ERASMUS + project 101134472/JOY21/08/2023

JOY IN SPORTS

ROADMAP TO POLICY INFLUENCING



Policy recommendations on how to decrease discrimination and increase sense of Joy in youth sports

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01

Executive Summary



1.1 The Problem

Sport has considerable potential to contribute to children's physical health, psychological well-being, social development and sense of belonging. Participation in sport can create friendships, strengthen confidence, develop social skills and provide children with meaningful opportunities to learn cooperation, responsibility and resilience. However, these benefits are not automatically experienced by every child.

Across Europe, children and young people encounter different barriers to meaningful participation in organised sport. These barriers may be linked to disability, socio-economic circumstances, gender, ethnic or cultural background, migration experience, perceived ability, body image, the cost or accessibility of participation, or the social climate within a club or team. Bullying, racism, discrimination, intolerance and exclusion can undermine the experience of sport and contribute to withdrawal and eventual dropout. The original JOY application consequently identified unequal opportunities to participate in sport and inadequate inclusion practices as central challenges to be addressed.

> The issue is therefore not only **whether children have access to sport**, but also **what kind of experience they encounter once they enter a sports environment.**

A child may technically be a member of a club but still feel excluded from the group. A young athlete may attend training regularly but experience persistent performance pressure, fear of mistakes or little opportunity to contribute to decisions. A child may have the physical ability to participate but face financial, social, cultural or accessibility barriers. Likewise, a coach may wish to create an inclusive environment but lack practical tools or education for responding to bullying, diversity, emotional distress or differing needs among young athletes.

JOY starts from the premise that **participation, inclusion, belonging, well-being and enjoyment are interconnected**. When young athletes feel safe, respected, competent and connected to others, they are more likely to remain engaged in sport. Educational Pack 2.0 therefore treats long-term participation not simply as a question of sporting performance but as the result of the wider environment around the child, including autonomy, competence, relationships, the learning climate, affordability, accessibility and appropriate expectations.

For public authorities, sport federations and clubs, this creates an important policy question: **How can organised youth sport be structured so that inclusion and joy are not accidental outcomes, but recognised quality standards?**

This White Paper responds to that question.

The central policy shift proposed by JOY is from funding participation alone to investing in quality participation. Access matters, but access alone is not enough if a child cannot participate meaningfully, feel safe, express a view or remains involved.

The final policy message is therefore simple: inclusion should not only be expected; it should be resourced. Clubs and coaches that reach and retain young people facing greater barriers need recognition, practical support and, where appropriate, additional resources.

1.2 What JOY Tested and Developed

The Erasmus+ **JOY in SPORTS – Strengthening Inclusion and Joy in Sports Clubs in Europe** project was created to promote inclusion, enthusiasm and joy in children's sport and to encourage participation through practical coach-to-child and child-to-child approaches.

Its central innovation has been the integration of **art-based methods, physical activity, positive pedagogy, peer support and reflective coaching** into everyday youth-sport environments.

The project was organised through five work packages. WP2, WP3 and WP4 created a continuous development pathway from evidence and co-creation to practical testing and then to a final educational resource.

WP2 – Preparation mapped inclusive sport and art-based practices. Partners reviewed approaches for promoting inclusion, investigated combinations of physical exercise and art-based methods, selected approaches suitable for piloting and developed the first Coaches Educational Pack, CEP 1.0. WP2 also

established a baseline for understanding bullying and discriminatory behaviour in participating in sport environments. The co-creation approach was intended to ensure that methods were selected not only theoretically but in dialogue with clubs and end users.

The Erasmus+ application describes this co-creation process as moving from understanding the current situation through interviews, surveys and workshops, through prototype development and piloting, and finally to evaluation and refinement together with end users.

WP3 – Implementation tested combinations of sport and art-based activities in real youth-sport settings. The project planned approximately 30 pilots across participating countries, involving different sports and diverse participant groups. The pilots were designed to include different genders, children with and without disabilities and participants from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The pilot phase provided an important bridge between the initial Educational Pack 1.0 and the subsequent Educational Pack 2.0. Activities were not simply delivered; participant experiences and outcomes were evaluated so that lessons learned could inform refinement of the approach.

By April 2026, the project reported that pilot implementation and evaluation had been completed across all partner countries and the final WP3 report has now been published. The project website reports strong participation and adherence, positive emotional engagement and a sense of team belonging across the pilots, while Finland and Poland provided additional final evidence for the consolidated evaluation.

WP4 - Coaches Educational Pack transformed these experiences and lessons into a comprehensive practical resource. Following the pilots, partners worked together to agree pedagogical principles, incorporate contextual and cultural differences, develop reflective-practice tools and finalise Educational Pack 2.0. The resource is intended for coaches, team leaders, volunteers and youth workers and is available in project languages through www.joyinsports.com

Educational Pack 2.0 now brings together art-based pedagogy, positive psychology, coach-athlete relationships, motivation and constructive feedback, peer support through the VIP model, resilience, mental well-being, reflective coaching, dropout prevention and a substantial set of practical JOY exercises.

> Thus, JOY has developed more than a set of exercises. It has developed a **practice model for creating youth-sport environments in which children can participate, belong, learn, express themselves and remain involved over time.**

1.3 Key Findings

The JOY experience suggests that inclusion in youth sport is strengthened when interventions address not only individual behaviour but also relationships and the wider environment surrounding the child.

Several recurring lessons emerge from WP2–WP4.

1. First, **belonging matters**. Young people are more likely to engage when they experience acceptance, trust and positive relationships with teammates and coaches. The Educational Pack identifies relatedness and positive coach-athlete relationships as important conditions for continued participation.
2. Second, **creativity can provide an additional route into participation and communication**. Art-based methods allow young athletes to interact outside traditional performance-oriented drills. Movement, improvisation, rhythm, role play, images and collaborative creative activities can help participants express themselves and encounter teammates in different ways. The project website reports that WP3 specifically tested combinations of art and physical activity, including approaches such as Forum Theatre.
3. Third, **the quality of coaching interaction is central**. Feedback, communication and emotional climate affect whether a mistake becomes an opportunity to learn or a reason to withdraw. Educational Pack 2.0 therefore encourages coaches to separate the athlete as a person from a specific behaviour or performance, recognise effort and intention, use clear guidance and create opportunities for athlete reflection and agency.
4. Fourth, **young people can support one another**. The VIP peer-support model extends responsibility for inclusion beyond the coach. VIPs may welcome newcomers, encourage teammates, help clarify routines and provide a bridge between young people and adults.
5. Fifth, **resilience should not be equated with simply tolerating pressure**. The JOY approach treats resilience as the capacity to recognise stress, recover from setbacks, regulate emotions and continue engaging in meaningful activity. This depends partly on the environment created by coaches and peers.
6. Finally, **long-term participation requires attention to structural barriers**. Cost, accessibility, time commitments, the type of sport offered, and the expectations placed on young people can all affect participation. Inclusion policy therefore needs to address organisational conditions as well as individual attitudes.

Preliminary and reported WP3 findings are consistent with these principles. The project website describes pilots in Türkiye, Portugal and Estonia as showing positive experiences relating to teamwork, communication, creative expression and belonging. Later consolidated project reporting states that results across participating countries indicated strong participation, team belonging and positive emotional engagement.

These findings should nevertheless be interpreted within the methodological limits described in Chapter 3. The strongest policy conclusion at this stage is not that one exercise or method causes a specific psychological outcome, but that **inclusive, relationship-centered and reflective coaching environments provide conditions that support participation, belonging and positive experiences in sport.**

1.4 Six JOY Policy Recommendations: Key points

The JOY experience leads to six key recommendations.

01

Public funding and access to public sporting facilities should be connected to demonstrable standards for inclusion, child well-being and non-discrimination, while also providing additional support to clubs that undertake the more demanding work of equitable inclusion.

02

Coach education and continuing professional development should include competences related to inclusion, constructive feedback, athlete voice, positive relationships, mental well-being, resilience and creative approaches to participation.

03

Youth-sport organisations should establish clear inclusion, anti-bullying and dropout-prevention practices rather than relying solely on informal goodwill.

04

Children and young people should have meaningful opportunities to shape their sporting environments, including through structured peer-support mechanisms such as the JOY VIP approach.

05

Well-being, belonging and psychological safety should be recognised as indicators of quality in youth sport alongside technical development and competitive performance.

06

Sport organisations and public authorities should monitor participation, belonging, retention, accessibility and experiences of exclusion so that policy decisions are based on what children experience.

Together, these recommendations propose a practical system for making inclusion part of how youth sport is funded, delivered, measured and improved. They are developed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

02

Why Europe Needs More Inclusive and Joy-Centred Youth Sport



2.1 Unequal Access, Discrimination and Exclusion

European youth sport has the potential to bring children from different backgrounds together, yet participation opportunities and experiences remain uneven.

The original JOY project rationale highlighted barriers affecting children with disabilities, minority and migrant backgrounds and children from lower socio-economic circumstances. It also recognised racism, bullying, discrimination and intolerance as barriers to the inclusive potential of sport.

Exclusion can occur at several levels.

There can be **structural exclusion**, where cost, transport, inaccessible facilities, inflexible schedules or limited types of sport make participation difficult.

There can be **social exclusion**, where a child is technically present but does not feel accepted or valued by teammates or adults.

There can also be **cultural and behavioural exclusion**, including stereotyping, racism, sexism, ableism, bullying or assumptions about who is considered naturally suited to sport.

For this reason, increasing registration numbers alone does not provide a sufficient measure of inclusion. Policy makers and sport organisations should also ask whether young people can participate meaningfully, whether they feel accepted once they participate and whether they have a realistic opportunity to continue.

> The JOY approach therefore places belonging alongside access.

2.2 Bullying, Pressure, Mental Well-being and Dropout

Leaving sport is rarely explained by one factor alone.

Relationships, perceived competence, enjoyment, competing time demands, cost, negative social experiences and excessive pressure can interact over time. Educational Pack 2.0 consequently treats dropout as a multidimensional issue requiring action from coaches, clubs, parents and peers.

Young people require opportunities to feel competent without being defined solely by performance. They need appropriate challenges, constructive feedback and realistic expectations. They also need supportive relationships and environments in which mistakes do not threaten their personal worth.

Pressure is particularly important in competitive youth sport. Competition itself is not inherently negative, nor is JOY an anti-competition approach. The aim is rather to prevent competitive environments from becoming spaces in which fear of failure, anxiety or external expectations systematically undermine well-being and participation.

The JOY materials emphasis that resilience does not mean suppressing anxiety or emotion. Young athletes can learn to recognise stress responses and develop strategies for coping with demanding situations. Coaches can support this by normalising mistakes, discussing pressure openly and providing psychologically safe opportunities for athletes to try, fail and try again.

The project has also highlighted competition anxiety as a practical concern reported in conversations with coaches. JOY materials developed around this theme include approaches designed to help athletes understand stress and regulate their responses rather than treating anxiety as personal weakness.

> From a policy perspective, this implies that dropout prevention should be treated as part of youth-sport quality management rather than simply as a question of individual motivation.

2.3 Why Belonging and Joy Are Policy Outcomes, not "Soft Extras"

Joy can easily be misunderstood as meaning that sport should always be easy, entertaining or free from demand. This is not the JOY position.

Young athletes can experience challenges, competition, frustration, mistakes and disappointment while still having a fundamentally positive relationship with sport. What matters is whether the environment allows them to experience challenges while retaining dignity, agency, connection and sense that they belong.

> In this sense, joy is a serious indicator of the quality of participation. In JOY, it emerges when belonging, meaningful challenge, positive relationships, agency, expression and psychological safety come together.

A child who repeatedly experiences humiliation, exclusion or fear may technically remain registered in a club, but the social value of participation has been weakened. Conversely, children who experience meaningful challenges alongside trust, friendship, learning and recognition are more likely to develop a sustainable relationship with sport.

Belonging is similarly important. It reflects more than simply being placed on a team list. It involves feeling accepted, recognised and included in the life of the group.

Educational Pack 2.0 places these experiences at the centre of their approach. It states that JOY aims to support enjoyment and engagement, confidence and resilience, focus and learning, belonging and inclusion, and long-term participation.

For policy makers, this means that participation statistics should be complemented by questions about **participation quality**.

A successful youth-sport system should therefore be able to answer not only:

"How many children participate?" but also:

"Who participates?"
"Who leaves?"
"Who feels that they belong?"
"Who repeatedly experiences barriers?"
"Do young athletes feel respected and listened to?"

These are legitimate policy and quality-assurance questions. The JOY pathway can be communicated simply: access makes entry possible; inclusion makes participation meaningful; belonging makes sport feel like "my place"; and retention shows whether the environment gives young people reasons and opportunities to stay.

2.4 Shared Responsibility Across the Youth-Sport System



Inclusion cannot be delegated to individual coaches alone.

Coaches have considerable influence over the immediate sporting environment, but the conditions in which coaches work are shaped by organisations and policy.

