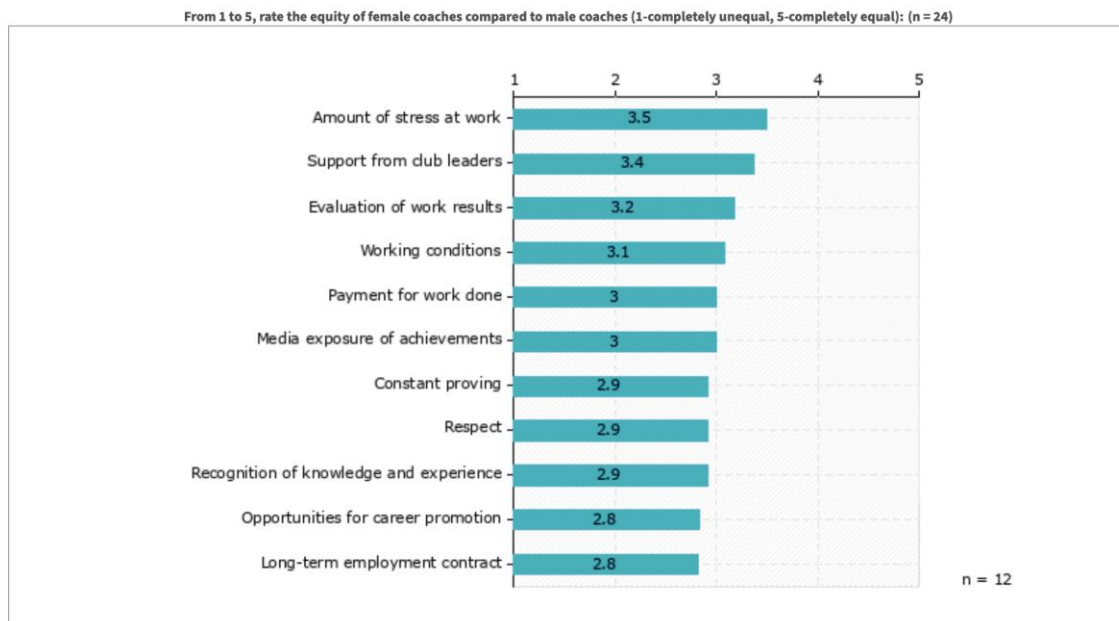
- Constant scrutiny of female coaches (2.6)
- Only former players can be good coaches (2.4)
- Male coaches have better job skills (2.3)
- Female players prefer a male coach (2.3)

These lower ratings suggest that players do not strongly internalize these stereotypes, even if they recognize that such ideas exist in the sport community.

The least supported stereotype is “Ice hockey is a man’s sport” (1.4). This very low score demonstrates clear rejection of the belief that ice hockey is inherently male. Female players strongly affirm their place in the sport and do not see gender as a barrier to participation or legitimacy on the ice.

3.2 Report of key findings: Coaches' survey

Perceived Equity Between Female and Male Ice Hockey Coaches



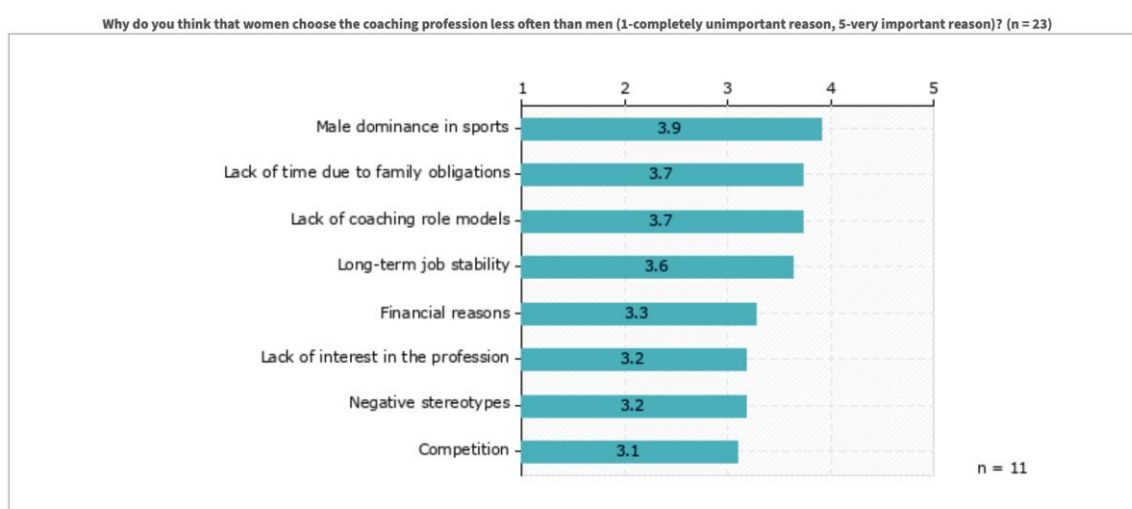
The highest perceived equality appears in amount of stress at work (3.5) and support from club leaders (3.4). These areas suggest that female and male coaches face similar levels of work pressure and receive comparable formal support from leadership structures.

Moderate equality is reported in evaluation of work results (3.2), working conditions (3.1), payment for work done (3.0), and media exposure of achievements (3.0). These scores indicate that although female coaches are viewed as generally evaluated and compensated fairly, subtle disparities may still be present, especially regarding visibility and recognition.

