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**Women – new leader's empowerment in sport and physical
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STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SKILL AND COMPETENCIES CARD AND FOR TRAINING MATERIALS

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IO3: STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SKILL AND COMPETENCIES CARD AND FOR TRAINING MATERIALS

Introduction

Gender equality is vital for fulfilling the EU objectives of economic and social cohesion and to increase employment opportunities, as well as for ensuring sustainable growth and competitiveness. Therefore, the change in male dominated sectors is needed, providing women the necessary knowledge, competencies, and skills, fighting against traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and guaranteeing equal professional opportunities to the European citizenship at large.

Self-awareness and willingness to change are crucial skills for effective leaders, independently from gender.

However, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions within sport organisations. The most prominent barriers identified are the lack of networking opportunities for women in sport, perceptions of women as less qualified than men and gender stereotyping that prevents women from being hired into positions of more responsibility, as well as a lack of opportunities for women to participate in education and training that can develop their management and leadership skills (“Success” project , 2017). Therefore, women should be further encouraged to engage in educational/vocational development to acquire all the necessary management skills and leadership characteristics indispensable for professional development and to perform different tasks in a variety of sport organisations settings (i.e., sport clubs, regional and national sport federations, and umbrella sport organisations). In this framework, the recognition of informal learning should be envisioned, as a complement to formal education through the achievement of multifaceted knowledge, skills, and competencies essential for new sport leaders. Furthermore, in compliance with the principles of good governance, sustainable and inclusive growth in sport organizations, qualified professional contributes to increase the quality of organizational culture, processes and operations.

A continuum between projects

Different career stages require different educational approaches and contents. Previous projects implemented by some of the NewMiracle’s project partners, namely “Success” and “Miracle”, have focused on Top management and Middle management women, who were already employed within different sport organizations, ranging from small to large, and with a variety of roles and responsibilities. Thus, these previous participants were already embedded into the sport system within different national contexts, presented different individual knowledge and backgrounds, and were working at different levels in their sport organizations. Regarding the training programme provided in the projects, the Success project aimed at increasing networking opportunities, leadership skills, and sport management competencies/skills of women Top managers. The training programme was mainly focused on individual formal and non-formal learning, with participant’s individual reflection on the major sport management themes (such as Organising a sport organisation, Managing strategically, Managing HR, Managing finance, Managing marketing, Organising a major sport event), through individual study, thematic practices and the development of case studies. Informal learning was also envisioned to be an essential part of the training, through national and international meetings/events. In particular, two one-week international sessions have been organized within the project, to

provide further learning opportunities and to stimulate the teamwork and networking among participants through group works and tasks. Conversely, the Miracle project addressed at a higher extent the gender equality in sport organizations' theme in women Middle managers, through one national and one international meeting. In particular, non-formal and informal learning have been widely provided during the project meetings, and group works were aimed at stimulating participants' networking and leadership skills.

Target group of the NewMiracle project is young women sport managers who might work in sport clubs, sport federations and other organisations in sport sector, but still at the entry level or Lower management career stage. This particular target group is supposed to have received a Sport Management education through academic/vocational educational paths. However, the young age of participants is relevant when considering acquired specific knowledge, competencies/skills, and experience in sport management settings. Therefore, it was deemed crucial for participants in the project to structure an adequate training programme to allow them to acquire a range of knowledge, competencies and skills relevant to prepare to face the challenges of a sport management career.

Evidence regarding the sport management competencies and skills

Today's career environment, independently from the professional sector, appears vastly different and the skills needed for today's careers are also hugely different. Innovation and collaborative problem-solving are highly demanded attributes in businesses companies and organizations (Torres et al., 2020), thus contemporary academic/vocational training programme should consider the implementation of activities and tasks to stimulate students in developing the necessary skills and competencies.

In general terms, a competence-based education targets the development of competencies relevant to the field of study to raise the employability of graduates. Although Europe is unified by its structural reform of higher education (e.g., Bachelor's and Master's degrees, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), no guidelines for competence-driven curricula exist. Furthermore, sport management higher education (SMHE) lacks a distinct competence framework: there is a gap of knowledge about which competencies are needed by the sport industry and how to develop them (Wohlfart et al, 2021).