Municipalities and local authorities influence access through funding, facilities, procurement arrangements, grants and partnerships with local sport clubs. This gives them an opportunity to include social inclusion and child-centred criteria in decisions about public support. The original JOY application explicitly envisaged the inclusion of promotion methods within municipal standards.

Sport federations influence rules, accreditation systems, club-development programmers and coaching education. They can establish common expectations about safe and inclusive coaching.

Sport clubs translate these principles into everyday organisational practice. Club leadership affects recruitment, affordability, communication with parents, anti-bullying procedures, how new participants are welcomed and how concerns are addressed.

Coach-education organisations determine whether coaches receive preparation not only for technical instruction but also for the interpersonal, educational and psychosocial responsibilities inherent in coaching children.

Young people themselves, including VIPs and other peer leaders, contribute to team culture when they are given safe, age-appropriate ways to welcome others, give feedback and take part in shared leadership.

Parents also shape access and retention. They understand barriers linked to cost, transport, equipment, time pressure and family commitments, and they influence whether children experience competition as healthy challenge or harmful pressure.

The policy challenge is consequently systemic.

JOY proposes moving from a situation in which inclusive practice depends on especially motivated individual coaches toward a model in which inclusion is built into the structures that define quality youth sport.

03

The JOY Project and Evidence Base



3.1 JOY Objectives and Partnership

JOY in SPORTS was created as a European cooperation project with the overarching aim of strengthening inclusion and joy in sports clubs.

The project identified four interconnected objectives: developing practical art-based and physical-activity methods; strengthening the knowledge and skills of people working with youth sport; encouraging participation and adherence while reducing dropout; and strengthening relationships between sport organisations, clubs, athletes, children, parents and other stakeholders.

The Erasmus+ application planned the project around cooperation among partners from several European countries and different types of organisations, thereby allowing the approach to be developed across varied sporting and cultural settings.

This transnational character is important. The project did not assume that one club culture or national model could simply be reproduced everywhere. Instead, partners were expected to identify common principles while allowing implementation to reflect national, cultural and organisational contexts.

3.2 Co-Creation Methodology

Co-creation has been central to the JOY development process.

Rather than designing complete intervention in isolation and delivering it to clubs afterwards, the project used a staged process of mapping, consultation, piloting, evaluation and refinement.

WP2 established its foundation.

Existing approaches to inclusion and art-based practice were reviewed and discussed. Partners explored how physical exercises might be combined with art-based methods and selected approaches for inclusion in the initial Coaches Educational Pack 1.0. A baseline concerning bullying and discriminatory behaviour was also included in the preparation phase.

The project application describes co-creation as beginning with an understanding of the current situation through discussions, interviews, surveys and workshops, followed by the development of initial methods, piloting with sport-club actors and subsequent evaluation and refinement.

This methodology has two policy advantages.

First, it recognises coaches and young athletes as sources of knowledge rather than only recipients of interventions.

Second, it increases the likelihood that final resources can be used within real coaching environments.

WP4 continued this co-creative principle. A project workshop specifically focused on identifying pedagogical principles, using collaborative ideation and ensuring that the subsequent Educational Pack 2.0 reflected inclusivity, accessibility and practical effectiveness.

3.3 Pilots and Target Groups

WP3 provided the principal practical testing environment for the JOY approach.

Pilot activities were implemented in five partner countries. Finland, Poland, Portugal, Türkiye and Estonia. The pilots involved 519 children and young players, exceeding the project target of 450 participants. Activities were delivered across different youth sports, including football, basketball, handball, ice hockey, rugby, volleyball, karate and dance .

519
children and young players

450
project target

5
partner countries

8
youth sports

Pilot selection was intended to reflect diversity in sport type, gender and ability/disability and to involve different groups of children and young people.

The pilots used combinations drawn from Educational Pack 1.0, including art-based and joy-oriented activities integrated into sport.

One particularly illustrative example was the application of **Forum Theatre** in the TuTo Captain School in Finland. Forum Theatre transforms participants from passive observers into people who can intervene in a scenario, test alternative responses and explore different solutions to social situations. Within JOY it was connected to young captains and peer leadership and complemented the broader peer-support philosophy of the VIP model.

Pilot activities in Türkiye, Portugal and Estonia were subsequently reported as producing positive experiences concerning team spirit, creative expression, communication and belonging. Finland and Poland completed the remaining evidence base, with the project reporting in 2026 that pilot evaluation across all participating countries had been completed.

The diversity of the pilot contexts is particularly relevant for policy transfer because it indicates that JOY principles can be adapted rather than implemented as a rigid programme.

3.4 What Was Evaluated and How

The JOY evaluation approach included a mixture of quantitative and qualitative information.

The project design incorporated baseline data on bullying and discriminatory behaviour, participant feedback, interviews and surveys, and evaluation before and after pilot implementation.

The original Erasmus+ objectives also identified indicators relating to participation, adherence, dropout, inclusion, health and well-being.

According to project reporting, pilot evaluations examined experiences including participation, motivation, team spirit, belonging and emotional engagement. The published WP3 report summaries feedback collected from coaches and participants during the pilot phase. Coaches generally described the JOY exercises as engaging, adaptable and supportive of teamwork, communication and a positive training atmosphere. They also identified opportunities to improve instructions and adapt activities more closely to different age groups.

The final WP3 reporting phase brings this material together across project countries.

The evaluation should be understood as serving two purposes.

One purpose is **outcome-oriented**: understanding whether the pilot experiences were associated with positive changes or perceptions.

The second is **developmental**: identifying which approaches were sufficiently useful, practical and acceptable to be incorporated or refined within Educational Pack 2.0.

For JOY, the latter is particularly important. The project is an educational and practice-development initiative as well as an evaluation exercise.

3.5 Limitations of the Evidence

The JOY evidence should be presented transparently.

The pilots provide valuable practice-based evidence across multiple European settings, but the White Paper should avoid presenting every positive change as proof of direct causality.

Participants were not necessarily drawn from representative national samples, clubs differed in organisational and cultural context, interventions were adapted locally, and several indicators rely on participant or coach perceptions. Moreover, social experiences such as belonging and joy are affected by multiple interacting factors.

> For these reasons, the strongest conclusions concern **feasibility, acceptability, recurring patterns and promising practice**, rather than definitive causal effects of one intervention.

The published WP3 report confirms the reach of the pilot phase and summaries positive coach feedback across different sporting contexts. However, the publicly available report does not provide detailed country-level results, statistical effect sizes or sufficient methodological information to establish causal effects or long-term reductions in discrimination and dropout.

The findings should therefore be presented primarily as evidence of implementation feasibility and encouraging participant and coach experiences.

To ensure clarity and transparency, the White Paper should distinguish between:

project targets;
observed outputs;
participant-reported experiences;
measured changes;
and conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from those findings.

Such transparency strengthens rather than weakens the policy argument. Policy makers need credible evidence, and credible evidence includes clarity about what is known and what remains to be investigated.

04

What JOY Shows Works in Practice



4.1 Art-Based and Creative Approaches

JOY's distinctive contribution is its integration of art-based approaches into youth sport.

The aim is not to replace sport with art. Rather, creative practices provide additional ways for young people to interact, learn and express themselves within sport.

Activities involving rhythm, movement, improvisation, storytelling, role play, images or group creativity can temporarily shift attention away from conventional sporting hierarchies. A child who is not the fastest runner or strongest player may contribute an idea, lead an improvisation or help solve a creative group problem.

Educational Pack 2.0 describes young athletes as active learners and creators and encourages playful exploration, open-ended activities, improvisation and reflection within clear structures. This represents an important pedagogical shift: the coach remains responsible for structure and safety but also becomes a facilitator of learning.

WP3 findings indicate that JOY's creative and cooperative exercises can be integrated into different youth sports and training environments. Coaches reported improvements in communication, cooperation, motivation and the overall training atmosphere. The feedback also highlights the importance of clear instructions and age-appropriate adaptation when transferring these activities into regular coaching practice.

The policy implication is that coaching should recognise creative pedagogy as a legitimate tool for developing social and relational dimensions of sport.

4.2 Positive and Inclusive Coaching Relationships



Few actors shape a child's daily sporting experience more directly than the coach.

JOY therefore treats the coach-athlete relationship as a fundamental component of inclusion.

An effective relationship combines leadership with respect, communication, trust and responsiveness. Young athletes need clear expectations and boundaries, but they also need to feel that adults recognise them as developing individuals rather than simply as sporting performers.

Educational Pack 2.0 emphasises that relationships influence motivation, confidence, learning and well-being. Strong relationships involve trust, commitment, cooperation and shared understanding.

This does not imply lowering standards.

Positive coaching can be demanding. Athletes can be challenged, corrected and encouraged to improve. The distinction lies in ensuring that correction addresses the behaviour or action without reducing the athlete's personal worth.

For policy makers and federations, the key message is that relationship competence is coaching competence.

4.3 Constructive Feedback and Athlete Voice

Feedback is one of the most frequent interactions between a coach and athlete and therefore one of the most powerful opportunities to create either confidence or insecurity.

JOY encourages feedback that is clear, specific and learning-oriented.

Athletes should understand what happened, what can be improved and what they can try next. Coaches can also use questions to invite reflection, for example by asking what the athlete was attempting or what they noticed during an activity.

This supports athlete agency.

Athlete voice extends beyond feedback. Young people should have appropriate opportunities to contribute ideas, reflect on activities, discuss team experiences and communicate concerns.

> Giving children a voice does not mean transferring adult safeguarding or leadership responsibilities to them. It means recognising that young athletes possess direct knowledge about their own experiences and that this knowledge can improve coaching and club decisions.

4.4 Resilience and Mental Well-being

JOY approaches resilience as a developmental capacity rather than as emotional suppression or "mental toughness".

Sport inevitably contains stressors: competition, mistakes, selection decisions, difficult training sessions, uncertainty and disappointment.

Healthy development therefore requires young athletes to encounter manageable challenges while having access to supportive relationships and strategies for coping.

Educational Pack 2.0 connects resilience with recognition of stress reactions, nervous-system regulation, supportive self-talk and mental imagery. It also stresses that coaches help create the conditions in which young people can safely experience, discuss and recover from difficult moments.

> Mental well-being should not become another target imposed on coaches without appropriate education and referral pathways. Coaches are not expected to replace qualified mental-health professionals.
>
> Their role is to contribute to an environment that supports well-being, recognises warning signs and knows when additional support is needed.

4.5 Peer Support and Shared Leadership: The VIP Model

Peers strongly influence whether sport feels welcoming or excluding.

The JOY VIP model addresses this directly by giving young athletes a structured peer-support role.



VIPs can welcome newcomers, encourage teammates, normalise mistakes, help others understand routines and strengthen communication between young athletes and coaches.

The model also broadens concepts of leadership.

Rather than restricting leadership to one permanent captain or the strongest performer, rotating responsibilities create opportunities for more young people to contribute to the social functioning of the team. The VIP approach should therefore be presented not only as peer support but also as structured youth participation and shared leadership.

The approach was further explored through the Captain School and Forum Theatre work in Finland, showing how peer leadership can be combined with participatory approaches for exploring difficult social situations.

> For policy and club development, peer-support systems provide a practical way of making youth participation visible and structured.

4.6 Preventing Dropout and Strengthening Long-Term Participation

Dropout prevention requires more than persuading young people to remain in sport.

Organisations need to examine the conditions that influence whether participation remains realistic and meaningful.

Educational Pack 2.0 identifies a broad range of relevant factors: autonomy; perceived competence; relatedness; learning climate; balance between sport and other commitments; costs; expectations; values; coach-athlete relationships; peer relationships; parental support; accessibility; and diversity in the type and level of sporting opportunities offered.

This is particularly significant for policy.

Some causes of dropout cannot be solved through improved coach communication alone. High fees, unsuitable schedules, inaccessible facilities or an excessive emphasis on a single competitive pathway require organisational decisions.

JOY therefore supports a whole-environment approach to retention.

4.7 Reflective Coaching and the JOY E-Portfolio

Good coaching develops through reflection as well as experience.

The JOY e-portfolio encourages coaches to revisit situations from practice and examine recurring patterns. Coaches may consider how athletes respond to different types of feedback, when participants become actively engaged or withdraw, what strengthens or weakens trust and how their own reactions influence the group atmosphere.

This turns reflection into a form of continuous professional learning.

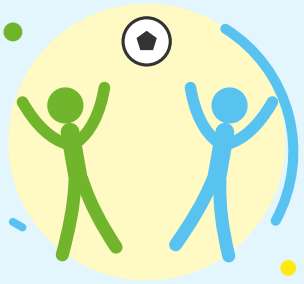
The objective is not surveillance or evaluation of individual coaches. Rather, reflective practice helps coaches make implicit decisions visible and learn systematically from experience.

WP4 explicitly included development of electronic portfolio structures as part of its reflective-practice approach.

At policy level, this suggests that coach development should not end when a qualification is awarded. Continuous reflection, peer learning and professional support should form part of a modern quality system for youth coaching.