Lower-scoring items—such as constant proving (2.9), respect (2.9), recognition of knowledge and experience (2.9)—suggest that female coaches may still face higher expectations to demonstrate competence and may receive less informal respect from peers or stakeholders.

The lowest perceived equality is found in opportunities for career promotion (2.8) and long-term employment contracts (2.8). These results highlight structural issues in job security and career progression, indicating that female coaches may encounter more limited pathways to stable and senior positions within the sport.

Reasons Why Women Enter the Coaching Profession Less Often Than Men



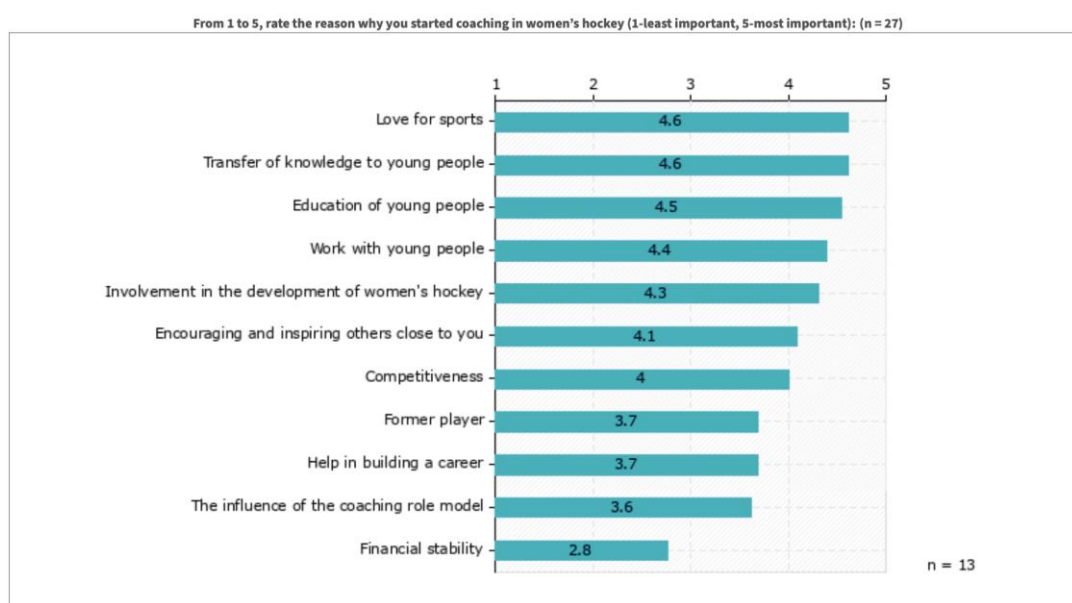
The highest-rated reason is male dominance in sports (3.9). Coaches perceive coaching as a traditionally male-controlled environment in which gender norms, established hierarchies, and limited acceptance of women make entry more challenging. This reflects persistent cultural barriers that discourage women from pursuing coaching pathways.

Two additional highly rated factors—lack of time due to family obligations (3.7) and lack of coaching role models (3.7)—highlight both practical and symbolic obstacles. Many women continue to shoulder a greater share of family responsibilities, which may restrict the demanding, irregular schedule of coaching. Simultaneously, the scarcity of female coaches in visible roles reduces opportunities for young women to envision coaching as a realistic or desirable career.

Moderately important reasons include long-term job stability (3.6) and financial reasons (3.3), suggesting that uncertainties within coaching—such as temporary contracts and modest or inconsistent income—may disproportionately deter women, who often seek professions offering more predictable security.

Lower-rated but still relevant factors include lack of interest in the profession (3.2), negative stereotypes (3.2), and competition (3.1). These results imply that coaches do not view women's lower participation as primarily driven by personal preference or inability to compete; instead, the emphasis remains on external systemic and cultural barriers.

