

# V.E.R.A.

VOICE FOR EQUALITY AND RIGHTS  
OF WOMEN ATHLETES



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## **What is the VERA Project?**

**An Erasmus+ Sport Project which entails a collaborative partnership addressing the priority “social inclusion and diversity” by promoting an international network of organisations working to protect, advance and promote women athletes' rights improving the level of protection, respect and value for them in sport in Europe and, consequently, to build a fairer and more virtuous sporting world.**



# Objectives:

Improve **safeguards, support, and representation** for women athletes, raising awareness and **securing fundamental rights** for a recognized and fulfilling sporting career.

Increase **awareness in European sports systems** and among the general audience about the benefits of gender equality and diversity in sports through advocacy, information dissemination, and networking.

Establish an **online platform for athletes,** organizations, and professionals to exchange best practices, discuss common challenges, and enhance empowerment and cooperation.

Facilitate structured **mentorship and mutual support between athletes and professionals,** encouraging blended training and multi-professional cooperation.

## PARTNERS:



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# VERA - HIGH QUALITY CAPACITY PROGRAM

## Overview of the workshop:

- Financial support and social welfare rights.
- Maternity Rights.
- Medical and Technical Support.
- Access to facilities.



# Financial support and social welfare rights

Policies, programs, and initiatives designed to provide economic assistance, equitable opportunities, and social welfare protection for women involved in sports.

Support for athletes varies based on their performance, national laws, and sport discipline.



# Financial support and social welfare rights

Financial support can be a monthly remuneration, contracts, scholarships, and sponsorships.

A variety of stakeholders, including National Olympic Committees, federations, clubs, universities, and third-party entities, contribute to athlete support.



# Why is it important?



**Crucial for  
High-Level  
Sports  
Development.**



**Balancing  
Sports,  
Income, and  
Education.**



**Essential for  
athlete's well-  
being.**



**Employment  
contracts.**



# Why is it important?

**Financial support and social welfare rights are fundamental for advancing women's participation in high-level sports.**

**Insufficient financial support often forces sportswomen to make the challenging choice between pursuing their athletic careers and managing income and education.**

**Ensuring proper contracts is essential for athlete well-being and legal protection.**

**Social welfare rights are often tied to employment contracts → absence can limit protections.**

**Compliance with European and international regulations regarding contracts can be challenging.**

# Legal Framework



The Treaty on  
the functioning  
of the European  
Union.

The Charter of  
Fundamental  
Rights of the  
European Union.

Equal Treatment  
Directive and the  
Gender Equality  
Directive.

# Legal Framework



The Treaty on  
the functioning  
of the European  
Union.

Includes provisions related  
to **gender equality**.

The Charter of  
Fundamental  
Rights of the  
European Union.

It affirms the right to **equal  
pay for equal work**.

Equal Treatment  
Directive and the  
Gender Equality  
Directive.

**Prohibit discrimination** on  
various grounds, including gender,  
in areas such as **employment and  
access to goods and services**.



# Legal Framework

**The Treaty on  
the functioning  
of the European  
Union.**

Includes provisions related to gender equality. Article 3(2) of the TFEU explicitly states that gender equality is a fundamental principle of the EU.



# Legal Framework



**The Charter of  
Fundamental  
Rights of the  
European  
Union.**

Explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex. It affirms the right to equal pay for equal work and the principle of gender equality.

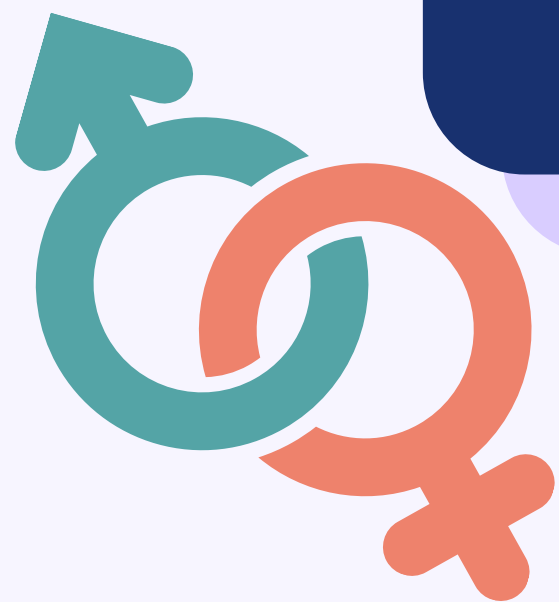


# Legal Framework



**Equal Treatment  
Directive and the  
Gender Equality  
Directive**

Prohibit discrimination on various grounds, including gender, in areas such as employment and access to goods and services. These directives have implications for gender equality in sports.