05

From Practice to Policy: The JOY Policy Framework



The central policy lesson from JOY is that inclusion cannot be achieved through one activity, one coach or one awareness campaign.

> It requires an **ecosystem.**

JOY therefore proposes a policy framework connecting the experiences of individual children with coach practice, club organisation, federation standards and public policy.

The framework is based on seven dimensions.

5.1 Youth focused and Rights-Based Sport

Youth sport exists first and foremost for children and young people.

Their physical and emotional safety, dignity, development and right to participate without discrimination should therefore guide organisational and policy decisions.

A child-centred approach does not mean that adults abandon expectations or performance development. It means that sporting ambitions are pursued within boundaries that respect children's developmental needs.

The Erasmus+ application explicitly positioned JOY in relation to children's rights and committed the project to voluntary participation and recognition of each child as an individual.

A rights-based approach asks organisations to consider not merely whether they offer activities but whether children can access, participate in and influence those activities fairly and safely.

5.2 Belonging, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

Inclusion must be visible in everyday practice.

Policies against discrimination are necessary, but written policies alone do not create belonging.

Sport organisations should be able to demonstrate how newcomers are welcomed, how bullying is addressed, how children with differing needs are accommodated and how teams create positive peer relationships.

JOY positions belonging as an outcome that should be intentionally supported.

This includes recognising different forms of diversity and avoiding assumptions that all young athletes need or want the same sporting pathway.

> Inclusive sport policy should consequently combine **non-discrimination requirements** with **positive expectations about belonging and participation quality.**

5.3 Coach Competence and Accountability

Coaches occupy a position of authority and trust.

Technical expertise alone is therefore insufficient for youth coaching.

A JOY-informed competence framework would include communication, positive relationship building, constructive feedback, inclusion, athlete voice, recognition of emotional needs, resilience support and the ability to adapt activities to heterogeneous groups.

Accountability should be developed as well as regulatory.

Organisations should provide coaches with education, mentoring, reflective tools and clear procedures rather than placing responsibility for complex inclusion challenges on individual volunteers without support.

The WP4 Educational Pack offers practical material that can contribute directly to such professional development.

5.4 Peer Participation and Youth Voice

Children should be recognised as participants in shaping the social life of sport.

Youth voice can operate at different levels: reflection during training, team discussions, athlete surveys, consultation with club leadership and structured peer-support roles.

The VIP model provides one practical example.

Policy should encourage such participation while maintaining clear adult responsibility for safeguarding and organisational decisions.

The objective is not to make young people responsible for solving exclusion themselves. It is to ensure that systems do not make decisions about young athletes without listening to the people experiencing those systems directly.

5.5 Mental Well-being and Resilience

Mental well-being should be recognised as part of quality youth sport.

This requires more than responding once serious problems arise.

Everyday coaching environments can support well-being through predictable structures, respectful communication, manageable challenge, belonging and healthy responses to mistakes and setbacks.

Resilience should similarly be understood as something developed within relationships and environments, not simply demanded from individuals.

Policies and quality standards can reinforce this by incorporating psychological safety, positive feedback and appropriate pressure management into coach education and organisational evaluation.

5.6 Accessible and Affordable Participation

A sport system cannot be described as inclusive if significant groups of children cannot realistically access it.

Accessibility includes physical access for children with disabilities but extends beyond physical infrastructure.

Cost, equipment requirements, transport, timing, competition structures and expectations regarding training volume can all create barriers.

Educational Pack 2.0 specifically identifies cost, accessible facilities, appropriate scheduling and varied sport opportunities as factors affecting continued participation.

Local and national policy therefore has an important role in addressing structural barriers that individual coaches cannot resolve.

5.7 Monitoring Inclusion, Experience and Dropout

What organisations measure influences what they prioritise.

Youth-sport systems commonly track registrations, competition results, qualifications and sporting performance. These remain useful indicators, but they provide limited information about inclusion.

A JOY-informed monitoring framework should progressively incorporate measures of:

participation and retention;
dropout and reasons for leaving;
access among groups facing barriers;
sense of belonging;
experiences of discrimination or bullying;
athlete voice and satisfaction;
coach competence and continuing education;
and accessibility or affordability of participation.

The purpose is not to create a heavy administrative burden for small clubs. Indicators should be proportionate and practical.

> The goal is to create an **early-warning and learning system.**

If one group enters sport but leaves significantly earlier than others, policy makers should know.

If athletes report that they do not feel safe or valued, clubs should be able to respond.

If an inclusion initiative produces positive experiences, organisations should be able to identify it, learn from it and scale it.

This completes the transition at the heart of JOY:

from good individual practice to sustainable organisational practice, and from sustainable organisational practice to public policy.

The original Erasmus+ application anticipated precisely this transition by calling for policy recommendations and for inclusion-promotion structures to be incorporated into municipal standards.

The next chapter can therefore move from this framework to **six concrete JOY policy recommendations**, identifying what public authorities, federations, clubs and coach-education bodies should actually do.

06

JOY Policy Recommendations



The JOY project demonstrates that increasing inclusion and joy in youth sport requires action beyond individual coaches or individual clubs. Sustainable change depends on the structures that shape everyday sporting environments: public funding, coach education, club governance, youth participation, well-being standards and the way success is measured.

This is consistent with the original JOY project design. The project aims to promote inclusion, enthusiasm and joy in sport while combating bullying, racism, discrimination and intolerance and improving opportunities for children who may otherwise face barriers to participation. It also explicitly connects these practical interventions with policy development, including the promotion of inclusion standards within municipalities.

Based on the JOY approach, the practical methods developed through the Educational Pack and the experience generated through the pilots, this White Paper proposes **six interconnected policy recommendations**.

They should not be understood as six separate interventions. Together, they form a policy framework in which:

public resources create incentives → **organisations establish standards** →
coaches have the competencies to implement them →
children participate in shaping their sporting environment →
well-being becomes part of quality → **monitoring makes progress visible.**

6.1 Recommendation 1: Link Public and Municipal Sport Funding to Inclusion and Youth-Well-Being Standards

RECOMMENDATION

Public authorities should progressively link financial support, facility access and partnership agreements with youth-sport organisations to proportionate standards for inclusion, non-discrimination, accessibility and child well-being.

Public funding is one of the strongest policy instruments available to municipalities and other public authorities.

Municipalities often support youth sport directly through grants and indirectly through subsidised facilities, equipment, events and partnerships. This creates an opportunity to ensure that public resources support not only sporting participation but also the **quality and inclusiveness of that participation**.

The JOY application anticipated precisely this connection between project learning and public policy. One of the project's objectives was to strengthen ties between sport organisations, clubs, children, parents and other actors by including structures for promoting inclusion within municipal standards, particularly where municipalities sponsor or cooperate with local sport clubs.

This recommendation should therefore work in both directions. Public resources can set inclusion expectations, and public resources can also help clubs meet them. Including children with disabilities, children from low-income families, migrant or minority communities, or young people at greater risk of dropout may require additional coaches, adapted equipment, transport solutions, accessible facilities, smaller groups or family support.

> The policy principle is: inclusion should not only be expected; it should be resourced. A gradual move from equal funding toward equitable funding recognises that the cost of creating equal opportunity is not the same in every setting.

This does not mean that every small volunteer club should immediately face complex reporting requirements.

The principle should be **proportionality and continuous improvement**.

Municipalities could introduce a small number of minimum expectations for organisations receiving public support. These could include:

- a commitment to non-discrimination and equal participation;
- an anti-bullying and safeguarding procedure;
- a named person or clear pathway for raising concerns;
- appropriate inclusion training for coaches working with children;
- reasonable attention to accessibility and affordability;
- mechanisms for listening to young participants;
- monitoring of participation and preventable dropout.

Municipalities should combine these expectations with support. Clubs could receive templates, self-assessment checklists, training opportunities and access to resources such as Educational Pack 2.0.

Municipalities could also reserve part of youth-sport funding, facility access or capacity-building support for clubs demonstrating credible efforts to reach and retain young people facing greater barriers. This makes inclusion a shared public responsibility rather than an unfunded expectation placed on individual coaches.

The purpose is therefore not:

> **"Meet every standard immediately or lose your funding."**

A more constructive policy principle is:

> **"Publicly supported youth sport should demonstrate a credible commitment to inclusion and continuous improvement."**

The JOY Policy Checklist for Municipalities in Annex 1 provides a practical starting point for implementing this recommendation.

SUGGESTED POLICY ACTION

Municipalities should include a short Inclusion and Child Well-being Standard in future sport-funding agreements and review progress annually with funded organisations.

EVIDENCE AND POLICY LOGIC:

WP2 identified structural and social barriers to participation, including bullying, discrimination, accessibility and cost. WP3 tested inclusive and creative methods in real club settings, where adaptation and support were necessary. WP4 converted the learning into Educational Pack 2.0 and practical tools. Funding policy should therefore combine expectations with capacity-building support.

6.2 Recommendation 2: Integrate JOY Competencies into Coach Education and Certification

RECOMMENDATION

National sport authorities, federations and coach-training organisations should integrate inclusion, positive relationships, constructive feedback, athlete voice, peer support, resilience and reflective practice into coach education and continuing professional development.

Coaches are among the most influential adults in children's sporting lives.

Technical competence remains fundamental, but youth coaching also requires pedagogical and relational competence.

Educational Pack 2.0 emphasises that effective coach-athlete relationships are built around mutual respect, communication and shared responsibility. Drawing on Jowett's work, the Pack highlights closeness, commitment, complementarity and shared understanding as important dimensions of these relationships.

The Pack also translates positive psychology into practical coaching. For example, its PERMA approach encourages coaches to consider positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

These are not peripheral competencies.

A technically knowledgeable coach who unintentionally humiliates young athletes, ignores exclusion or creates an environment where mistakes are feared may undermine children's motivation and continued participation.

Coach education should therefore prepare coaches to answer questions such as:

How do I create belonging?
How do I give corrective feedback without attacking the athlete?
How do I respond when a participant becomes socially isolated?
How can I involve athletes appropriately in decisions?
How do I recognise effort and learning as well as performance?
How do I support resilience without normalising harmful pressure?
How do I reflect critically on my own coaching behaviour?

The JOY e-portfolio and other reflective tools can be incorporated into continuing professional development so that these competencies are developed through practice rather than treated only as theoretical course content.

Importantly, this recommendation does **not** turn coaches into psychologists or social workers. Coaches should understand the limits of their responsibilities and know when concerns require referral to safeguarding, health or other qualified professionals.

Sustainable inclusion also requires attention to coach well-being. Coaches and volunteers cannot be expected to absorb expanding responsibilities for inclusion, safeguarding, mental well-being and dropout prevention without mentoring, peer learning and access to professional support when situations exceed their role.

SUGGESTED POLICY ACTION

Federations and coach-training organisations should review existing curricula against a JOY competency framework and identify where relational, inclusion and well-being competencies are missing.

These competencies should progressively become part of both initial certification and continuing professional development.

EVIDENCE AND POLICY LOGIC:

WP2 mapped inclusive and art-based practices and established the baseline concern around bullying and discriminatory behaviour. WP3 showed coach interaction, adaptation and group climate shape participation experience. WP4 produced coach-facing tools on positive relationships, constructive feedback, VIP peer support, resilience and reflective practice. Coach education is the most scalable route for this learning.

From a sustainable education perspective, coaches should also be recognised as non-formal educators whose everyday interactions contribute to young people's social and emotional development. Through inclusive coaching, constructive feedback and shared decision-making, sport can become a learning environment for empathy, cooperation, agency and responsible participation. These competencies extend beyond sporting contexts and contribute to more resilient and inclusive communities.

6.3 Recommendation 3: Require Clubs to Establish Inclusion, Anti-Bullying and Dropout-Prevention Policies

RECOMMENDATION

Every organisation providing structured youth sport should have clear, practical and age-appropriate procedures for inclusion, anti-bullying, non-discrimination and prevention of avoidable dropout.

A policy document alone will not create an inclusive club.

Nevertheless, without clear organisational responsibility, action often depends too heavily on the attitudes and skills of individual coaches.

Children should not receive a highly inclusive experience in one team and a discriminatory or harmful experience in another simply because the two teams happen to have different coaches.

Organisational policy establishes a minimum shared expectation.

Educational Pack 2.0 provides a particularly strong basis for the dropout component. It recommends that clubs have an anti-dropout policy that creates awareness of factors associated with dropout and actively seeks to prevent unnecessary withdrawal from sport.

The same material highlights several interconnected protective factors: positive coach-athlete relationships, peer involvement, parental support and accessibility.

A practical club policy should therefore answer:

Prevention:	What does the club do to create an inclusive environment before problems occur?
Identification:	How will coaches and club leaders notice exclusion, bullying or disengagement?

Reporting:	How can a child or parent safely raise a concern?
Response:	Who is responsible for responding and what happens next?
Learning:	How does the organisation learn from incidents and from children who leave?