Research (Jenkins, 2021) has reported that a significant competency gap exists between how college graduates perceive their competencies and how employers perceive those same competencies relative to career readiness. NACE (2018) identified seven competencies believed to be indicative of career readiness (work ethic, communication, critical thinking/ problem-solving, teamwork/collaboration, leadership, digital technology, and career management) and surveyed more than 200 employers and 4,000 graduating college students. According to the results, college graduates perceived themselves to be proficient while employers considered many to perform well below expectations (Jenkins, 2021; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018). Thus, young professionals should be provided with both the necessary sector-specific knowledge, but also a range of employability skills to start successfully and grow in their career.

Many businesses are utilizing concepts such as business agility, human-centred design (HCD), flash teams, and rapid prototyping to drive innovation and combat the ever-changing conditions in society. Additionally, businesses operate in cross-functional teams while higher education tends to remain consistent and resistant to change as curricular specificity and course structures remain prevalently stable overtime. Such is the case for many sports management programmes. The disconnect in strategies between industry and higher

education appears to leave students under-prepared for the workplace and employers disenchanted with the learning outcomes being produced in colleges and universities (Jinkins, 2021).

Innovation and creativity in the workplace have become increasingly important determinants of organizational performance, success, and longer-term survival (Anderson et al., 2014). The 2020 pandemic has also shown the need for creativity and innovation to pivot and adapt to rapidly changing conditions, even for those industries that are thriving. No longer can manufacturing, tourism, government, retail, sport, or higher education continue to do business as usual. The evidence clearly suggests that businesses and institutions of higher learning need continuous innovation to adapt and thrive as the velocity of change increases, beginning with knowledge acquisition, talent development, and working collaboratively to produce graduates that can make a substantive, meaningful, and positive impact upon graduation. Organizations cannot afford to take a 'wait-and-see' approach and are building innovation-based cultures to proactively combat an ever-changing world. Sjödin et al. (2020) suggest that to compete in this era of constant change, businesses should invest in co-creation and innovation practices to maintain their position in the market. Therefore, sport management programmes should reflect the changes occurring in business and society.

In 2020, still no internationally recognized competence framework for sport managers exists because of the quasi-professional nature of sport management (Dowling, 2020). Competencies have not yet been a major issue in sport management education and research (Miragaia & Soares, 2017; Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2019). Similarly, it is largely unexplored whether and to which extent the inner workings of sports organisations are aligned with competence-based regulations. Nevertheless, the lack of a competency-based conception restricts the differentiation of sport management from other occupations and thus also its social legitimacy. This deficit appears particularly problematic as the sport management industry is a complex and diverse occupational field, holding various employment opportunities in a variety of settings (Emery, Crabtree, & Kerr, 2012; Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2019). Indeed, the multifaceted nature of sport management tasks within sport organizations of different nature and size further challenge contemporary sport managers. Bigger and more complex organizations (i.e., in terms of organizational structure) require a high degree of professionalism and qualifications in employees. However, also smaller, and simpler organizations could strongly benefit of qualified personnel to achieve efficient working processes and operations.

Organisational purposes and aims determine which programmes and instruments are considered appropriate to achieve these purposes. They also aim at cultivating traditions and may therefore influence informal rules of organisational culture. Consequently, 'different occupational contexts will require different levels of ability on the part of role holders' (Morgeson, Dierdorff, & Hmurovic, 2010, p. 353). Furthermore, every manager fills a vacancy, with the job position being embedded in a hierarchical relationship with (more or less) superior positions and subordinate departments, units, and staff members. Organisational guidelines and rules of procedure, understood as communication channels in the form of 'a horizontally and vertically differentiated network, which determines the distribution of tasks, hierarchies or processes' (Thiel & Mayer, 2009, p. 90), and affects the job position's area of responsibility and work autonomy (e.g. regarding scheduling, spatial design, and methods). Finally, with respect to the job position's functional responsibility, different job duties and tasks need to be observed. Characterised by different degrees of interaction with people, relatedness to figures or sports activities, obviously, work activities require specific patterns of competencies (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2019).