# Legal Framework

**International  
Labour  
Organisation (ILO)  
Conventions.**

**International  
Olympic  
Committee  
Charter.**



**International  
Labour  
Organisation (ILO)  
Conventions.**

Several ILO conventions, such as Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration and Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), **promote gender equality in the workplace, which includes sports-related employment.**

**International  
Olympic  
Committee  
Charter.**

The IOC is committed to **gender equality** in sports, as outlined in its Charter. **It encourages National Olympic Committees and sports organizations to promote equal opportunities and support for female athletes.**



## Questions for the participants

- Did you have to work/ are working on a job next to your training as a sport professional / high level athlete ?
- How did you manage to have a sport career and studies/jobs ?
- How are you supported by your federations in your country ?
- Are you aware of collective bargaining agreement that were established in your country ?
- Do you see difference between men and women to get sponsorship ?

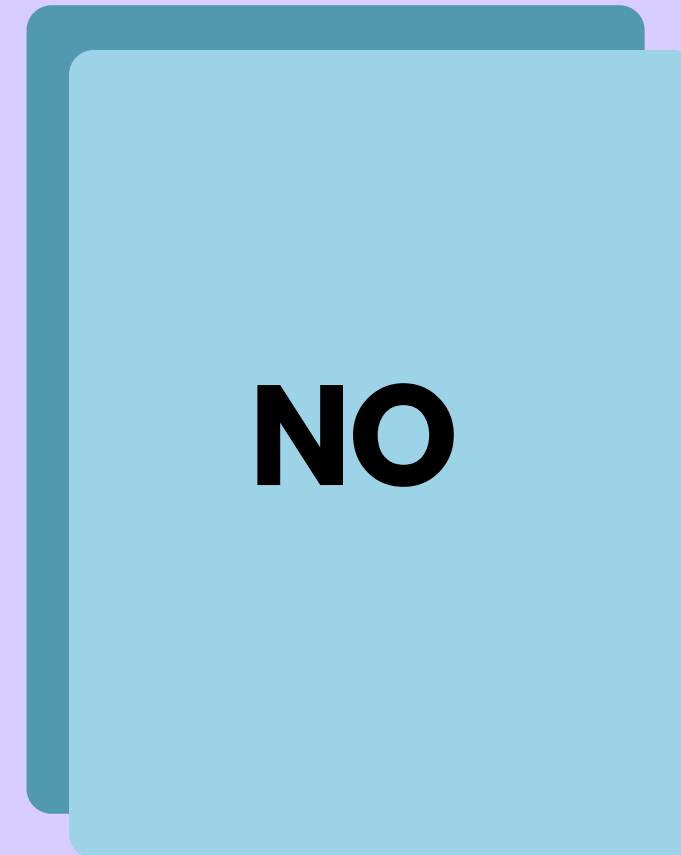
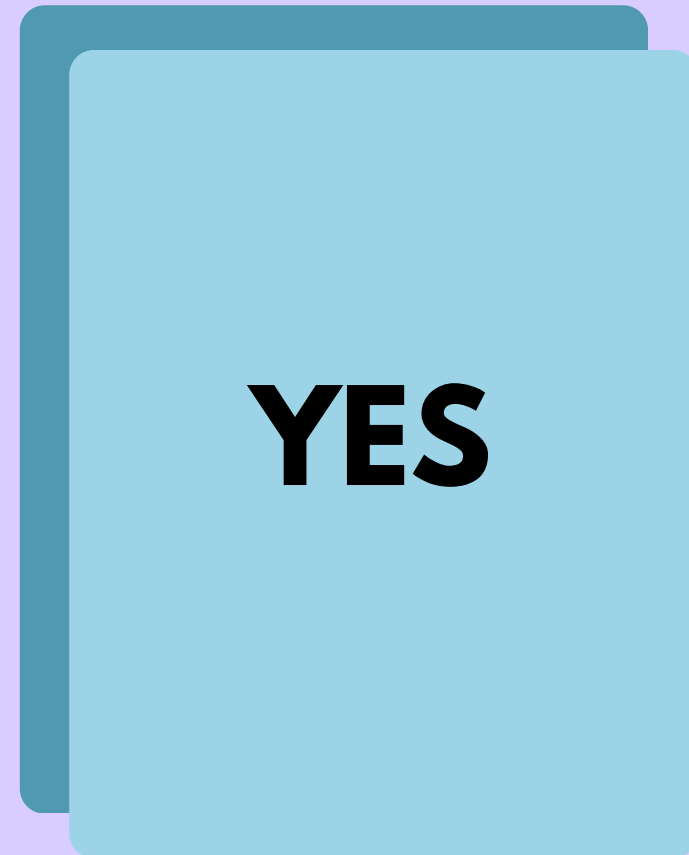
# Good Practices Examples