Reasons for Starting to Coach in Women's Ice Hockey



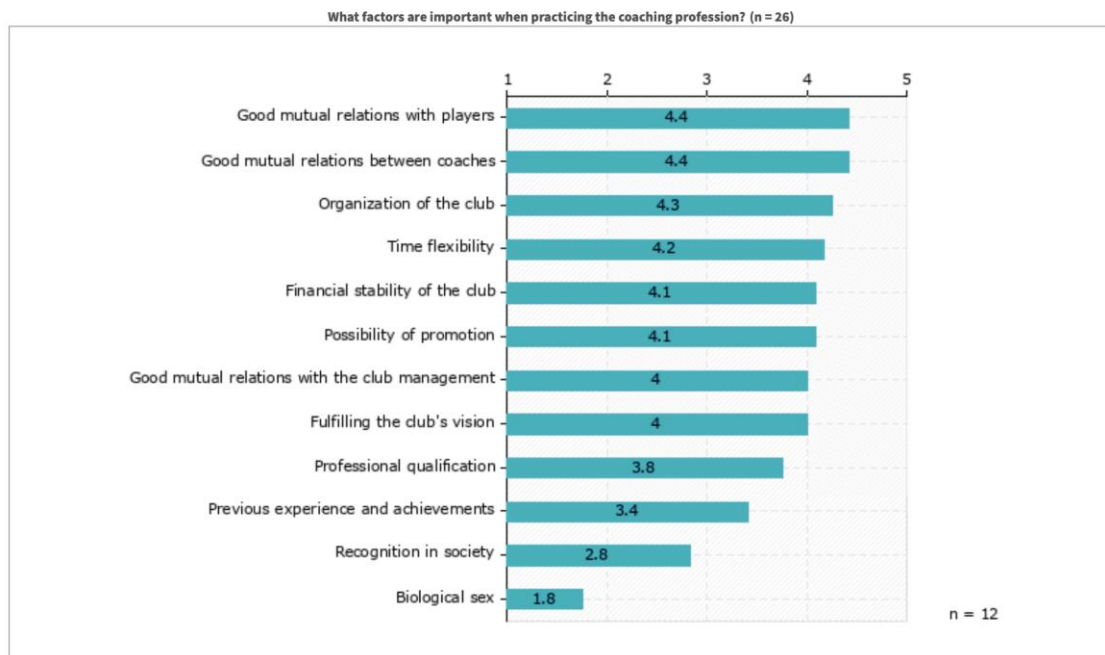
The highest-rated motives—love for sports (4.6) and transfer of knowledge to young people (4.6)—indicate that passion for ice hockey and a desire to contribute to the next generation are the strongest drivers for entering the field. Closely related is the motivation to educate young people (4.5) and work with young players (4.4), reinforcing the central role of youth development in shaping coaches' engagement in the women's game.

A strong sense of purpose also appears in involvement in the development of women's hockey (4.3) and encouraging and inspiring others close to them (4.1). These motives suggest that many coaches see their role as contributing to the growth of the women's sport and supporting the athletes around them, often motivated by community impact or personal connections.

Moderate motives include competitiveness (4.0) and being a former player (3.7), showing that prior sport experience and the desire to stay within a competitive environment also play relevant but secondary roles. Similarly, help in building a career (3.7) and the influence of a coaching role model (3.6) reflect developmental pathways that encourage coaches to transition into women's hockey.

The least important motive is financial stability (2.8), indicating that coaching in women's hockey is not perceived as financially secure or lucrative. This aligns with broader trends in women's sport, where institutional investment and professionalization remain limited.

Key Factors Important for Practicing the Coaching Profession



The highest-rated factors—good mutual relations with players (4.4) and good mutual relations between coaches (4.4)—highlight that positive personal relationships within the team and coaching staff are seen as central to successful and satisfying coaching work. These findings underline the importance of communication, trust, and team cohesion in the coaching environment.

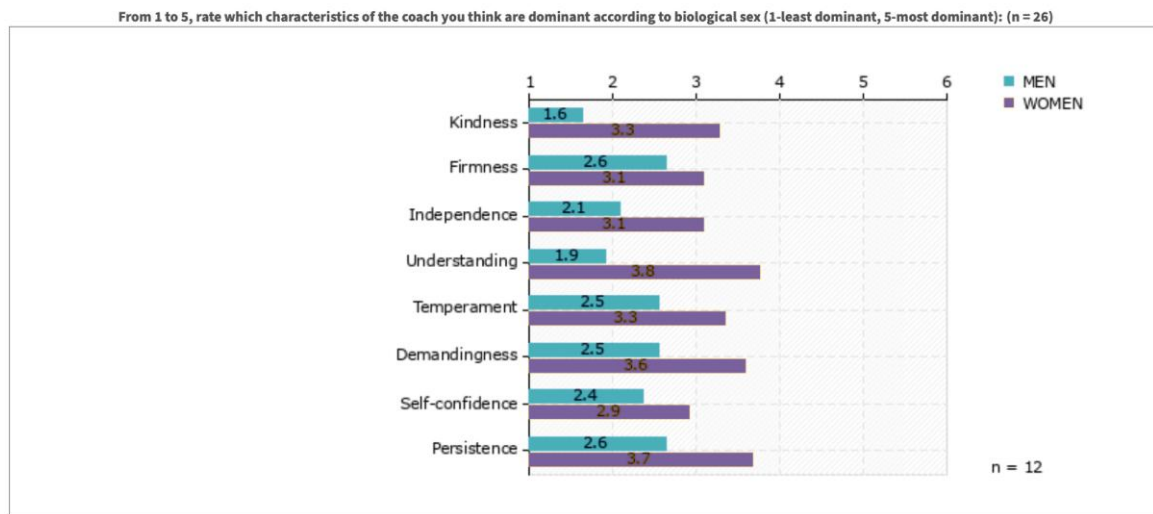
Closely following are organization of the club (4.3) and time flexibility (4.2), suggesting that well-structured clubs and adaptable work arrangements significantly affect coaches' ability to perform effectively. Coaches also emphasize the relevance of the financial stability of the club (4.1) and the possibility of promotion (4.1), showing that stability and professional growth opportunities remain important motivators in their careers.

Other factors such as good relations with club management (4.0), fulfilling the club's vision (4.0), and professional qualification (3.8) reflect the importance of aligning with the club's long-term goals and maintaining appropriate expertise, although these factors are rated slightly lower than interpersonal aspects.