Knowledge-based needs in sport management have benefited of the widespread international formal agreement regarding the educational curricula within the academic system, aimed at facilitating the mobility

of students between national and international contexts. Major recognized learning themes, included in most of the academic/vocational courses, are managing sport organizations, strategic management, human resources, sport marketing, finance and budgeting, and sport event management. Conversely, many studies (i.e., Thiel & Mayer, 2009; Miragaia & Soares, 2017; Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2019; Dowling, 2020; Emery, Crabtreeb & Kerr, 2012; and many others) have tried to characterize the competencies/skills set necessary in sport management. Although many similarities and common grounds emerged, there is still a gap in: a) a formal and stable agreement regarding the competencies and skills structure and relevance; b) a uniform use of the terms “competence” and “skill” to unequivocally define all the recognized sport managers’ characteristics (i.e., it is not infrequent to find the same characteristic qualified as competence or skill within different studies); and c) the use of internationally recognized clusters (i.e., competence; soft skills; hard skills; personal traits) to identify the identified characteristics.

Finally, an important aspect that should be considered in contemporary work is that sport management students and professionals should be equipped with more than specific business-focused technical skills and competencies. Emery et al. (2012) found a disconnect between the skills that sport management education offers and what the sport industry requires from employees. Sport management programmes focus on individual learning and use a rational approach to reflection (i.e., reasoning, problem solving) to facilitate a student’s individual growth (Martin, 2013; Sotiriadou & Hill, 2015). Such a rational approach is insufficient to address distinctive cultural and social characteristics of the sport industry. De Schepper and Sotiriadou (2017) asserted operationalizing and examining both individual and social dimensions of critical reflection in a sport management context would be more beneficial to achieve alignment between academic learning processes and requirements of the job market. Including social dimensions into critical reflection enhances awareness and understanding of the diverse and heterogeneous features of the sport industry.

In this framework, also interpersonal and social skills and teamwork play a crucial role. Participation in diverse settings encourages the development of knowledge and skills required to effectively communicate and cooperate to reach group goals. Developing competency in working effectively with individuals who have different values, perspectives, backgrounds, and orientations requires the need to see things from others’ perspectives (Brooks et al, 2013).

NewMiracle adopted clusters and definitions

To provide a solid structure to the training course and to the competencies/skills framework to be developed, definitions in compliance with contemporary trends and literature was deemed crucial. Therefore, from the studies of Rychen and Salganik (2000) and Matteson et al. (2016), the following definitions have been adopted throughout project’s activities:

- The term "knowledge" applies to facts or ideas acquired by study, investigation, observation, or experience and refers to a body of information that is understood.
- The concept of "competence" refers to the ability to meet demands of a high degree of complexity and implies complex action systems.
- The term "skill" is used to designate the ability to use one's knowledge with relative ease to perform relatively simple tasks.

- "Dispositions/Traits" are the individual qualities, relatively stable over time, that influence behaviour and actions performed as part of an individual's skill set.
- Literature describes "attitude" as "an overall evaluation about some aspect of the world—people, issues, or objects."
- A belief is a conclusion regarding factual evidence, whereas an attitude is a belief that includes an emotional component. An acceptance that certain factual evidence is true, informed by an individual's own values.
- Values are general standards or principles that guide behaviours among varying situations and to which individuals feel a strong commitment.
- The term "soft skills" is catchy but ambiguous, being used extensively with little agreement on meaning. In such fields as business education, management, communication, and even library and information science, articles list all kinds of soft skills derived from formal and informal research methods. Yet definitions of the term vary. No formally agreed upon, universal set of soft skills exists.
- "Hard skills" are learned abilities acquired and enhanced through practice, repetition, and education. Hard skills are essential because they increase employee productivity and efficiency and subsequently improve employee satisfaction.