- In 2021, the **Spanish women's Football League** gained **professional status**.
- Clubs receive **initial government support**, transitioning to **financial independence** within three years.
- **Mandatory employment contracts** for players and ongoing negotiations for player support.





# Do all signed written contracts establish an employment relationship?



# Do all signed written contracts establish an employment relationship?



**NO**

In a **2017 global employment report**[82], which gathered over 3,000 responses from high-level players, **FIFPRO** observed that only 47 % of these players held employment contracts.

The remaining players had an **amateur contract (34 %)**, a **self-employment contract (4 %)**, or were unable to identify the type of contract (15 %).

It is therefore important to note that while **signing a contract is essential** to respecting an athlete's rights, it **does not guarantee him or her a decent income** or social welfare rights.

# Maternity Rights

**Definition (Article 33 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU):**

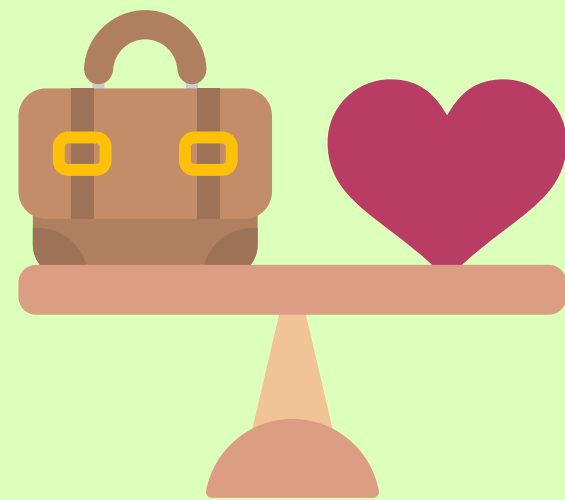
**"The right to protection from dismissal for a reason connected with maternity and the right to paid maternity leave and to parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child, to reconcile family and professional life"**



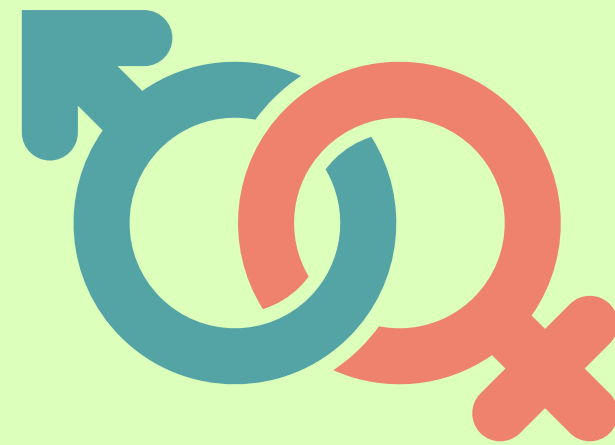
# Why is it important?