Lower-rated items include previous experience and achievements (3.4) and recognition in society (2.8). This suggests that while experience is valued, it is not considered as critical as the quality of day-to-day collaboration. Social recognition, on the other hand, appears to have limited influence on coaches' satisfaction or decision-making.

The lowest-rated factor is biological sex (1.8), indicating that gender is not seen by coaches as an important determinant for performing the coaching profession. This aligns with earlier findings that while gender inequalities may exist in structural areas, coaches personally do not perceive gender as a key factor in the actual practice of coaching.

Perceived Dominant Coaching Characteristics by Biological Sex



Across all characteristics, women are rated higher than men, indicating that coaches generally attribute stronger dominance of selected traits to female coaches. The largest perceived differences appear in characteristics traditionally associated with interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.

The greatest gap is visible in understanding, where women score 3.8 compared with men's 1.9. Women are also perceived as more kind (3.3 vs. 1.6) and more persistent (3.7 vs. 2.6). These patterns suggest that coaches see women as more empathetic, patient, and nurturing—traits often linked to supportive coaching styles.

Female coaches are also seen as more demanding (3.6) than men (2.5), which contrasts traditional stereotypes and indicates that respondents recognize women as capable of setting high standards and expectations for athletes.

Moderate differences appear in firmness (3.1 for women, 2.6 for men) and independence (3.1 for women, 2.1 for men). This suggests that respondents view women as equally or more capable of maintaining discipline, autonomy, and authority within their teams.

Smaller differences are observed in temperament (3.3 vs. 2.5) and self-confidence (2.9 vs. 2.4), though women still receive higher ratings. These findings show that coaches perceive emotional control and confidence as slightly more pronounced in women, but not as strongly differentiated as other traits.

3.3 What we learned

From the **coach survey**, we learned that coaches are strongly driven by intrinsic motivation—love for the sport, commitment to youth development, and a desire to contribute to the growth of women’s hockey. They value positive interpersonal relationships, good club organisation, and stable working conditions. While coaches perceive some areas of gender equality in daily practice, they also identify persistent inequalities in long-term career opportunities, recognition of experience, and job stability for female coaches. Stereotypes about coaching characteristics remain present, with many respondents perceiving certain traits (such as empathy, understanding, and persistence) as more dominant in women, reflecting ongoing gendered expectations within the profession.



From the **female player survey**, we learned that players place high importance on a safe and respectful environment, strong relationships with coaches and teammates, and well-organised training conditions. Players demonstrate strong dual-career motivation, valuing both academic achievement and athletic performance. They recognise that stereotypes and gender bias exist in the wider sport community—especially the perception that male coaches are more suitable or that coaching is a male domain. However, players themselves strongly reject the stereotype that ice hockey is a “man’s sport,” affirming their right to participate fully and confidently.



4 Qualitative study on challenges of female ice hockey players in the Balkan area

The qualitative research aimed to understand the lived experiences of players and coaches, with a focus on training demands, barriers to participation, stereotypes, support structures, and dual-career management. This study complements the quantitative surveys by providing deeper insight into personal and structural challenges and identifying the challenges of female ice hockey players in the Balkan area.

Sample

The sample consisted of female ice hockey players and coaches from Danube-region countries involved in the WHPP project. Participants included active female players and female and male coaches working in women's ice hockey. Interviews capture perspectives from Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Serbia, and Bosnia—reflecting the same regional context as the survey samples.

Procedure

A qualitative interview approach was used to collect experiences and perceptions from both players and coaches. The procedure included: Semi-structured interviews focusing on demands, barriers, stereotypes, and support systems. Interviews were conducted online or in person, recorded, and manually transcribed.

4.1 Results

DEMANDS

Players and coaches highlighted high performance expectations and the need for discipline—often equal to those placed on male players.

- *“High demands in training, teaching them to be hockey players and not lowering the standards due to some thought that girls can't be pushed or need to just have fun. When coaches are successful in teaching skills and the game of hockey, players will have fun.”* — **Amanda, coach**
- *“A demand that we keep facing is that we need to do everything for free. That we can be happy that we get ice time and so on. But expectations are then the same as with the men - to be successful.”* — **Florence, coach**

Players identified restfulness, school balance, and structured environments as essential:

- *“It's definitely getting enough sleep, since school is a lot, and hockey also demands a lot of our time and dedication.”* — **Serena, player**
- *“Ice hockey academy. Yeah, like an academy where you go to school and have practice and everything together.”* — **Emma, player**

BARRIERS

Barriers were both structural (lack of resources) and personal (time and dual-career pressure).

- *“The biggest challenges for female players are financial and structural barriers, fewer rinks, lack of ice time and teams to play in.”* — **Serena, coach**
- *“Sometimes they put a schedule during my work time. So, I skip those practices because I have to work. This season we try to find a solution so everyone who works or studies can manage.”* — **Majda, player**
- *“Probably my personal willingness to be the best in both hockey and school... I always want to be the best in both situations.”* — **Emma, player**



STEREOTYPES

Players and coaches reported persistent stereotypes about gender roles in ice hockey.

- *"I feel like everyone thinks that it's a guy's sport or a sport for boys... but I don't think people think it's that big of a deal when boys do the same things we do."* – **Emma, player**

Female coaches described limited acceptance within the male-dominated community:

- *"I received support from the women's side, not from the men's side or the Association... 'Now that you've stopped playing, you think you can be a coach.' But I didn't settle for that."* – **Medarda, coach**

SOURCES OF SUPPORT (DUAL-CAREER SUPPORT)

Both coaches and players described multiple forms of support, especially around managing school, work, and sport.