Dropout should also be interpreted carefully.

The goal cannot be to prevent every young person from leaving every sport. Children's interests change, families move and young people legitimately choose different activities.

The policy concern is **preventable dropout**: situations in which young people leave because of exclusion, bullying, inappropriate pressure, poor relationships, financial barriers or a lack of suitable participation pathways.

Clubs should therefore seek to understand *why* young people leave rather than treating dropout as a single statistic.

Parents should be treated as partners in this process. They can help clubs identify practical barriers, notice early signs of pressure or exclusion, and support healthy expectations around participation and competition.

SUGGESTED POLICY ACTION

Federations and municipalities should provide clubs with a simple common template covering:

Inclusion + anti-discrimination + anti-bullying + safeguarding/reporting + dropout prevention.

The JOY checklist in Annex 2 can support implementation and annual self-assessment.

EVIDENCE AND POLICY LOGIC:

WP2 and WP3 showed that inclusion depends on the whole environment, not only individual goodwill. WP4 includes practical dropout-prevention guidance and highlights peer, parent, coach and accessibility factors. Clubs therefore need simple shared policies that make prevention, reporting, response and learning visible.

6.4 Recommendation 4: Introduce Structured Youth Voice and Peer-Support Mechanisms such as VIP

RECOMMENDATION

Youth-sport organisations should provide age-appropriate mechanisms through which children can influence their sporting experience and support positive peer relationships.

Children and young people should not be understood solely as recipients of sport services.

They are participants with valuable knowledge about the environment in which they train.

Adults may know attendance figures and competition results. Young athletes know whether newcomers are welcomed, whether mistakes feel safe, whether jokes cross the line into bullying, whether teammates support one another and whether they feel able to talk to their coach.

JOY therefore recommends creating regular opportunities for this knowledge to influence practice.

Youth voice does not require every decision to be transferred to children. The degree of participation should reflect age, maturity, safeguarding responsibilities and the nature of the decision.

Practical mechanisms can include:

- short athlete feedback conversations;
- anonymous pulse surveys;
- team discussions;
- youth representatives;
- athlete councils;
- co-created team agreements;
- rotating leadership roles;
- peer-support mechanisms.

The **VIP model** developed through JOY provides a particularly practical mechanism for strengthening peer participation.

Educational Pack 2.0 describes four core VIP functions: social support, motivational support, task support and acting as a communication bridge. VIPs can welcome new players, encourage effort, help teammates understand activities and support communication within the team.

This is important because peer relationships strongly influence children's experience of sport.

Structured peer support can strengthen confidence, integration and relationships between athletes. The Pack specifically notes that peer mentoring can help young athletes feel safer, more confident and included.
Youth voice and peer support should also be understood as mechanisms of community building. When young people contribute to team culture, welcome newcomers and participate in decisions affecting their sporting experience, they develop a sense of shared responsibility. JOY's VIP approach offers a practical model for supporting this participation, while recognising that adult supervision, safeguarding and appropriate support remain essential.

However, peer leadership must not become peer policing.

VIPs should not be expected to resolve serious safeguarding, discrimination or bullying cases. Those responsibilities remain with adults and organisations.

SUGGESTED POLICY ACTION

Sport clubs should introduce at least **one structured youth-voice mechanism and one peer-support mechanism** appropriate to their participants' ages.

Federations and municipalities can recognise youth participation as an indicator of club quality.

EVIDENCE AND POLICY LOGIC:

JOY pilots and Educational Pack 2.0 show that young people can contribute actively to belonging, communication and peer support. The VIP model identifies social support, motivational support, task support and communication bridge functions. Policy should therefore treat youth voice as part of quality sport, while keeping safeguarding responsibility with adults.

6.5 Recommendation 5: Make Mental Well-being, Positive Feedback and Resilience Part of Everyday Youth-Sport Quality Standards

RECOMMENDATION

Youth-sport quality frameworks should recognise mental well-being, emotional safety, constructive feedback and healthy resilience as normal components of good coaching rather than optional additional services.

JOY does not propose replacing competitive sport with an environment without difficulty, effort or challenge.

Young athletes need opportunities to encounter challenge, cope with setbacks, learn from mistakes and develop resilience.

> The policy question is **what kind of environment surrounds that challenge.**

A young athlete can experience a mistake as useful information:

“That didn't work. What can I try differently?”

Or as a judgement about personal worth:

“I failed. I am not good enough to belong here.”

Coaching practice strongly influences which interpretation develops.

Educational Pack 2.0 encourages coaches to provide feedback that reinforces positive performance while using corrective feedback to guide improvement. It also emphasises confidence, achievable goals, a positive training environment, recognition of effort and athlete autonomy.

The Pack's PERMA framework similarly links positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment to well-being in sport.

This has direct implications for quality standards.

A high-quality youth-sport programme should not be assessed solely by medals, competition rankings, elite progression or technical development.

It should also ask:

Do children enjoy participating?
Do they feel emotionally safe?
Can they make mistakes without humiliation?
Do coaches recognise effort and progress?
Are relationships respectful?
Do athletes feel that they belong?
Does challenge build resilience rather than fear?

This distinction is particularly important when discussing resilience.

Resilience should not mean teaching children to tolerate harmful environments. It should mean helping them develop resources to respond constructively to normal challenges while ensuring that adults remain responsible for creating safe and supportive conditions.

SUGGESTED POLICY ACTION

Federations, municipalities and club-accreditation systems should include **well-being and relational quality** alongside traditional sporting indicators in definitions of high-quality youth sport.

Coach education should reinforce the same expectation.

EVIDENCE AND POLICY LOGIC:

WP3 reporting highlighted team belonging and positive emotional engagement, while Educational Pack 2.0 links well-being with positive relationships, constructive feedback, manageable challenge, resilience and reflective coaching. Quality standards should therefore include the social and emotional conditions of participation.

6.6 Recommendation 6: Measure What Matters — Participation, Belonging, Inclusion, Well-being and Retention, Not Only Sporting Performance

RECOMMENDATION

Public authorities, federations and sport organisations should broaden their monitoring systems so that the quality of youth sport is assessed through participation and children's experience as well as competitive performance.

What organisations measure influences what they prioritise.

Sport systems traditionally generate large amounts of information about competition:

results,
rankings,
wins and losses,
records,
qualifications,
and athlete progression.

These indicators are useful, but they tell us relatively little about whether a sporting environment is inclusive.

An organisation can perform well competitively while some young people feel excluded.

Conversely, a grassroots programme may produce few elite athletes while making an important contribution to children's physical activity, friendships, confidence and continued engagement.

JOY therefore recommends a more balanced approach.

At minimum, organisations should use a small JOY Core Indicator Set:

ACCESS

Are children who face barriers actually able to participate?

BELONGING

Do young people feel accepted and part of the team?

SAFETY & RESPECT

Do they feel safe, respected and able to make mistakes without humiliation?

VOICE

Do young people feel that coaches listen to them and that they can contribute?

JOY

Do they enjoy participation and look forward to continuing?

RETENTION

Who stays, who leaves and why?

The six-domain JOY Core Indicator Set is proposed as a practical monitoring framework to support organisations in assessing access, belonging, safety and respect, youth voice, enjoyment and retention. It is intended to guide reflection and continuous improvement and should not be interpreted as a validated psychometric instrument. Further testing would be required to establish its reliability, validity and suitability across different sporting and cultural contexts.

Monitoring should remain proportionate.

A volunteer club should not need a sophisticated research department. A short annual survey combined with basic registration and dropout information may already reveal valuable patterns.

Larger federations and municipalities can aggregate information across clubs to identify structural inequalities and areas where additional support is required.

> Most importantly, **children's own perspectives should form part of the evidence.**

An organisation cannot determine whether children feel that they belong solely by counting registrations.

Simple questions such as:

"I feel that I am part of this team."
"I feel safe and respected here."
"My coach listens to me."
"My teammates support me."

can complement administrative indicators.

Data must nevertheless be interpreted responsibly. An increase in reported concerns may indicate improved reporting mechanisms rather than deteriorating conditions. Similarly, retention cannot be interpreted without understanding the reasons why participants leave.

The purpose of monitoring should therefore be learning and improvement, not ranking or punishment. The preferred cycle is: Measure → Listen → Understand → Improve → Support.

EVIDENCE AND POLICY LOGIC:

JOY's original objectives included participation, adherence, dropout, inclusion, health and well-being indicators, and the evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Because the evidence has limits, monitoring should support learning and improvement rather than ranking or punishment.

SUGGESTED POLICY ACTION

Public authorities and sport organisations should introduce a small common set of youth-sport quality indicators combining participation, retention and participant experience.

Annex 3 proposes a detailed indicator menu and a six-domain JOY Core Indicator Set for organisations seeking a practical starting point.

From Recommendations to Action

The six recommendations can be translated into a simple implementation framework:

Policy recommendation	Main responsible actors	Practical first step
1. Link funding and facility access to inclusion, well-being and equitable support	Municipalities, public authorities	Add inclusion criteria and targeted support options to sport grants and facility agreements

Policy recommendation	Main responsible actors	Practical first step
2. Integrate JOY competencies into coach education	Federations, ministries, coach educators	Map existing curricula against JOY competencies
3. Establish inclusion and dropout policies	Clubs, federations	Adopt a practical common policy and reporting procedure
4. Strengthen youth voice and peer support	Clubs, coaches, federations	Introduce athlete feedback and VIP/peer-support mechanisms
5. Make well-being part of sport quality	Federations, municipalities, clubs	Include relational and well-being criteria in quality frameworks
6. Measure what matters	Municipalities, federations, clubs	Introduce a small core set of experience and retention indicators

The recommendations intentionally operate at different levels. A club cannot independently remove every financial or structural barrier. A municipality cannot create belonging inside a training session. A federation cannot know how every young athlete experiences their team without mechanisms for listening to children.

> For this reason, JOY proposes a **shared-responsibility model.**

The public sector establishes enabling conditions and incentives. Federations translate them into sport-specific standards and education. Clubs establish organisational practices. Coaches create the everyday environment. Children and young people contribute their experiences and voices. Monitoring then enables all actors to learn whether the system is producing the intended outcomes.

The long-term value of JOY will depend not only on the continued use of its educational resources, but also on whether its principles become embedded in the everyday practices and institutional arrangements of youth sport. Sustainable impact requires investment in coach development, inclusive club cultures, meaningful youth participation and partnerships between sport organisations, families, educational institutions and municipalities. In this sense, JOY offers more than a set of tools: it provides a framework for strengthening the social and educational role of grassroots sport.

This approach also reflects the sustainability ambition already contained in the Erasmus+ application: project results should move beyond the original consortium, become incorporated into coach education and club practice, and offer municipalities and governmental organisations practical guidance for supporting inclusive youth sport.

Chapter 7 translates these six recommendations into responsibilities and implementation actions at European, national, municipal, federation, club and coach-education levels.

07

How to Implement the Recommendations



The recommendations presented in Chapter 6 will have the greatest effect when they are implemented across the different levels of the sport system rather than assigned to a single actor.

The JOY experience demonstrates that inclusion is produced through a combination of public policy, organisational structures and everyday interaction. A municipality may provide accessible facilities, but inclusion can still fail if a child encounters discrimination in a club. A federation may adopt an inclusion policy, but its effect may remain limited if coaches are not equipped to translate it into practice. A coach may create a welcoming team, but structural barriers such as high participation costs or inaccessible facilities may still exclude some children.

> Implementation therefore requires **shared but differentiated responsibility.**

Implementation cycle

Stakeholders can use a simple JOY cycle: COMMIT -> ASSESS -> ACT -> LISTEN -> EVIDENCE -> SUPPORT & SCALE.

Commit means adopting inclusion, belonging and well-being as quality objectives. Assess means identifying barriers and current practice. Act means selecting practical changes. Listen means involving young people and parents. Evidence means using proportionate indicators. Support and scale means resourcing clubs and coaches so that effective practice can continue.

Shared implementation responsibilities

Actor	Primary responsibility	Practical next step
EU and national authorities	Set policy direction and support inclusion through programmes, funding and guidance.	Include quality participation, belonging and well-being in relevant sport-policy priorities.
Municipalities	Connect grants, facilities and partnerships with inclusion, and provide additional support where barriers are greatest.	Add proportionate inclusion criteria and targeted support options to funding and facility agreements.
Sport federations	Integrate JOY competencies into coach education, certification and club-development standards.	Map existing curricula and quality systems against JOY competencies.
Clubs	Create inclusive environments, address barriers, engage families, prevent bullying and listen to young people.	Use the JOY checklist to set an annual inclusion-improvement plan.
Coaches	Translate inclusion into everyday relationships, communication, feedback and training practice.	Use Educational Pack 2.0 and reflective practice tools in regular coaching.
Young people and VIPs	Contribute to team culture, welcome peers and express views safely.	Use age-appropriate feedback and rotating peer-support roles.
Parents	Support participation and identify barriers linked to cost, transport, pressure or family circumstances.	Create simple channels for parent information and concerns.