Competencies are broader than knowledge and skills. Competencies are structured around demands and tasks. Fulfilling complex demands and tasks requires not only knowledge and skills but also involves strategies and routines needed to apply the knowledge and skills, as well as appropriate emotions and attitudes, and effective management of these components. Thus, the notion of competencies encompasses cognitive but also motivational, ethical, social, and behavioural components. It combines stable traits, learning outcomes (e.g., knowledge and skills), belief-value systems, habits, and other psychological features. In this view, basic reading, writing, and calculating are skills that are critical components of numerous competencies. Although the line between competence and skill is somewhat blurry, the conceptual difference between these terms is real. Competencies are learned. Acquiring competencies is viewed as an on-going, lifelong, learning process. This process occurs in multiple settings. The settings and social institutions relevant for the development of competencies besides school are family, peers, work, political life, religious life, cultural life, etc. The conception of competencies as learned contrasts with one in which competencies are considered innate, inborn characteristics. Competency learning is not only a matter of personal effort. The development of competencies presumes a favourable social and ecological environment, which includes but goes beyond the satisfaction of basic needs (food, housing, health, etc.). It is also dependent on the quantity and quality of learning opportunities. Therefore, the structure of the economy and social institutions plays an important role in the development of competencies.

Among the various definitions of skill, the concept of execution is central in all of them. That is, skill implies the prerequisites of having and accessing certain knowledge, processes, or sequences of behaviour leading to a specific performance. However, for something to be considered a skill, it must contain an element of action. In addition, skills fall on a competency continuum from low to high, are associated with knowledge and values, and can be developed, moving from basic to more advanced.

The relationship between skills and dispositions or traits is particularly difficult to ascertain. For example, although literature (Grugulis and Vincent, 2009) warns against defining personal attributes and behaviours as skills, traits, goals, motivations, and preferences have all often been considered soft skills. In fact, these are personal attributes, not skills. The terms trait and disposition—functionally synonymous—are individual qualities. Relatively stable over time, traits affect behaviour. Owing to that stability, they differ from skills, which inherently involve performance, action, or change. Essentially, dispositions are qualities people possess; they inform what people do using their skill sets.

Attitudes consist of three components: affective, that is, feelings about an object or issue; behavioural, that is, intent to act in a particular way regarding the object or issue; and cognitive, that is, beliefs or knowledge about the object or issue. Attitude has been also defined as a positive or negative judgment of an object or entity.

While beliefs may be grounded in some factual evidence, the beliefs people hold are informed by their values. Values are “abstract, generalized principle[s] of behaviour to which the members of a group feel a strong, emotionally toned positive commitment and which provides a standard for judging specific acts and goals.” Literature emphasizes that personal values typically apply across situations, further differentiating them from attitudes and beliefs, which people hold about specific people, issues, objects, or facts.

If definitions across the management research literature depart from and even contradict one another, overlaps among these lists of soft skills do exist: sociability, self-management, communication skills, ethics, diversity sensitivity, teamwork skills, problem-solving or critical thinking abilities, customer service competencies, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills have all been mentioned as examples. Three broad categories of soft skills: (1) interpersonal skills, such as teamwork skills and customer service skills; (2) thinking skills, such as decision-making and knowing how to learn; and (3) personal skills, such as sociability and self-management. The soft skills most commonly listed in job ads included innovation, initiative, service orientation, leveraging diversity, communication, leadership, collaboration and cooperation, and team capabilities. Chamorro-Premuzic et al. created an inventory of fifteen soft skills based on previous literature: self-management, communicational, interpersonal, teamwork, the ability to work under pressure, imagination or creativity, critical thinking, willingness to learn, attention to detail, taking responsibility, planning, and organizing, insight, maturity, professionalism, and emotional intelligence.

In business, hard skills most often refer to the basics of accounting and financial modelling. In a broad sense, hard skills may refer to proficiency in any complex task. Fluency in a second language, knowledge of Photoshop or PowerPoint, or field specific software/hardware are all hard skills that can be learned and improved upon with practice. Employers and recruiters most often look for these hard skills in professional resumes. Any hard skill that a person cites is best backed up with a certificate, degree, or other qualification that shows a level of achievement. Experience in the subject, such as years of working with QuickBooks, are also seen as qualifications that validate expertise in hard skills.