Coach support:

- *I am coaching a team where 1/3 are full-time players, 1/3 go to school, and 1/3 combine hockey with part-time jobs. It's all about time management from the players and flexibility from us coaches."* – **Erica, coach**
- *"Encouraging them to get an education and have something outside hockey... you never know if an injury occurs."* – **Stefan, coach**
- *"Showing understanding... and how they can develop themselves not only as hockey players but as persons in society."* – **Florence, coach**

Player support:

- *"My biggest sources of support were definitely my parents... they took me to competitions... my friends also supported me and even came to my matches."* – **Lara, player**
- *"I find inspiration in my friends and family... when I face difficult mental phases... they help me overcome problems."* – **Majda, player**

4.2 Conclusions: A Journey Marked by Transitions, Obstacles, and Possibilities

The qualitative research revealed that the experience of being a female ice hockey player in the Balkan region is shaped not just by what happens on the ice, but by a series of pivotal transitions. These transitions act as crossroads—moments when a player either moves forward, loses momentum, or steps away from the sport altogether.

Crucial Transition Periods – Moments That Define the Path

For many girls, the first major turning point arrives early: balancing school and sport. At a time when their peers worry about homework or social life, these young athletes are navigating a schedule filled with practices, competitions, and academic responsibilities. It requires discipline and resilience—qualities they often develop long before adulthood.

As they grow older, another shift awaits: entering senior-level hockey.

The jump from junior to senior categories is steep. Expectations rise, the physicality increases, and the number of female teams often decreases. Some players described this period as the moment when their dreams collided with reality—schedules became tighter, studies intensified, and opportunities became more limited.

The final transition is one few talk about but many feel deeply: moving from athlete to coach.

For those who stay in the sport beyond their playing years, coaching can be both a continuation and a reinvention of their identity. Yet this pathway is rarely straightforward for women. They enter a space where leadership is still seen as masculine, where female authority is questioned, and where the support they receive is often informal rather than institutional.

Key Barriers – What Stands in the Way

While passion drives female players and coaches, the environment around them presents obstacles that require constant negotiation.

The lack of facilities, ice time, and financial resources is a recurring theme. Many players share the same rink with men's teams, but receive fewer hours and less favourable time slots. Equipment is expensive, travel costs add up quickly, and for many families, supporting a girl in hockey requires financial sacrifices that boys in the same sport rarely face.

Then come the stereotypes.

Ice hockey, in the eyes of many outsiders, remains “a men's sport.” Even when players themselves reject this idea, they still carry its weight. It influences how others view their commitment, their skill, and even their right to be on the ice.

Women who choose to coach face their own set of constraints. Limited structural support and visibility mean that female coaches often work in isolation, without mentors or clear development pathways. They must constantly prove their competence in an environment where coaching is still imagined as a male role.

And throughout all these challenges lies the silent thread connecting every story: dual-career management.

Girls must juggle school and sport; teenagers must navigate exams and competitions; young adults must balance university or work with training demands. It is a balancing act that requires flexibility, yet the systems around them—schools, clubs, employers—are not always ready to accommodate.

4.3 What we learned: WHPP Can Make a Difference

1. Structured dual-career support systems

Players should not have to choose between success in sport and success in school or work. Guidance, flexible scheduling, and communication across institutions can help them manage both worlds.

2. Increasing access to ice and training opportunities

More ice time, more age-appropriate programs, and more structured development environments can support girls during critical stages of growth.

3. Strengthening coach education and inclusion

Creating pathways for female coaches—through training, mentorship, and visibility—can empower more women to step confidently into leadership roles.

4. Reducing gender stereotypes through visibility, advocacy, and communication

The narrative around women's hockey must change. When girls see themselves represented, when communities celebrate their achievements, stereotypes lose their power.

5. Supporting emotional and mental well-being

Behind every athlete is a human being navigating pressure, expectations, and self-doubt. Providing psychological support, mentorship, and safe spaces to talk can help young athletes stay resilient and connected to the sport they love.



5 A checklist for organising Women Ice Hockey Tournament

5.1 Overview of a WHPP Tournament

The WHPP event is designed not only as a competitive event, but also as a platform to promote women's hockey, improve player development, and strengthen cooperation among clubs and federations. Camps included multiple age categories, from U18 to senior players, with formats adapted to the local hockey environment.

Typical WHPP event objectives include:

- Providing meaningful educational sessions, expert engagement and well-organised sport development for girls and women
- Increasing visibility of women's hockey at the local and national level
- Encouraging participation among new players and retaining existing ones
- Creating a supportive environment for networking among players, coaches, officials, and Federations
- Showcasing good organisational practices that other regions can replicate
- Providing support for building and strengthening national team programs (U18 and senior national teams)

Well-planned events contribute directly to the long-term sustainability of women's hockey programmes by improving development and competitive opportunities and community engagement.