The JOY project itself was designed around this multi-level approach. Its policy objective explicitly sought to strengthen ties between sport organisations, clubs, athletes, children, parents and other actors and encourage inclusion-promotion structures within municipal standards.

7.1 European and EU Level

At European level, JOY should be understood as contributing to a wider effort to use sport as a vehicle for inclusion, equality, participation and well-being.

European institutions can support this transition by ensuring that programmes concerned with grassroots sport do not assess success solely through activity numbers or competitive results. Projects, networks and funding instruments should increasingly encourage organisations to demonstrate how sporting environments contribute to belonging, equal participation, child well-being and long-term engagement.

The JOY approach suggests several practical directions.

European programmes can promote the exchange and adaptation of tested inclusion methods between countries. They can encourage the integration of social and pedagogical competences into coach education. They can support cooperation between sport, education, youth, health and social-inclusion sectors. They can also strengthen the visibility of evidence-informed approaches that address racism, bullying, discrimination and unequal participation.

European-level cooperation is particularly valuable because many challenges identified by JOY occur across national boundaries while manifesting differently in local settings. The project therefore did not seek to develop one rigid European coaching model. WP4 was explicitly designed to preserve common pedagogical principles while allowing cultural and contextual adaptation.

> European institutions and networks can consequently play a useful role as **facilitators of common principles and cross-border learning**, rather than imposing identical implementation mechanisms.

The JOY consortium also envisaged continued engagement with the European Week of Sport, Olympic structures, other Erasmus+ Sport projects and inclusion-oriented European networks after the project period.

7.2 National Ministries and Sport Authorities

National ministries and sport authorities can translate the broad principles of inclusion into standards, funding priorities, training requirements and monitoring systems.

A first priority should be to recognise that youth-sport quality includes the **social and educational environment** in which sport takes place.

National frameworks can encourage or require sport organisations to address:

- non-discrimination and inclusion;
- safeguarding and anti-bullying practices;
- athlete voice and participation;
- coach competencies concerning children and young people;
- psychological safety and well-being;
- accessible and affordable participation;
- prevention of unnecessary dropout;
- monitoring of participation and retention.

National authorities can also encourage JOY-related competencies to enter coach qualifications and continuing professional development.

> This does not mean that every coach should become a psychologist, social worker or therapist. Rather, coaches working with children should understand basic principles of motivation, belonging, constructive feedback, inclusion and mental well-being and know the limits of their role.

Educational Pack 2.0 offers material that can contribute to such programmes. Its content extends beyond technical instruction to include positive psychology, coach-athlete relationships, feedback, peer support, resilience, dropout prevention and reflective practice.

National authorities can also promote cooperation between sport federations, municipalities, educational institutions, Olympic and Paralympic structures and organisations representing groups facing barriers to participation.

7.3 Municipalities and Local Authorities

Municipalities and local authorities play a central role in ensuring that children and young people have access to inclusive, safe and enjoyable sporting environments. Through their responsibilities for public sports facilities, local funding arrangements, community services and cooperation with sports organisations, municipalities can influence both opportunities to participate in sport and the quality of children's sporting experiences.

The JOY in SPORTS project recognises municipalities as important partners in translating inclusive coaching practices and positive sporting experiences into sustainable local policies. This reflects the project's objective of strengthening cooperation between sports organisations, clubs, athletes, children, parents and other stakeholders, including the integration of inclusion-promoting practices into municipal standards.

Integrating inclusion into municipal sports policies

Municipalities can promote inclusive youth sport by incorporating principles of non-discrimination, accessibility, child well-being and positive participation into their sports strategies, funding criteria and cooperation agreements with local sports organisations.

Rather than focusing exclusively on participation numbers or competitive achievements, municipal support frameworks can also recognise the quality of the sporting environment, including whether children feel safe, respected, included and motivated to continue participating.

Practical measures may include:

- Introducing proportionate inclusion and child well-being criteria into municipal sports grants and partnership agreements.
- Encouraging publicly supported sports clubs to adopt anti-bullying, anti-discrimination and safeguarding policies.
- Supporting affordable participation for children and families facing financial or social barriers.
- Improving accessibility and equitable access to public sports facilities.
- Promoting inclusive coaching education and the use of JOY educational materials.
- Encouraging structured opportunities for children and young people to express their views and participate in decisions affecting their sporting experiences.
- Strengthening cooperation between municipalities, sports clubs, schools, families and community organisations.

These measures should be adapted to the administrative responsibilities, legal frameworks and available resources of each municipality.

Municipal funding as an instrument for inclusion

Municipal funding and access to publicly supported facilities can provide practical opportunities to encourage inclusive practices within local sports organisations.

Municipalities may consider linking relevant aspects of public support to reasonable expectations concerning accessibility, equal opportunities, positive coaching environments and the prevention of discrimination and bullying.

Such arrangements should be proportionate to the size and capacity of the organisations concerned. Smaller and volunteer-led clubs may require guidance, training or additional support to implement inclusion-related requirements.

The purpose should be to encourage improvement and strengthen organisational capacity rather than create administrative barriers that could disadvantage smaller clubs or organisations serving children with greater support needs.

Where legally permitted, municipalities could recognise documented additional costs of inclusion, such as adapted equipment, support personnel or transport, through targeted grants or service arrangements. Any incentive should reflect actual support needs and be accompanied by simple guidance and proportionate reporting, particularly for small volunteer-led clubs.

Country Example: Poland – Using Municipal Sports Funding to Promote Inclusion

Poland provides an illustrative example of how municipalities can use existing sports funding and cooperation arrangements to support more inclusive youth sport.

Under the Polish Act on Sport (2010) and the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteer Work (2003), municipalities can support sports clubs and non-governmental organisations through grants, access to public facilities and local partnerships.

Building on this framework, municipalities could progressively integrate JOY inclusion principles into existing sports funding procedures.

Illustration of existing municipal practice – Gdynia, Poland

Gdynia provides a documented example of municipal support for organised youth sport. In July 2026, Gdyńskie Centrum Sportu published an open call for proposals to support basketball training for girls and young women. The municipality acted as the contracting authority, while the municipal sports centre administered the funding procedure.

This demonstrates how an existing municipal grant mechanism can be used to support youth sports activities. Such mechanisms could provide an administrative starting point for incorporating JOY principles, including accessibility, safeguarding, inclusive coaching and meaningful youth participation.

However, the published funding notice should not be interpreted as evidence that JOY-specific inclusion criteria have already been formally adopted by Gdynia. Their introduction would require an explicit municipal decision and appropriate documentation.

Source: Gdyńskie Centrum Sportu (2026), public call for proposals supporting youth basketball training.

Within the Polish municipal funding framework, the general JOY implementation pathway could be translated into the following five practical steps:

1. **Review existing funding criteria:** Identify whether municipal grants currently address accessibility, safeguarding, equal opportunities and the quality of children's sporting experiences.

2. **Introduce proportionate inclusion indicators:** Include criteria covering affordable participation, disability inclusion, child safeguarding, inclusive coaching and youth participation.

3. **Support implementation:** Provide clubs with practical tools, training and guidance, including relevant JOY Educational Pack 2.0 resources. Where legally permitted, recognise additional inclusion-related costs through targeted financial support.

4. **Monitor meaningful outcomes:** Assess accessibility, participation continuity, children's sense of belonging and feedback from young participants, rather than relying solely on participation numbers or competitive achievements.

5. **Review and improve:** Use evidence and feedback from clubs, children and families to refine municipal funding criteria and support measures.

This proposed approach could be piloted within existing municipal sports grant programmes without requiring the creation of a separate funding system.

Transferable lesson for JOY: Municipalities can promote inclusion by combining proportionate funding criteria, practical support for sports clubs and meaningful monitoring of children's sporting experiences. The Polish framework illustrates a potential pathway for implementation; it does not, by itself, demonstrate that JOY-specific funding criteria have already been formally adopted.

Differences between national and municipal contexts

The five JOY partner countries—Finland, Poland, Portugal, Türkiye and Estonia—have different systems for organising, financing and administering local sport.

Responsibilities for sports facilities, grants, youth activities and cooperation with sports organisations vary across national and municipal contexts. Available financial information also differs in its classifications, reporting periods and coverage.

As these differences prevent sufficiently reliable and harmonised comparisons, this White Paper does not present comparative municipal sports expenditure figures.

Instead, it focuses on common policy principles and practical measures that can be adapted to different local circumstances.

Country-specific examples can clarify how these principles operate under different legal and administrative systems, but a local funding arrangement should not be presented as a national standard. Relevant legal powers, grant eligibility and procurement or accountability requirements should be checked before adapting a measure to another municipality. The national policy pathways in Chapter 8 provide the appropriate place for this contextual detail.

The absence of directly comparable expenditure data does not prevent municipalities from identifying opportunities to strengthen inclusion through their existing policies, funding mechanisms and cooperation arrangements.

From municipal support to practical inclusion

The JOY approach encourages municipalities to consider not only how many children participate in organised sport but also whether participation is meaningful, inclusive and sustainable.

For example, municipalities can work with sports organisations to identify barriers that may prevent children from joining or remaining in sporting activities. These may include participation costs, inaccessible facilities, discrimination, bullying, limited opportunities for children with disabilities or insufficient support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Municipalities can respond through targeted support, partnerships, accessible facilities, inclusive programme requirements and opportunities for coaches and club representatives to develop relevant competencies.

The JOY Educational Pack 2.0 offers practical approaches that can support these efforts, particularly in relation to inclusive coaching, positive feedback, resilience, creativity, peer support and children's sense of belonging.

Monitoring and continuous improvement

Municipalities can encourage sports organisations to monitor inclusion and participation through a manageable set of indicators.

These may include:

- Participation and retention among children and young people.
- Accessibility and affordability of sporting opportunities.
- Children's sense of belonging, safety and enjoyment.
- Experiences of bullying, discrimination or exclusion.
- Opportunities for children to express their views.
- Participation of coaches in inclusion-related education.
- Adoption of inclusion policies and practices by supported sports organisations.

Monitoring should be used to identify barriers, guide improvements and support organisations rather than simply rank clubs or impose sanctions.

Safeguarding requirements should follow applicable law and be assessed through credible implementation, not the mere existence of written policies. Participation and retention figures also need careful interpretation: moving between clubs or activities does not necessarily indicate withdrawal from sport. Youth feedback and privacy-conscious, proportionate data collection can help explain the figures.

Municipalities should also recognise that changes in reporting may reflect greater awareness and trust. For example, an increase in reported concerns does not necessarily indicate worsening conditions if children have become more confident in raising problems.

Recommended municipal implementation pathway

A practical approach for municipalities is to:

1. **Review existing policies:** Identify how inclusion, accessibility and child well-being are currently reflected in municipal sports strategies, grants and facility arrangements.
2. **Engage local stakeholders:** Consult sports clubs, coaches, schools, families and children to understand participation barriers and improvement opportunities.
3. **Introduce proportionate inclusion expectations:** Incorporate practical inclusion principles into relevant funding criteria, partnership agreements and local guidance.
4. **Provide implementation support:** Encourage the use of JOY educational resources, coach education and cooperation between local organisations.
5. **Monitor and improve:** Review participation and children's experiences, identify emerging barriers and adjust support measures accordingly.

This approach enables municipalities to strengthen inclusive youth sport progressively while respecting differences in local resources, governance arrangements and organisational capacity.

Policy implication

Municipalities should be recognised not only as providers of sports infrastructure or financial support but also as partners in promoting inclusive and child-centred sporting environments.

By incorporating inclusion, well-being, accessibility and children's participation into existing municipal policies and cooperation arrangements, local authorities can help translate the JOY project's principles into sustainable organisational practices.

This directly supports the Erasmus+ JOY in SPORTS objective of strengthening cooperation between sports organisations and municipalities and encouraging the integration of inclusion-promoting practices into local standards.

Annex 1 of this White Paper proposes a practical JOY Policy Checklist that municipalities can use as a starting point.

7.4 Sport Federations

Sport federations occupy a critical position between public policy and everyday club practice.

They establish norms concerning competition, coach education, club development and, in many cases, licensing or accreditation. They also have the capacity to spread good practice across large numbers of clubs.

Federations can embed JOY principles into existing systems rather than creating a completely separate inclusion programme.

For example, inclusion and child well-being can become part of club quality criteria. Coach-development courses can include modules on relationships, feedback and belonging. Federation guidance can encourage multiple pathways for participation so that children who do not wish to follow an elite competitive pathway do not have to leave the sport entirely.

Federations can also encourage clubs to learn from participation and dropout data.

The purpose should not be to rank clubs according to how many children remain indefinitely. Leaving a sport can be a legitimate personal decision. Monitoring becomes important when patterns indicate that particular groups systematically encounter barriers, exclusion or negative experiences.

> Federations should therefore help clubs distinguish between **normal sporting transitions and preventable dropout associated with poor participation environments.**

7.5 Sport Clubs

> The sport club is where policy becomes experienced.