The NewMiracle strategy for the skill and competencies card implementation

The basis for developing training materials started with defining the necessary skill set for each function and defining learning outcomes. In particular, a detailed description of all learning objectives, the definition of how these objectives and through which activities the needed competences should be acquired by the learners during the training programme was deemed crucial.

During the NewMiracle a skill set was developed for new sport leaders, which focused on the areas of management and leadership, in connection with good governance, sustainable and inclusive growth, innovation, sustainability, cultural and self-awareness and gender-based issues in the sport environment. The consortiums different experiences and partners specific knowledge helped to create a complete, coherent, and useful skill card which was the premise to develop the program modules. Activity leader coordinated the information collection among the partners for skill card creation and based on that prepared the strategy design. The curriculum and training materials were based on the skill card and suggestions of strategy design report. The focus in creation of the curriculum and training materials was on practical hands-on trainings and based on acquisition of constructive skills and competences necessary to increase the capabilities and knowledge in sport sector. To provide a comprehensive picture of all the necessary knowledge/competencies/skills required by contemporary sport managers, a three-fold strategic analysis has been deemed necessary:

- Firstly, relevant information regarding the European framework for working fields, professions and necessary knowledge/qualifications/competencies/skills in relation to sport management has been retrieved through internet search.
- Secondly, national information was retrieved through the desk analysis (IO1), aimed at: a) identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the equal opportunities in sport management; b) explore information related to women managers/administrator's empowerment in sport; c) identify existing women empowerment trainings and classify their methods; d) debate possible training content and learning approaches for participants.
- Thirdly, a systematic literature review of the relevant contemporary scientific literature in the field of sport management and necessary knowledge/competencies/skills has been performed. The integration of the EU and research information was considered crucial to fill in the knowledge needs and gaps, to define a clearer and precise profile of the contemporary sport manager, and to structure an adequate training course within the project.

The integration of the information derived from the above-mentioned sources would ensure to identify all the main knowledge contents that need to be addressed, all the relevant competencies and skills that should be developed by contemporary sport managers, and all the gender-based features that need to be considered to increase the gender equality opportunities in the field of sport management. In particular, aside all the relevant and necessary learning contents, a specific focus on gender-based bias in sport and in the work environment at large would provide young women the necessary awareness and knowledge in order to recognize specific gender norms and stereotypes that may interfere with their career development.

Regarding the training course implementation, the use of different approaches and pedagogical methodologies was deemed indispensable to provide participants a rich, exhaustive and enjoyable learning path and experience. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the educational sector, pushing it towards teaching-learning methodologies where the online aspect takes on special importance. In this sense, social media are tools that facilitate the creation of meaningful and sustainable learning environments. In particular, social media is one of the most outstanding technological phenomena in people's lives, having become an integral part of our society. Given the emergence and ubiquity of social media, whether intended or unintended, social media is transforming the way students communicate, collaborate, and learn. The field of education has not been unaffected by the rise of social media, penetrating these tools in many domains of educational practices and processes (López-Carril et al., 2020). Consequently, in a contemporary sport management training setting, the

use of a digital experience as learning tool was considered essential. This implied the use of an agile, user-friendly, on-line training tool (i.e., Google Forms), and different communication strategies, ranging from technical written contents, relevant papers, and documents for knowledge deepening through individual study, explanation videos, scenario/dilemmas that required the learner's reaction, inspirational speeches (TED Talks), practices, and learning evaluation sheets. In particular, TED Talks can be integrated into the learning dynamic with a wide range of learning purposes such as: (1) generating debates and discussions about the topic content of the TED Talks; (2) viewing TED Talks to introduce or expand on topics from the course syllabus; (3) enabling learners to give oral presentations imitating the TED Talks format; (4) analysing the speech and aspects of its implementation through gestures; and (5) with the idea of teaching English as a foreign language (López-Carril et al., 2020).

In all the training modules, a specific focus on gender equality was addressed, as learning common denominator.