**Maternity  
Rights and  
Worker  
Status.**



**Work-Life  
Balance.**



**Promotion  
of Gender  
Equality.**



**Health and  
Well-Being.**



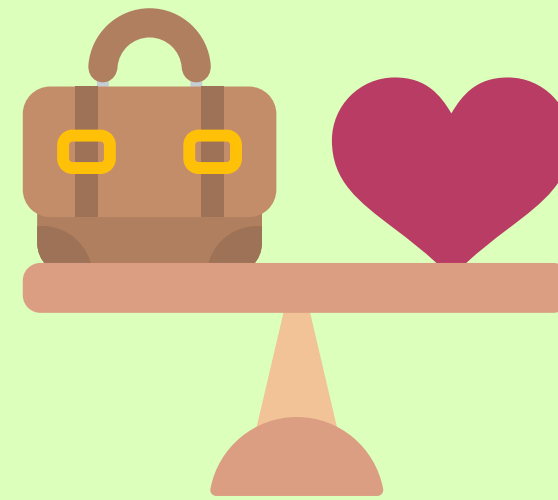
**Retention of  
Talent.**

# Why is it important?



## Maternity Rights and Worker Status.

If the sportswomen do not have the status of workers, no guaranteed maternity rights arise from these status.



## Work-Life Balance.

- Balancing a sports career with motherhood can be challenging.
- Maternity rights facilitate a healthier work-life balance by allowing sportswomen to take the necessary time off for pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare.

# Why is it important?



## Promotion of Gender Equality.

- By removing barriers that might discourage women from pursuing or continuing their athletic careers.
- They promote the idea that women can be successful athletes and mothers simultaneously.



## Health and Well-Being.

- Pregnancy and childbirth are significant life events that require appropriate medical care and recovery time.
- Maternity rights ensure that sportswomen have the necessary time and support to prioritize their health and well-being during and after pregnancy.



# Why is it important?



## Retention of Talent.

- **Sportswomen often invest years of hard work and training to reach elite levels.**
- **Maternity rights enable them to continue their sports careers during their pregnancy and after giving birth, helping retain talent and experience in women's sports.**



# Legal Framework

**Article 33 of the  
Charter of  
Fundamental  
Rights of the EU**

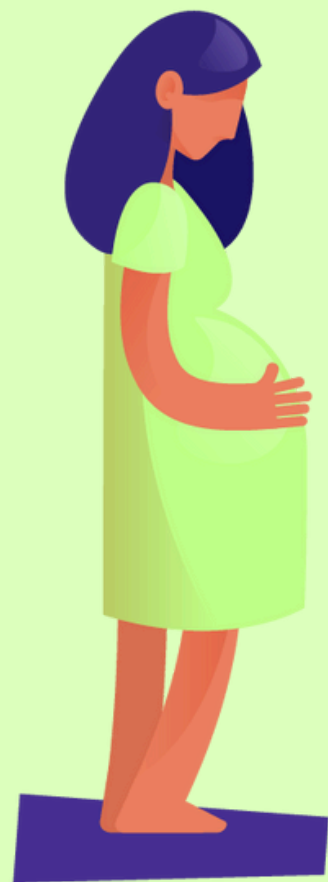
**European Union  
the Pregnancy  
Directive - Paid  
Leave**