For children and families, inclusion is not primarily encountered in a strategy document. It is experienced at the first training session, in the changing room, in communication with a coach, during selection, in interaction with teammates and in adults' responses when something goes wrong.

JOY therefore recommends that clubs treat inclusion as part of everyday club development.

A club can begin with relatively simple questions:

- Who joins our club?
- Who does not?
- Who leaves, and why?
- How are new children welcomed?
- What happens when bullying occurs?
- Do children know whom they can talk to?
- How do coaches give feedback?
- Can children participate at different levels of commitment and ability?
- What financial or practical barriers affect families?
- Do coaches themselves receive sufficient support?

Educational Pack 2.0 gives clubs practical material to work on these questions.

Parent partnership should be made explicit at club level. Parents can be invited into clear expectations around positive sideline behaviour, healthy competition, practical barriers and early warning signs when a child is becoming disengaged.

For example, its dropout-prevention section recommends positive coach-athlete relationships, peer involvement, parental support, prevention policies and safe, convenient access to facilities.

The VIP model can help clubs make peer support more intentional. VIPs can welcome new participants, encourage teammates, assist communication and strengthen the social environment.

Clubs can also use the JOY Card, JOY Alphabet, art-based activities and reflective coaching tools as low-threshold mechanisms for making inclusion visible.

7.6 Coach-Training Organisations

Coach education is one of the most scalable opportunities emerging from JOY.

A coach influences dozens or potentially hundreds of young athletes over time. Strengthening one coach's relational and pedagogical competencies can therefore have effects far beyond a single intervention.

JOY suggests that coach education should include four interconnected dimensions.

Technical competence remains essential: coaches need sport-specific expertise.

Pedagogical competence enables them to design learning environments suitable for children at different developmental levels.

Relational competence enables them to communicate, provide feedback, build trust and respond appropriately to individual differences.

Reflective competence enables coaches to learn continuously from practice.

The JOY e-portfolio is particularly relevant to the fourth dimension. It encourages coaches to notice patterns such as when athletes engage or withdraw, how different forms of feedback are received and which behaviours strengthen or weaken trust.

Continuing professional development should therefore complement initial qualifications. Inclusion should not be treated as a one-off module completed at the beginning of a coaching career.

Coach-development systems should also recognise workload and emotional responsibility. Mentoring, peer reflection and clear referral routes help coaches sustain inclusive practice without being left alone with problems that require organisational or professional support.

7.7 Suggested Indicators and Monitoring Framework

JOY recommends a **small, proportionate monitoring framework** focused on learning and improvement.

The objective is not to measure children's emotions constantly or create unnecessary bureaucracy. Instead, organisations need enough information to identify patterns that would otherwise remain invisible.

A simple framework can combine administrative data with short experience measures.
Six headline domains are particularly useful:

Access
Are children who face barriers actually able to participate?

Belonging
Do young people feel accepted and part of the team?

Safety and respect
Do young people feel safe, respected and able to make mistakes without humiliation?

Voice
Do young people feel that they are listened to and able to contribute?

Joy
Do young people enjoy participation and look forward to continuing?

Retention
Who stays, who leaves and why?

Data should be interpreted carefully. A single indicator rarely demonstrates quality on its own.

For example, a low dropout rate does not automatically mean that a club is inclusive, while a rise in reporting of bullying may initially indicate that children have become more confident in reporting problems rather than that bullying has increased.

Indicators therefore need to be considered together and used for dialogue and improvement.

> The monitoring principle should be: Measure -> Listen -> Understand -> Improve -> Support. It should not become: Measure -> Rank -> Punish. This distinction is particularly important for clubs working with young people experiencing the greatest barriers.

A more detailed set is proposed in Annex 3.

7.8 JOY Policy Influence Roadmap 2026-2029

Phase	Timing	Main action	Lead actors	Expected evidence
1. Dissemination	Project end	Publish White Paper in six languages	EFSEI + consortium	Publications/downloads

Phase	Timing	Main action	Lead actors	Expected evidence
2. Adoption	0-6 months	Secure named commitments	National partners	Named adopters
3. Implementation	6-18 months	Test JOY criteria, club practices, youth voice or funding links	Municipalities + clubs	Implementation records
4. Embedding	6-24 months	Add JOY to CPD, certification, club standards or municipal criteria	Federations, HEIs, municipalities	Courses, standards or criteria
5. Evidence use	12-24 months	Review Core JOY Indicators with clubs and young people	Clubs + municipalities	Access, belonging and retention evidence
6. Scaling	18-36 months	Share adoption cases through national and European networks	Consortium + European partners	New adopters or countries
7. Review	36 months	Review uptake and update recommendations	JOY consortium	Follow-up policy brief

Country focal points should update the uptake register at least every six months. EFSEI should consolidate progress against the milestones and refer to Sections 7.7 and 7.9 and Annex 4 for indicators and supporting records, avoiding duplicate evidence tables. A review should document barriers, decisions not secured, and any changes to targets. The 36-month review should state both successes and non-adoption transparently.

Review and accountability

Annex 4 documents dissemination and stakeholder engagement, including events, publications and institutional contacts. Such records demonstrate reach and dialogue but do not, on their own, verify policy adoption. A verified adoption entry should identify the adopting organisation, date, exact policy or operational instrument, nature of the JOY-related change, source document or official confirmation, and responsible verifier. Meeting minutes or letters can substantiate a commitment; signed decisions, approved funding criteria, adopted standards, published curricula or equivalent institutional records are required to substantiate formal adoption. Implementation should be supported by operational records and proportionate participant feedback. Until such documents are supplied and checked, the status must remain “engagement”, “proposed”, “commitment pending verification” or “pilot”, rather than “verified policy change”.

Verification of adoption and evidence thresholds

By month 6 after project end: appoint and record five country focal points; identify at least one relevant decision-making institution and one priority policy instrument per participating country; seek at least one documented adoption or testing commitment per country. By month 18: seek at least one documented pilot or implementation example per country, with a baseline and youth feedback where appropriate. By month 24: seek at least one formal proposal to embed JOY principles in a municipal, federation or coach-education instrument per country. By month 36: publish a consolidated uptake review, distinguishing proposals, commitments, pilots, adopted instruments and independently evidenced practice change. These are proposed follow-up targets; achievement is not asserted.

Measurable milestones and reporting

Priority decisions to pursue are: (1) municipal grant or service criteria that recognise affordability, accessibility, safeguarding and meaningful youth participation; (2) sport federation club-quality or safeguarding standards that incorporate inclusion and youth voice; (3) coach-education or continuing-professional-development curricula that integrate JOY relational, pedagogical and reflective competencies; and (4) club-level procedures for feedback, anti-bullying, peer support and dropout prevention. These are proposed policy targets, not changes already secured. Each national partner should identify the decision-making institution, existing instrument, decision window and legal feasibility before seeking adoption.

Concrete policy-influence targets

Each national partner should designate one named policy-engagement focal point and one deputy, with contact details recorded in the consortium follow-up plan. TUAS and TuTo can coordinate follow-up through their Finnish sport and education networks; Cister Sport de Alcobaça can coordinate Portuguese partner follow-up. Country-level leads in Poland, Türkiye and Estonia, and the specific municipal, federation or education-system decision owners, must be confirmed by the respective partners before being presented as formally assigned responsibilities.

7.9 JOY Policy Engagement and Uptake to Date

The final White Paper should report confirmed policy engagement and uptake against the project's planned dissemination and policy targets.

JOY partners have undertaken dissemination, stakeholder engagement and policy-influencing activities across the participating countries. These include engagement with municipalities, sport organisations, universities, federations and other national and international stakeholders.

Confirmed activities and evidence are presented in **Annex 4 – JOY Policy Engagement, Dissemination and Uptake Evidence**. The annex distinguishes between dissemination, stakeholder engagement, adoption or testing, implementation, institutionalisation and policy change in order to avoid treating visibility or participation alone as evidence of policy uptake.

08

National Policy Pathways and Transferability



JOY was developed as a transnational project involving Finland, Poland, Portugal, Türkiye and Estonia. The project therefore offers an opportunity to examine not only whether a common framework can be developed but also how that framework can be adapted to different sporting cultures and organisational environments.

> The lesson from WP2–WP4 is that **transferability depends on adaptation rather than exact replication.**

WP4 explicitly allows cultural and context-specific differences to be accommodated while maintaining the core JOY philosophy.

The country's observations below should therefore not be interpreted as comprehensive assessments of national sport systems. They identify directions emerging from the JOY project experience. Detailed national legal and policy references should be validated and added by the responsible country partners before final publication.

8.1 Finland

The Finnish JOY experience provides a particularly useful example of how peer leadership, reflective coaching and municipal-sport cooperation can complement each other.

The Finland pilots applied Educational Pack 1.0 within regular youth-sport environments. Project reporting indicates very high continuity of participation together with strengthened feelings of belonging, supported by before-after evidence and coach reflections.

Finland also contributed strongly to the development of the VIP approach. TuTo's Captain School and the use of Forum Theatre demonstrated how youth leadership can move beyond the traditional idea of a captain as primarily a performance leader.

Instead, young athletes can learn to facilitate inclusion, communication and group belonging.

For Finland, JOY therefore points toward three potential implementation routes:

- integration of relational and reflective competencies into coach education;
- structured peer leadership and youth participation within sport clubs;
- and cooperation between municipalities, clubs, educational institutions and national sport organisations.

The original project application already anticipated cooperation with Turku City Sport Services and the Finnish Olympic Committee and identified national and municipal structures as potential channels for dissemination and implementation.
In Finland, the JOY approach can be effectively transferred through cooperation between sport clubs, national sport federations, educational institutions, municipalities and national sport organisations. The Finnish dissemination activities have demonstrated that the principles of joy, inclusion and positive sporting experiences resonate strongly with both grassroots sport actors and policy-level stakeholders.

The engagement of football clubs, sport federation representatives, coaches and volunteers through events such as the ÅIFK Spring Cup and Erkki Alaja Symposium highlights the potential for embedding JOY principles within coach education, club development programmes and everyday sporting practices. Similarly, contacts established with representatives of the Finnish Olympic Committee and youth sport networks provide opportunities to promote the JOY approach within wider national sport development initiatives.

The Olympic Day dissemination activities further demonstrated the value of public-facing sport events as platforms for raising awareness of joy-centred and inclusive sport environments among participants, families and community stakeholders.

A practical pathway for Finland would therefore be to integrate the JOY Educational Pack 2.0 and the recommendations of the White Paper into coach education programmes, sport club development activities, youth sport initiatives and higher education curricula. Through TUAS, TuTo and their national networks, the project outputs can continue to reach coaches, volunteers, sport managers and decision-makers beyond the funded project period.

8.2 Poland

Poland's JOY experience highlights the relevance of maintaining joy and inclusion in environments where organised sport may otherwise become strongly performance oriented.

The final WP3 project update reports sustained engagement across diverse sports in the Polish pilots and qualitative evidence of a shift toward more joy-centred and inclusive coaching approaches.

Earlier JOY communication from Poland similarly presented an approach in which integration, healthy habits and enjoyment were prioritised over ranking children as better or worse performers.

The Polish experience therefore supports using JOY in both grassroots club environments and coach education.

A particularly promising pathway identified in the original application is integration of JOY-related knowledge into education for coaches, physical education teachers and related professionals. The application specifically envisaged future use of educational material within higher-education and professional-training contexts.

> For Poland, implementation can therefore connect **grassroots practice with formal coach and physical-education training.**

8.3 Portugal

Portugal's pilots demonstrated how creative activity can be integrated into a club setting while retaining a recognisable sporting structure.

Project reporting characterised the Portuguese pilot experience by strong energy and creative self-expression. Across the initial pilots in Portugal, Türkiye and Estonia, JOY reported positive experiences relating to engagement, team relationships and well-being.

The role of Cister Sport de Alcobaça as a sport-club partner is significant because it shows that JOY methods do not need to remain confined to university or research settings. They can be adapted to everyday club practice.

For Portugal, the JOY experience therefore suggests an emphasis on:

- coach-accessible creative exercises;
- club-level inclusion practices;
- engagement of local authorities and families;

and ensuring that innovative pedagogical approaches remain simple enough to be used routinely rather than only during special project activities.

The Portuguese experience also illustrates the value of giving clubs ownership over adaptation. Coaches are more likely to use an approach when they can integrate it into existing training rather than treating it as an external programme.

8.4 Turkey

The pilots in Turkey provide a strong example of the role of friendship, teamwork and social connection in children's experience of sport.

Project summaries indicate that participating young athletes particularly emphasized friendship and teamwork and experienced sport as a space for connection and development.

Türkiye also led WP3 through Yalova Ortopedikler Spor Kulübü. The work package was responsible for planning and implementing approximately 30 pilots covering different sports, genders and combinations of participants with and without disabilities.

This makes accessibility and meaningful inclusion especially relevant to the Turkey experience.