5.2 Have the right knowledge

Here are some tips that help organisers prepare effectively

1. **Understand playing formats** – Choose between five-on-five or three-on-three game format depending on the number and skill level of teams.
2. **Define clear rules and age-group categories** – Ensure alignment with IIHF or national federation regulations.
3. **Prepare a detailed event manual** – Include schedules, roles, duties, emergency contacts, and rink procedures.
4. **Know your participants** – Collect information about roster size and team staff, goaltender availability, skill levels, and any special needs, making sure to provide inclusive environment.
5. **Ensure safety knowledge** – Cover first-aid procedures, concussion protocol, and emergency exit routes with staff and volunteers.
6. **Budget realistically** – Understand costs for ice time, accommodation, transport, insurance, equipment, and promotional materials.
7. **Involve your volunteer team** – A short briefing before the event helps ensure smooth communication and problem solving.
8. **Defining clear deadlines for submitting participant information** – ensuring the right information were delivered before the events.
9. **Engage international ice hockey expertise** – to ensure high standards of education and on ice development practices.
10. **Ensure proper dissemination of event learnings** – making sure that professional practices reach a wider audience and help shift negative prejudices about women's ice hockey and sport in general.



5.3 Connect with other teams

Strategies for strengthening cooperation and ensuring full tournament participation

1. **Start communication early** – Contact federations months in advance to secure their interest and confirm availability.
2. **Build a shared calendar** – Coordinate with partner federations to avoid scheduling conflicts.
3. **Promote inclusivity** – Encourage participation from developing teams, mixed-level teams, or countries with fewer female players.
4. **Share logistical information** – Provide accommodation suggestions, travel assistance, and local area guidance.
5. **Use digital platforms for coordination** – Set up a shared group chat or email list for fast updates and problem resolution.
6. **Encourage and provide joint development opportunities** – preparation matches or shared training sessions during the event helps players and team staff connect through mixed teams.
7. **Communicate expectations clearly** – Share rules, game formats, and code of conduct early to avoid misunderstandings.



5.4 Get the proper facilities

Key elements to ensure a professional and safe event environment

1. **Secure sufficient ice time** – Book well in advance and reserve buffer periods for warm-ups, ice resurfacing, and delays.
2. **Ensure appropriate locker room space** – Provide safe, clean changing areas with adequate privacy for women and girls.
3. **Provide off-ice areas** – Meeting rooms for educational sessions, warm-up zones, and rest areas improve the athlete experience.
4. **Check technical requirements** – Functional scoreboard, penalty boxes, benches, clock system, and sound system.
5. **Arrange skilled arena staff** – Ice technicians, first-aid personnel, and safety officers should be available throughout the day.
6. **Prepare signage and visibility** – Use banners, WHPP branding, and clear navigation around the rink.
7. **Consider accessibility** – Ensure the venue is accessible for younger participants, parents, people with disabilities, and visitors.

6 Open days

As part of the WHPP project, partner organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia organised Open Day events aimed at promoting girls' and women's ice hockey, engaging local communities, and creating opportunities for new participants to try the sport. All partners submitted reports using the agreed template, which included organisational characteristics, event descriptions, risks and opportunities, and lessons learned. The following chapter summarises their activities and reflects on shared insights.

6.1 Report: Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Organisation's Characteristics

- **Name:** Ice Hockey Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Hosting Club:** ŽHK Lavice
- **Target groups:** Girls aged 5 and older, families, local community
- **Key activities:** Promotion of women's ice hockey, development of youth hockey programmes, participation in WHPP activities



2. Description of the Open Day Event

- **Date & location:** 19 October 2025, Sarajevo (HK Vukovi rink)
- **Participants:** ~60 girls, ages 5+
- **Activities:**
 - Presentation on women's ice hockey and WHPP project
 - Division into three skill-based groups (experienced players, experienced skaters, complete beginners)
 - 3x3 games for youngest players
 - Training sessions led by women players, coaches, and officials from ŽHK Lavice
 - Visit from the Deputy Mayor of Sarajevo
 - Certificates and group photos
 - Post-session social event with parents and players

3. Main Risks and Opportunities Identified

- **Risks:**
 - None explicitly reported; event ran smoothly
- **Opportunities**
 - Increased registrations for skating and hockey school
 - Improved visibility of women's ice hockey
 - Strengthened community engagement and positive media interest

4. Key Lessons & Recommendations

- **What worked well:** Strong atmosphere, enthusiastic response from girls and parents, successful recruitment
- **Challenges:** None significant
- **Recommendations:** Continue hosting similar events to maintain momentum
- **Helpful resources:** Engagement of players, coaches, parents; support from the municipality

1. Organisation's Characteristics

- **Name:** Croatian Ice Hockey Association
- **Target groups:** Girls aged 8–18, families, local communities
- **Key activities:** WHPP Open Day integrated with IIHF World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend



2. Description of the Open Day Event

- **Date & location:** 18 October 2025 – Sisak (ice rink) and Karlovac (inline rink)
- **Participants:** 20 girls (11 in Sisak, 9 in Karlovac)
- **Activities:**
 - Introductory presentation on women's hockey and WHPP
 - Skating and stick-handling basics
 - Small-area games
 - Peer mentoring by older players
 - Inline hockey activities in Karlovac

3. Main Risks and Opportunities Identified

- **Risks:**
 - Low general awareness of women's hockey
 - Limited ice availability in Sisak due to senior league scheduling
- **Opportunities:**
 - Strong WHPP and IIHF branding increased visibility
 - Potential for higher retention of participants
 - Strengthened ties between clubs, communities, and families