**FIFA and  
FIFPRO, UCI  
and ITF**

**Collective  
bargaining  
Agreements  
(CBAs)**

**ILO or EU  
regulations**

# Legal Framework

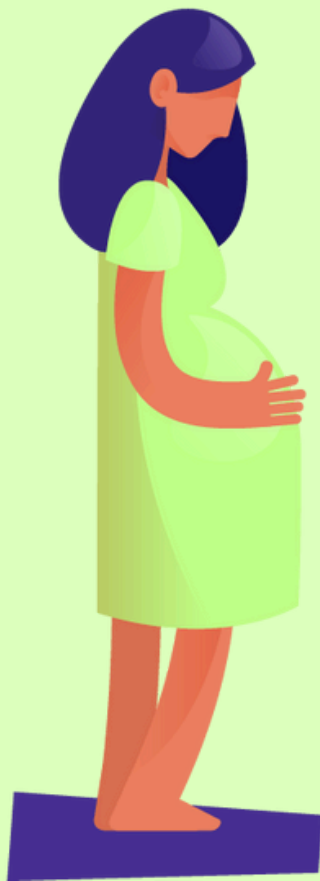


**FIFA and  
FIFPRO, UCI  
and ITF**

**(International Federation of Professional Footballers) have introduced maternity rights, entitling female players to 14 weeks' paid maternity leave, with two-thirds of their contracted salary.**

# Legal Framework

- **UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale) and ITF (International Tennis Federation) have also implemented pregnancy-related provisions.**
- **CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreements) are emerging in Europe, specifying maternity leave and financial support for female athletes.**
- **Maternity rights often apply to workers under ILO or EU regulations, leaving gaps in protection.**



# Good Practices Examples



- The **Italian Department for Sport** of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers provides a **monthly contribution for non-professional athletes** who have had to **put on hold their competitive activity due to maternity**.
- Compared to previous years, the **monthly payments of the contribution have been increased**, passing to 12 monthly payments of 1 000€ each, and the audience of potential beneficiaries also extended to athletes active in the previous sports season.



# Fill in the Blanks



**In 2017, El Pais revealed that some Spanish football and basketball teams had inserted into their contracts, a type of clause called:**



# Fill in the Blanks



**In 2017, El Pais revealed that some Spanish football and basketball teams had inserted into their contracts, a type of clause called:**

**"Anti-pregnancy"**



# Technical and Medical Support

- **Specialists involved in ensuring the excellent performance** of sportswomen.
- Medical support includes **all medical professions** (doctor, physiotherapist, osteopath, psychologist, etc.).
- Technical support has a **broader scope and concerns any action that might be necessary** for the practice of sports by women athletes (**administrative staff, management, etc.**).





# Technical Support




This support takes several forms and is almost compulsory in some countries, notably Portugal and Spain.

The **technical team** consists of **one to three people** with very **diverse profiles**. But, they almost always include a **coach and administrative and secretarial staff**. The rest of the technical staff, such as the **manager** or the person **responsible for relations** with the press and public, **varies** enormously **from country to country**.

# Medical Support

- **One to three** members.
- The **doctor** remains one of the professionals **most present** in the structures, all countries taken together, to **ensure the follow-up of the health** of the athletes.

- 
- The presence of a **physiotherapist varies enormously**, with a strong presence in Portugal, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain.
  - Other professionals involved include **psychologists and osteopaths**. It appears that in Spain, this support is compulsory.

- However, in general, some athletes reported that **this support is present in their country's national team, not in their club**.

# Why is it important?



**Performance  
Optimization.**



**Psychological  
Well-being.**



**Injury  
prevention  
and recovery.**

# Why is it important?



## Performance Optimization.

Technical support **ensures efficient management, organization, and logistics** of sports activities, allowing athletes to **focus solely on their training** and competitions.

Medical support plays a crucial role in **monitoring athletes' health, preventing injuries, and providing timely treatment**, enabling them to **perform at their best**.