JOY's contribution is not simply to place children with different needs in the same physical space. Genuine inclusion requires attention to communication, roles, peer relationships, confidence and whether every participant has a meaningful opportunity to contribute.

The Turkey experience therefore supports further development of:

- inclusive club practices;
- disability-sensitive coaching;
- peer support;
- team-building and communication methods;

and systematic consideration of children's belonging and emotional experience.

8.5 Estonia

The Estonian JOY pilots particularly highlighted **friendship and team belonging**.

Project reporting states that art-based pilot activities strengthened friendships and a strong sense of belonging among participants.

Estonia also has an important dissemination and sustainability role within JOY through the Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information, including leadership of WP5.

This provides a pathway for translating practice into broader coach education, sport-sector information and policy dialogue.

For Estonia, the JOY experience suggests connecting club-level methods with existing sport-education and information structures. Rather than establishing a separate JOY system, the principles can potentially be incorporated into coach development, sport-organisation guidance and local policy conversations.

The multilingual nature of Educational Pack 2.0 is also important. Materials being available in Estonian as well as English reduces a practical barrier to uptake and supports wider use beyond organisations directly involved in the project. WP4 was explicitly designed to produce the final Educational Pack in all six project languages.

8.6 Transferability to Other European Contexts

JOY should not be transferred by asking another country or municipality to reproduce every activity exactly.

Instead, transfer should preserve the **core principles** while adapting the mechanism.

The principles that appear most transferable are:

- every child should be treated as a valued participant;
- belonging is an intentional outcome;
- coaches require relational as well as technical competence;
- constructive feedback should support learning and agency;
- young people should have meaningful opportunities to contribute;
- peer relationships can be mobilised positively;
- creativity can complement conventional sport pedagogy;
- resilience is developed through supportive challenge;
- accessibility and affordability matter;
- participation experience should be monitored.

A municipality, federation or club wishing to adopt JOY can therefore begin by identifying its own inclusion challenges and selecting appropriate JOY tools.

This is consistent with the original co-creation philosophy: understand the context first, then select, test, reflect and adapt.

09

Sustainability and Policy Uptake



Sustainability means more than keeping project documents online after the grant ends.

The White Paper should therefore distinguish between disseminating JOY and institutionalising JOY. A coach downloading the Educational Pack is dissemination; a club adopting JOY practices is implementation; a federation integrating JOY competencies into coach certification is institutionalisation; and a municipality changing funding criteria to recognise inclusive clubs is policy change.

For JOY, sustainability means that ideas tested through WP2–WP4 continue to influence coaching practice, club development, education and policy.

This requires three forms of continuation:

resource sustainability
— maintaining access to materials;

practice sustainability
— continuing to use and adapt JOY principles;

institutional sustainability
— integrating successful approaches into education, standards, funding and organisational routines.

9.1 Educational Pack 2.0 and Open Resources

Educational Pack 2.0 is the principal mechanism for transferring project learning into continued practice.

The Pack has been developed to support everyday coaching rather than function as a rigid step-by-step programme. Coaches can enter the material according to their current needs and select relevant exercises or reflective tools. The Pack explicitly states that even small changes in activity structure, feedback or reflection can support confidence, belonging and long-term engagement.

Its practical value lies in the combination of theory and usable tools.

The final resource includes material on art-based methods, positive psychology, coach-athlete relationships, motivation and feedback, VIP peer support, resilience, e-portfolios, dropout prevention and practical activities.

The project website is intended to remain a central point through which public materials and findings are available to coaches, clubs, managers and other stakeholders. WP5 specifically defines the website as a mechanism for enabling stakeholders to implement the approach beyond the immediate consortium.

Open and multilingual access is important for sustainability because uptake should not depend on continued participation in the original partnership.

9.2 Stakeholder and Policy Dialogue

Policy changes are unlikely to occur through publication alone.

The White Paper should therefore be treated as the beginning of policy dialogue rather than the end of dissemination.

The Erasmus+ application anticipated multiplier events involving coaches, volunteers, physical-education teachers, youth workers and policy makers, together with dedicated engagement at national and/or European policy level. It set targets of five dissemination events and fifteen policy events.

Stakeholder dialogue should focus on implementation questions:

- What inclusion problems are most pressing locally?
- Which JOY recommendations are already partly implemented?
- What would prevent implementation?
- Which organisation has authority to change the relevant rule or practice?
- What support do clubs and coaches require?
- Which indicators can realistically be collected?

This shifts stakeholder events away from one-way project presentations and toward policy co-creation. The aim is to move from dissemination to adoption, from adoption to implementation, and from implementation to institutionalisation.

Local stakeholders should also be encouraged to identify adaptations. A municipal official, national federation, disability-sport organisation, coach educator and parent organisation may each understand different barriers.

Their perspectives are complementary.

9.3 European Networks and Dissemination

JOY's transnational character creates opportunities for European-level continuation.

The original sustainability strategy envisaged cooperation with Olympic Committees, European Week of Sport, other Erasmus+ Sport projects and wider European inclusion initiatives. It also anticipated joint policy briefs, multiplier events and other collaborative dissemination mechanisms.

This network-based approach should continue.

JOY's strongest European contribution is not necessarily the creation of a new permanent institution. It is the availability of an adaptable framework and practical tools that existing networks can use.

Potential dissemination audiences therefore include:

European and national sport federations;
Olympic and Paralympic organisations;
municipal networks;
coach-education institutions;
universities;
youth organisations;
disability and inclusion organisations;
and future Erasmus+ Sport partnerships.

> Dissemination should increasingly focus on **use**, not only reach.

Website visits, downloads and social-media visibility are useful indicators of communication. However, the stronger sustainability question is whether an organisation subsequently changes a training course, club policy, funding standard or coaching practice.

Future follow-up should therefore collect examples of adoption wherever possible.

9.4 Maintaining and Scaling JOY after Erasmus+ Funding

The original application contains several concrete sustainability commitments.

Project materials were intended to remain accessible in multiple languages through the project website and Erasmus+ channels. **The website was planned to be maintained for at least three years following the project. The consortium also envisaged annual online partner meetings for three years following project completion to continue dissemination, evaluation and future cooperation.**

These commitments provide a useful foundation, but scaling requires moving beyond project maintenance.

A possible scaling pathway consists of five stages.

Stage 1 – Dissemination.
Existing resources are published, translated, presented and made easy to access.

Stage 2 – Adoption.
Clubs, municipalities, federations or coach educators decide to use selected JOY principles or tools.

Stage 3 – Implementation.
Organisations apply the approach in coaching practice, club policies, youth-voice mechanisms or municipal support systems.

Stage 4 – Institutionalisation.
Federations, educational institutions or municipalities incorporate JOY principles into regular training, standards, certification or funding criteria.

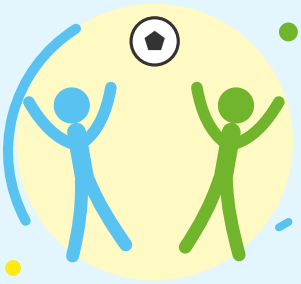
Stage 5 – Scaling.
Adoption cases are shared through national and European networks, and the recommendations are updated based on evidence from implementation.

Scaling should not require every organisation to use the JOY name indefinitely.

A deeper measure of success would be that JOY principles become so embedded in normal practice that inclusive coaching is simply regarded as good coaching.

10

Conclusions: From Joyful Sport to Inclusive Sport Policy



10.1 Alignment with Current EU Policy Priorities

The JOY approach is closely aligned with the current direction of European Union sport policy. The **EU Work Plan for Sport 2024–2027** identifies integrity and values in sport, the socio-economic and sustainable dimensions of sport, and participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity as its three priority areas. Its guiding objectives include strengthening safe and value-based sport, supporting sustainable and evidence-informed sport policy, increasing participation and improving accessibility for vulnerable groups. JOY contributes directly to these objectives by treating inclusion, belonging, well-being and positive participation experiences as integral dimensions of quality youth sport rather than as additional or optional outcomes.

The 2025 Council Conclusions on an integrated approach to sport and physical activity in the education context provide an even stronger connection to the JOY philosophy. The Conclusions emphasise the physical, mental and social development of children and adolescents and recognise motivation, self-confidence and physical literacy as foundations for lifelong engagement in physical activity. Significantly, they explicitly connect lifelong participation with personal motivation and the **joy of sport and physical activity**. They also underline the importance of creating supportive environments and making sport attractive and accessible to children and adolescents. These priorities closely reflect JOY's emphasis on enjoyment, belonging, inclusion and positive experiences as factors supporting continued participation.

The Council Conclusions also reinforce JOY's focus on the people and organisations that shape children's everyday sporting environments. They call for stronger cooperation between sport, education, youth and health sectors and recognise the importance of the competences of teachers, coaches and others working with children and adolescents. Member States are encouraged to provide ongoing training based on current knowledge and to strengthen emotional and ethical competencies supporting children's mental health and well-being. The Conclusions also encourage cooperation between schools and sport clubs and call for activities to

take place in safe, accessible and inclusive environments. These priorities correspond closely with JOY's recommendations on coach education, youth voice and peer support, well-being, accessibility and shared responsibility between public authorities, federations, clubs and coaches.

Taken together, these EU policy developments strengthen the relevance of the JOY recommendations beyond the project itself. JOY provides practical mechanisms through which current European priorities can be translated into everyday youth-sport practice: inclusion criteria in public funding, relational and pedagogical competencies in coach education, mechanisms for youth feedback and peer support, attention to mental well-being and belonging, and proportionate monitoring of participation, experience and retention. In this sense, JOY can be positioned not as a separate policy model, but as an evidence-informed contribution to the implementation of existing EU priorities for more inclusive, accessible and positive sport experiences for children and young people.

10.2 Conclusion: From Joyful Sport to Inclusive Sport Policy



JOY in SPORTS began from a simple but important observation: sport can be a powerful environment for health, learning, friendship and belonging, but these positive outcomes do not occur automatically.

Children's experiences depend on the environments adults and organisations create.

> Sport can foster inclusion, but it can also reinforce exclusion.
> Competition can motivate, but unmanaged pressure can undermine participation.
> Peer groups can create belonging, but they can also reproduce bullying and isolation.
> Coaches can strengthen confidence, but the way feedback and relationships are managed can also influence whether a young person wishes to return.

For this reason, inclusion in youth sport cannot be treated as an optional activity added to the “real” work of sport.

> It is part of real work.

The JOY project has approached this challenge through a combination of co-creation, art-based methods, positive pedagogy, practical piloting, peer support and reflective coaching. WP2 mapped and developed the initial approaches; WP3 tested them across different European sport settings; and WP4 transformed the accumulated learning into Educational Pack 2.0.

The completed WP3 evaluation phase has reported high participation and adherence, strong team belonging and positive emotional engagement across partner contexts, while also providing evidence for refinement of the final educational materials. These results should be interpreted with the methodological caution described earlier in this White Paper, but they reinforce a consistent conclusion:

the social environment of sport matters.

JOY therefore calls on policy makers to broaden the definition of quality youth sport.

Quality should include performance and technical development, but it should also include whether children feel welcome, safe, respected and able to participate.

It should include whether coaches are prepared for their educational and relational responsibilities.

It should include whether young people have a voice.

It should include whether costs, facilities and organisational practices unintentionally exclude groups.
And it should include whether organisations learn when children leave.

The responsibility for this transition is shared.

European institutions can encourage common principles and exchange.

National authorities can embed inclusion into strategies, coaching education and funding.

Municipalities can connect public support to reasonable inclusion standards.

Federations can integrate these expectations into club and coach development.

Clubs can make them visible in everyday practice.

Coaches can translate them into relationships with children.

Young athletes themselves can contribute through participation, feedback and peer support.

The purpose is not to make youth sport easier or remove competition and challenge.

The purpose is to create environments in which challenge can occur **without sacrificing dignity, belonging and well-being**.

The original JOY proposal sought an approach that decreases discrimination while increasing children's sense of joy in sport and asked that the White Paper explain both why this is necessary and how it can be implemented.

POLICY MESSAGE

Young people should not simply have access to sport. They should have a meaningful opportunity to belong, develop and remain involved. Clubs and coaches that make this possible, especially for children facing the greatest barriers, should receive the recognition, support and resources needed to sustain and scale their work.

References

The following is a **working reference list** for the White Paper. It combines key academic sources already used in Educational Pack 2.0 with JOY project documents.

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Annex 1

JOY Policy Checklist for Municipalities



This checklist is intended as a **practical self-assessment tool**, not a compulsory certification instrument. A municipality may use it when designing grants, partnerships, facility agreements or youth-sport strategies.