4. Key Lessons & Recommendations

- **What worked well:** Supportive atmosphere, strong teamwork, parental engagement
- **Challenges:** Coordinating multi-location activities, limited rink availability
- **Improvements:** Earlier communication with schools; longer sessions for newcomers
- **Helpful resources:** Coaches, senior players, and volunteers (particularly parents)

1. Organisation's Characteristics

- **Name of organisation:** Serbian Ice Hockey Association
- **Type of organisation:** National association
- **Size:** 800 members, 9 teams, 10 staff
- **Main target groups:** Girls aged 8–18, young female athletes, parents, and the local community
- **Key activities related to women's hockey / inclusion:** The WHPP Open Day was organised as part of the IIHF World Girls' Ice Hockey Weekend (WGIHW), supporting the growth and visibility of women's hockey in Serbia.



2. Description of the Open Day Event

- **Date & location:** 18 October 2025, Novi Sad, Serbia
- **Target audience:** Girls aged 8–18, parents, coaches, schools, and community members
- **Activities:** Registration and welcome session, presentation on women's hockey development and the WHPP project, basic skating and stick-handling drills, small-area games, and peer support provided by older female players.
- **Number of participants:** 30 girls (8 from Belgrade, 12 from Subotica, 10 from Novi Sad)

3. Main Risks and Opportunities Identified

- **Risks**
 - Lower participation risk due to limited visibility and general unfamiliarity with women's hockey in Serbia.
 - Reduced ice availability in Belgrade and Novi Sad due to a simultaneous large-scale tournament.
- **Opportunities**
 - Strong potential to increase awareness of women's hockey and WHPP through visible branding and promotional material.
 - Opportunity to motivate girls to continue playing and to deepen engagement between clubs and the community.

6.4 Report: Slovenia

1. Organisation's Characteristics

- **Name:** Hokejska zveza Slovenije (HZS) with HK Olimpija, HDK Maribor, HK Triglav Kranj
- **Target groups:** Girls and women
- **Key activities:** U-8 and U-10 tournament in Kranj; women's national league game in Maribor



2. Description of the Open Day Event

- **Date & location:** 19 October, Kranj and Maribor
- **Participants:** ~50
- **Activities:**
 - U-8 and U-10 tournament
 - Women's league match
 - Informal presentations to parents and young players about girls'/women's hockey in Slovenia

3. Main Risks and Opportunities Identified

- **Risks:**
 - No special ice time available; event had to be merged with pre-scheduled matches
- **Opportunities**
 - Tournament atmosphere provided excellent outreach to many parents
 - Opportunity to showcase existing girls' hockey activity

4. Key Lessons & Recommendations

- **What worked well:** Direct conversations with parents, visibility of female programmes
- **Challenges:** Lack of dedicated ice time
- **Improvements:** More frequent events, broader outreach, increased club engagement, improved use of social media
- **Helpful resources:** IIHF promotional materials, jerseys, social media support from clubs and HZS

7 Key Lessons & Recommendations

What worked well: A positive and supportive atmosphere, close cooperation between older and younger players, and strong WHPP branding contributed to a successful event. Parents were highly engaged and supportive, enhancing the sense of community.

Challenges: Due to busy club schedules and a high level of operational activity, it was difficult to gather players who already train regularly with their teams.

What to improve: Earlier promotion in schools and local communities would increase turnout. The federation also suggests considering a joint regional Open Day in the future, involving neighbouring WHPP countries to strengthen visibility and create a larger regional event.

Helpful resources: Support from coaches, senior players, and volunteers - especially parents - was essential in helping participants feel prepared, safe, and welcome.

The Open Day events delivered by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia represent a significant contribution to the WHPP project. Each partner successfully increased visibility, engaged young athletes, and strengthened pathways for future participation in women's ice hockey. The collective insights from these events will support future development efforts and reinforce the project's long-term legacy.

8 Conclusion

After the final Consortium Meeting held in Bled, Slovenia, the project partners provided final feedback regarding the benefits of the project:

ÖEHV (Austria): For the Austrian participants – including players, coaches, and officials – the WHPP project proved to be a highly successful and valuable project. For several participants, it was their first experience within an international ice hockey environment, offering important insights into different sporting cultures, structures, and working methods.

In addition, the opportunity to learn from experts across a wide range of fields, such as coaching, officiating, athlete development, and sports psychology, represented a significant added value. This approach allowed participants to gain new perspectives and practical knowledge that can be directly transferred into their daily work.

Although Austria was involved in the project as an expert partner, all Austrian participants benefited substantially from this project. They were able to further develop their skills both on and off the ice, strengthen their professional competencies, and expand their international networks. Overall, the WHPP contributed meaningfully to personal development, knowledge exchange, and the long-term strengthening of Austrian ice hockey within a European and international context.

HSBiH (Bosnia and Herzegovina): The project had a significant and lasting impact on female players in Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily through high-quality educational and professional training sessions delivered by international experts. These player-centred sessions, combined with the mixed-team format, created an environment where participants could develop their skills while building a strong regional network of women hockey players throughout all WHPP events.