# Why is it important?



## Psychological Well-being.

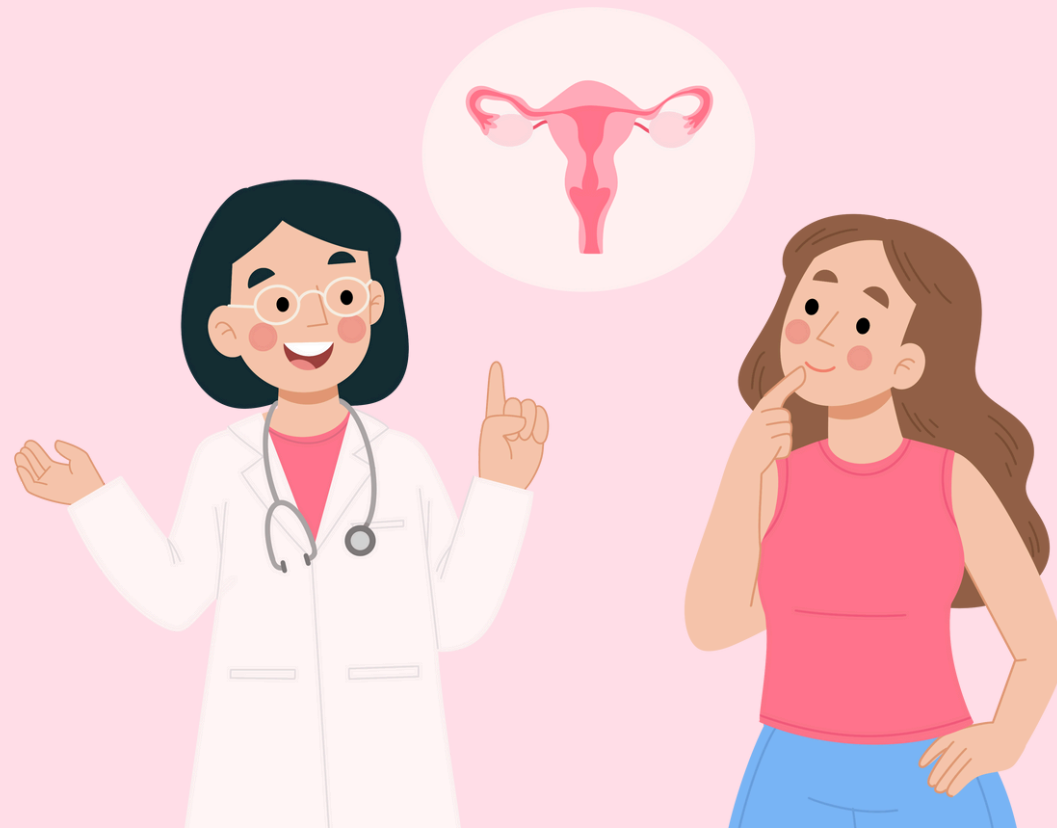
**Psychologists** in the medical support team offer **mental health and emotional support** to athletes, helping them **cope with the pressures** of competition and maintain a **positive mindset**.



## Injury prevention and recovery.

**Physiotherapists and osteopaths** play a pivotal role in **preventing injuries** through specialized training regimens and aiding in **athletes' recovery**, minimizing downtime.

# Why is it important?



Women's specific needs (**cycles, menstruation, contraception, and pregnancy**) in medical care will help improve athletes' health, performance, and well-being. For instance, a **gynecologist** on the team can make a massive difference to athletes who do not have one.

# Legal Framework



There are **no regulations** on this subject **by non-sporting institutions**. Sporting institutions **sometimes** provide for a **mandatory minimum number of technical and medical people** in the structures. However, these situations remain at the margin for highly developed sports.

# Good Practices Examples



- The **CBA for the French Women's Handball League** imposes in its **specifications** the integration of the **first division conditions** of technical and medical support to be respected.
- Indeed, the **club must employ at least** one full-time professional coach, at least two or more administrative employees and "put in place the **medical logistics and facilities** adapted to the exercise of this activity during training sessions and walks, and in **compliance with legal provisions** and federal requirements".
- These **measures will extend** to the second division for the season 2023 - 2024.





**Name the various  
professionals who  
contribute to ensuring  
optimal performance for  
female athletes.**



**Name the various professionals who contribute to ensuring optimal performance for female athletes.**



**Physiotherapist**

**Administrative**

**Gynecologists**

**Psychologists**

**Manager**

**Coach**



# Access to facilities

## Definition:

- It refers to the **availability and suitability** of sports **training facilities**.
- It involves **assessing training conditions to ensure** they meet the standards required for high-level performance.



# Access to facilities



- Having **sufficient training venues** and **equipment** accessible to female athletes.
- For instance, having **multiple basketball courts**, or **swimming pools accessible** to the teams.
- **Appropriateness** and **functionality** of the training facilities.
- Assessment involves **evaluating safety, cleanliness, and upkeep of facilities**. → Regular inspections to ensure that training venues are in optimal condition for use.

# Why is it important?



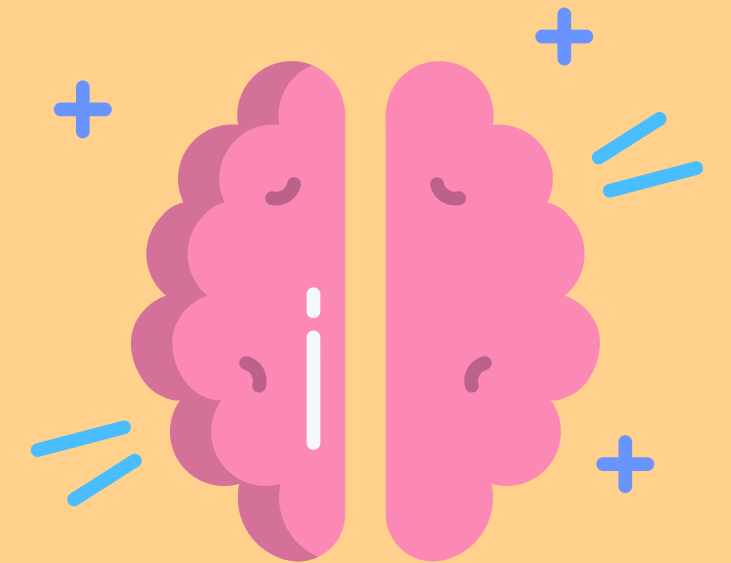
**Equal  
Opportunities.**



**Performance  
Enhancement.**



**Injury  
Prevention.**



**Mental Focus.**

# Why is it important?



**Equal  
Opportunities.**

**Providing female athletes with access to high-quality facilities ensures they have the same opportunities as their male counterparts. This helps level the playing field and promotes gender equality in sports.**

# Why is it important?



**Performance  
Enhancement.**

**Well-maintained and adequately equipped facilities contribute to improved performance. Female athletes can train effectively and reach their full potential when they have access to facilities that meet their specific training needs.**

# Why is it important?



## **Injury Prevention.**

**Safe and appropriate training facilities reduce the risk of injuries. Properly designed spaces and equipment minimize the chances of accidents or overuse injuries, enabling female athletes to stay healthy and active.**



# Why is it important?



## **Mental Focus.**

**Access to consistent training environments helps female athletes maintain mental focus and build confidence. Familiarity with their training facilities allows athletes to concentrate on their workouts and competitions without distractions.**

# Legal Framework

- **Sports institutions** sometimes provide a **mandatory disposition** for the facilities' accesses. However, these regulations **remain at the margin for highly developed sports**.
- **Local authorities** and the **state own the vast majority of sports facilities**. As a result, sports organisations have less flexibility in using and accessing sports facilities for female athletes.
- Indeed, the percentage of organisations with specific provisions regarding access to facilities for women athletes (**construction of facilities, financing, the arbitration for the occupation of facilities**) is **disparate across countries**.



# GOOD PRACTICES EXAMPLE

The **Spanish Supreme Council of Sports** has implemented different provisions to **improve sporting conditions and access** to facilities for elite athletes.

Therefore: They **invested 16 million euros in 2022** to improve the infrastructure of the **pitches and stadiums** of first-division **women's football** teams.

The facilities of the **High-Performance Centres**, which are **labelled** by the Spanish Supreme Council of Sports and are used for elite athletes training all over Spain, are **accessible to both men and women on an equal basis**. However, access is not guaranteed to be unlimited.

**Sport infrastructures should be  
adapted to the specificities of women.**

**TRUE.**

**FALSE.**

# Sport infrastructures should be adapted to the specificities of women.

**TRUE.**

Adapting sports infrastructure to **women's specific needs** is **crucial for gender equality, injury prevention, and optimal performance**. It fosters **inclusivity**, supports growth in women's sports, and demonstrates a **long-term commitment** to female athletes.

# VOERA

VOICE FOR EQUALITY AND RIGHTS  
OF WOMEN ATHLETES

**Get inspired to defend your rights!**



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