One of the most meaningful outcomes of the project is the increased inclusion of women in coaching roles. The program successfully encouraged female athletes to step into leadership positions, resulting in greater visibility and active participation of women in the country's ice hockey community. Many have since joined club programs, contributing by coaching younger age categories and serving as role models for the next generation.

The game-officiating component of the WHPP project also delivered excellent results. Continuous, structured education led by experienced officials, both on and off the ice, significantly strengthened the competence and confidence of aspiring referees. The growing presence of female game officials not only improved officiating standards but also helped normalize and promote women's involvement in all aspects of the sport.

Overall, the project has played a crucial role in advancing gender equality, empowering women, and fostering long-term development within Bosnia and Herzegovina's ice hockey community.

SHSL (Croatia): The key takeaway for the Croatian Ice Hockey Association is that this project not only strengthened internal cooperation, provided development opportunities for young female players and young on-ice officials and coaches, but also, during the organisation of the tournament in Zagreb, broadened cross-gender support within Croatian Ice Hockey Association. Male coaches and junior players participated as volunteers during the Open Day and in the organisation of the WHPP tournament held in Zagreb, Croatia. Their participation not only supported the event, but also gave junior male players valuable insight into the functioning of women's hockey and the experience of female athletes.

SHLS (Serbia): The WHPP project has contributed greatly to the development of women's hockey in Serbia. Especially for the younger generation of girls and the formation of the U18 national team. The opportunity and possibility to gain experience and knowledge from experts from the world of hockey was invaluable. Mixed teams were a great opportunity to create new friendships, as well as gain experience in a new environment of teammates, coaches and team leaders where the girls have done great. This project has certainly contributed greatly to the development of hockey referees, as well as improving the knowledge and experience of coaches.

HZS (Slovenia): As the coordinating country and project leader, HZS played a central role in the strategic planning, implementation, and overall coordination of the WHPP project. With strong project support and structured international cooperation, the U18 women's national team was successfully established, representing a major milestone in the long-term development of women's ice hockey in Slovenia.

Beyond the sporting outcomes, the project strengthened institutional capacity within the Slovenian Ice Hockey Federation by enhancing organizational know-how, project management experience, and international networking. Hosting the final Consortium Meeting in Bled further reinforced Slovenia's leadership role, providing a platform for knowledge exchange, reflection on best practices, and the alignment of future development strategies for women's hockey across partner countries.

IIHF: The WHPP project delivered very successful leadership development both on ice for the players and off-ice for the involved staff members.

The international expert group was crucial for the development of the players on the ice but also for showing pathways and encouraging the participants towards strengthening their personal leadership skills.

The mixed-team format proved to be a key factor which brought on a new level of mutual respect between the teams and players.

The WHPP events increased the visibility of women's hockey in all the involved countries and will contribute strongly to the future growth of the respective national programs. This gives a good basis for future similar programs where education and key learnings can be extended to an even wider group of participants.



9 About the project partners

(ÖEHV) The Austrian Ice Hockey Federation is the most developed Ice Hockey Federation in consortium of the WHPP project. It is responsible for all male, female and para ice hockey programs and national teams. ÖEHV is part of the Austrian Federal Sports Organization (BSO), and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF).

(HSBiH) The Ice Hockey Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the governing body of ice hockey in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is responsible for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Hockey League (BHL) and the Bosnia and Herzegovina national ice hockey teams. The HSBiH is a Member of the International Ice Hockey Federation since 2001.

(HSHL) Croatian Ice Hockey Association is a sport federation that deals with the development of Men and Women's ice hockey in Croatia, is in charge of all national ice hockey teams (U18, U20, Men, Women). HSHL members are more than 15 ice hockey clubs, as well as Zagreb Ice Hockey Association and Croatian Association of Ice hockey officials.

(SHLS) Key activities of Serbian Ice Hockey Association is the governing body and member of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) that oversees ice hockey in Serbia. SIHA is focused on the growth and development of female hockey and overall popularization of ice hockey in Serbia.

(HZS) Ice Hockey Federation Slovenia is a national governing body for ice hockey in Slovenia. Key activities are organization of national and international competitions (senior, U19, U17, U14, U12. Teams from Slovenia are participating in Austrian Hockey league as well in IHL (SLO, CRO, SRB Teams)

(IIHF) The International Ice Hockey Federation is governing body for ice hockey on global scale. The IIHF features 84 member associations, each of which is the national governing body of the sport in its nation. Besides controlling the international rulebook, processing international player transfers, and dictating officiating guidelines, the IIHF runs numerous development programmes designed to bring hockey to a broader population.

(SIF) The Sport Institute of Finland is Olympic Training Centre and training centre for sports coaches and physical education instructors. It operates under the auspices of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and is run by the Suomen Urheiluopiston Kannatusosakeyhtiö Ltd. The Sport Institute of Finland develops, produces, and markets high-quality coaching, training, and education services both at a national level and internationally.

(UL) University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Sports is a higher education institution specializing in the field of sports and physical activity. Located in the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, it is part of the University of Ljubljana. The faculty offers a wide range of study programs covering areas such as sports pedagogy, coaching, sports medicine, sports management, and other related disciplines. Known for its top-notch and modern sports facilities, it provides students with practical experience and research opportunities. In addition to its educational role, the faculty also significantly contributes to the development and promotion of sports in Slovenia and collaborates with various national and international sports organizations