Area	Key question for the municipality	Suggested minimum expectation
Policy commitment	Does our youth-sport policy explicitly include inclusion, non-discrimination and child well-being?	These principles are stated in funding/policy documents.
Equal access	Can children participate regardless of disability, gender, background or socio-economic situation?	Barriers are periodically identified and actions planned.
Affordability	Do fees, equipment and travel requirements exclude some families?	Support or reduced-cost options are available where possible.
Accessibility	Are publicly supported facilities physically and practically accessible?	Accessibility forms part of facility planning and evaluation.
Funding standards	Do clubs receiving municipal support demonstrate inclusive practice, and are clubs facing higher inclusion costs supported?	Grant/facility criteria include inclusion, with targeted capacity-building or additional support where barriers are greatest.
Anti-discrimination	Do supported clubs have procedures addressing discrimination, racism and bullying?	A clear procedure and responsible contact person exist.
Child safeguarding	Can children safely raise concerns?	Appropriate reporting and safeguarding pathways exist.
Coach competence	Are coaches supported to develop inclusion and relational competencies?	Training opportunities are available and encouraged.
Athlete voice	Are young people consulted about their sport experience?	Clubs use age-appropriate feedback or participation mechanisms.

Annex 1: JOY Policy Checklist for Municipalities

Area	Key question for the municipality	Suggested minimum expectation
Peer support	Are positive peer relationships intentionally encouraged?	Clubs are encouraged to use mentoring/VIP-type practices.
Well-being	Is children's well-being recognised as part of sport quality?	Quality criteria go beyond competitive results.
Participation pathways	Can young people participate recreationally as well as competitively?	Where possible, more than one participation pathway exists.
Retention	Do we know who is leaving municipal-supported sport and why?	Basic retention/dropout information is reviewed.
Data equity	Can participation differences between groups be identified without unnecessary personal-data collection?	Proportionate monitoring is used.
Parent engagement	Are families provided with information about positive youth-sport behaviour?	Clubs engage parents in expectations and values.
Stakeholder cooperation	Do sport, education, youth and social services cooperate where relevant?	Cross-sector dialogue takes place periodically.
Continuous improvement	Are clubs helped to improve rather than only assessed?	Templates, training, mentoring and examples of good practice are available.
Policy review	Are inclusion criteria reviewed with clubs and young people?	Policy is periodically updated using feedback and evidence.

Suggested municipal decision rule

Rather than using a simple pass/fail model, municipalities could classify each area as:

Established
consistently implemented and evidenced.

Developing
partly implemented; improvement plan exists.

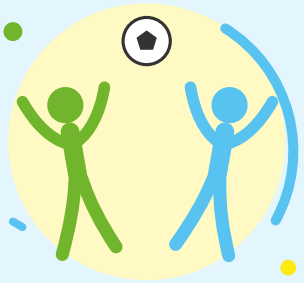
Not yet established
action required.

Not applicable
justified for the particular context.

This allows the checklist to support improvement rather than punish organisations that are beginning their inclusion journey.

Annex 2

JOY Policy Checklist for Sport Clubs and Federations



This checklist translates the JOY framework into questions that a club or federation can ask about its own practice.

A. Belonging and Inclusion

- [ ] Every new participant receives a clear and welcoming introduction.
- [ ] Coaches actively learn and use children's names.
- [ ] Children understand team expectations and values.
- [ ] Differences in ability, disability, culture, gender or socio-economic background are treated respectfully.
- [ ] There is a clear process for responding to discrimination, bullying and exclusion.
- [ ] Coaches notice participants who regularly remain on the margins of activities.
- [ ] Activities can be adapted so that different young people can participate meaningfully.

B. Coaching Relationships

- ☐ Coaches understand that their relationship with athletes affects motivation, confidence and well-being.
- ☐ Feedback addresses actions and learning rather than the child's personal worth.
- ☐ Coaches recognise effort, progress, problem-solving and teamwork as well as results.
- ☐ Children have opportunities to ask questions and express concerns.
- ☐ Coaching behaviour remains respectful during high-pressure competitive situations.
- ☐ Coaches know where to seek support when an issue is beyond their competence.

C. Athlete Voice

- ☐ Athletes are periodically asked about their experience.
- ☐ Young people can contribute ideas appropriate to their age.
- ☐ Participants know whom to approach if they feel unsafe or excluded.
- ☐ Feedback from children produces visible action where appropriate.
- ☐ Youth participation does not replace adult safeguarding responsibility.

D. Peer Relationships and the VIP Model

- ☐ New participants receive support from teammates.
- ☐ Positive peer leadership is encouraged.
- ☐ Leadership is not automatically limited to the highest-performing athlete.
- ☐ VIP/peer-support roles can rotate.
- ☐ Peer leaders are taught to encourage rather than police teammates.
- ☐ Adults retain responsibility for serious bullying, safeguarding or discrimination concerns.

The Educational Pack describes VIP roles as social support, motivational support, task support and communication bridge.

E. Mental Well-being and Resilience

- ☐ Mistakes are treated as normal components of learning.
- ☐ Athletes are not expected to hide all signs of stress or anxiety.
- ☐ Coaches understand basic strategies that can support emotional regulation.
- ☐ Training creates challenge without systematic humiliation or fear.
- ☐ Coaches understand when professional mental-health support may be required.
- ☐ Well-being is discussed in an age-appropriate way.

F. Dropout Prevention

- ☐ The club records when young participants leave.
- ☐ Where appropriate, the reason for leaving is requested.
- ☐ The club periodically reviews whether dropout patterns indicate preventable barriers.
- ☐ Different levels of participation are available where feasible.
- ☐ Time expectations are proportionate to participants' level and age.
- ☐ Costs and financial barriers are considered.
- ☐ Parents are supported to enable continued participation.

Educational Pack 2.0 explicitly recommends an anti-dropout policy and highlights peer, parent, coach and accessibility factors.

G. Parent Partnership

- ☐ Parents receive simple guidance on positive youth-sport behaviour and healthy competition.
- ☐ Parents have a clear channel for raising practical barriers, concerns or early signs of disengagement.
- ☐ Clubs ask families about cost, transport, equipment and scheduling barriers where appropriate.
- ☐ Parent communication reinforces inclusion, respect and belonging rather than only performance outcomes.

H. Coach Development

- ☐ Coaches receive induction on the club's inclusion principles.
- ☐ Inclusion is part of continuing professional development.
- ☐ Coaches have opportunities for peer discussion or mentoring.
- ☐ Reflective practice is encouraged.
- ☐ Coaches can use the JOY e-portfolio or a comparable reflection method.
- ☐ Volunteers receive support appropriate to their responsibilities.
- ☐ Coaches have access to mentoring or peer support when dealing with complex inclusion, well-being or safeguarding situations.
- ☐ Coach workload and well-being are considered when assigning inclusion responsibilities.

I. Organisational Accountability

- ☐ A named person has responsibility for inclusion/safeguarding coordination.
- ☐ Policies are communicated in understandable language.
- ☐ Children and parents know how concerns are handled.
- ☐ Club leadership periodically reviews participation, retention and experience data.
- ☐ Good practice is shared between teams and coaches.
- ☐ Inclusion is included in strategic and operational planning.

Annex 3

Recommended Indicators



The indicators below are intended as a **menu**, not as a requirement that every organisation collect every measure.

Small clubs should begin with a small number of practical indicators. Municipalities and federations can collect a broader set when appropriate.

Domain	Suggested indicator	Example measure	Data source	Suggested frequency
Access	Total youth participation	Number of registered young participants	Registration data	Annual
Access	Representation	Participation by relevant age/group categories where lawful and appropriate	Registration data	Annual
Accessibility	Accessible opportunities	% of programmes assessed as accessible/adaptable	Club review	Annual
Affordability	Financial support	Number/% receiving reduced fees or other support	Administrative data	Annual
Belonging	Sense of belonging	"I feel that I am part of this team/ club"	Short anonymous survey	1–2 times/year
Safety & Respect	Psychological safety	"I feel safe being myself in this team"	Short survey	1–2 times/year
Safety & Respect	Respectful environment	"People in this team treat me with respect"	Short survey	1–2 times/year
Voice	Feeling heard	"My coach listens to my views"	Short survey	1–2 times/year

Annex 3: Recommended Indicators

Domain	Suggested indicator	Example measure	Data source	Suggested frequency
Belonging	Teammate support	"My teammates help and encourage me"	Short survey	1–2 times/year
JOY	Positive sport experience	"I enjoy taking part in this sport"	Short survey	1–2 times/year
JOY	Intention to continue	"I would like to continue next season"	Short survey	Annual
Retention	Annual retention	% of young members returning	Registration data	Annual
Retention	Dropout rate	% leaving before the expected transition point	Registration data	Annual
Retention	Reasons for leaving	Main self-reported reasons	Exit question/ survey	Ongoing
Safety & Respect	Reported incidents	Number/type of reports	Safeguarding system	Ongoing + annual review
Safety & Respect	Reported incidents	Number/type of discrimination concerns	Safeguarding system	Ongoing
Response	Case handling	% of reported cases receiving documented follow-up	Club records	Annual
Coach Support	Inclusion training	% of youth coaches completing relevant education	Training records	Annual
Coach Support	Reflection participation	% of coaches using reflection/peer review	Coach records	1–2 times/year
Voice	Formal youth voice	Number of teams/clubs using athlete consultation or VIP approaches	Organizational review	Annual
Parent Partnership	Parent understanding	Parent awareness of club values/ conduct expectations	Brief survey	Annual
Continuous Improvement	JOY checklist progress	Number of criteria Established/ Developing/Not yet established	Self-assessment	Annual

Suggested Core JOY Indicator Set

> **For organisations that need a very simple starting point, JOY recommends six headline indicators:** This is a proposed practical monitoring framework rather than a validated psychometric instrument. Further testing would be needed to establish reliability, validity and cross-context suitability.

ACCESS
participation and barrier removal.

BELONGING
feeling accepted and part of the team or club.

SAFETY & RESPECT
psychological safety, dignity and freedom from humiliation.

VOICE
feeling heard and able to contribute.

JOY
enjoyment, motivation and intention to continue.

RETENTION
who stays, who leaves and why.

These indicators deliberately combine administrative outcomes with children's lived experiences. The detailed indicator menu can then be used selectively by municipalities, federations or larger clubs.

Interpretation Principles

The indicators should never be interpreted mechanically.

A high retention rate is not proof that every athlete is flourishing.

A low number of reported bullying incidents does not necessarily demonstrate that bullying is absent; children may not know how or feel safe enough to report.

An increase in reporting after introducing a safeguarding mechanism may be evidence of improved trust.

Similarly, differences between teams should initially prompt questions rather than sanctions.

The recommended cycle is:

Measure → **Listen** → **Understand** → **Improve** → **Support.**

The purpose of JOY monitoring is therefore not to produce league tables of "most inclusive clubs". It is to help organisations see what would otherwise remain invisible and continuously improve the sporting experience of children.

Taken together, the three annexes translate the White Paper's central argument into a practical policy chain:

municipal expectations → **organisational practice** → **measurable experience and outcomes.**

That is also consistent with the original Erasmus+ ambition to move JOY beyond the consortium through policy recommendations, municipal inclusion standards, coach education and continued dissemination.

Annex 4

JOY Policy Engagement, Dissemination and Uptake Evidence



Confirmed activities and supporting evidence as of **31 October 2026** are presented in **Annex 4 – JOY Policy Engagement, Dissemination and Uptake Evidence**. This annex distinguishes between dissemination, stakeholder engagement, adoption or testing, implementation, institutionalisation, and policy change to ensure that visibility or participation alone is not considered evidence of policy uptake. Activities are ongoing and will continue until the project concludes on 31 December 2026. Each partner is responsible for implementing and reporting on activities in their respective country.

Annex 4: JOY Policy Engagement, Dissemination and Uptake Evidence

Country / partner	Policy meetings	Organizations and municipalities reached	Ministries / federations / Olympic or Paralympic bodies…etc	External adoption or testing of Educational Pack 2.0 at least 8 organisations outside of consortium	Policy / organisational changes	Dissemination events and participants
Turkey – YOSC	Meetings were held with representatives of the Yalova Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports and the Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services to introduce JOY in Sport and discuss possible use of its resources. Contact was also made with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and TBESF. The Ministry of Youth and Sports replied on 20 October 2026, explaining that comments and suggestions received by email are forwarded to the relevant departments. The reply also directed formal applications to CİMER.	Organisations reached included Yalova University, BİKAMDER, the Yalova Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports, the Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services, the Provincial Directorate of National Education and TBESF. Activities covered Yalova, Çınarcık, Orhangazi/ Bursa and Bandırma/Balıkesir, reaching children, families, students, teachers and coaches. BİKAMDER, a non-profit organisation working in the health field, supported enjoyable practical activities for children and families. In Orhangazi, YOSC introduced the project during an event organised by Yalova University and the Provincial Directorate of National Education.	Contact was made with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Turkish Sports Federation for the Physically Disabled (TBESF). The Yalova Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports was also engaged through meetings. TBESF published news about the Educational Pack, and Pack 2.0 was presented during federation coach training on 27 September 2026. JOY in Sport was also presented during an IWBF event on 24–27 April 2025, extending dissemination to an international sport network.	JOY in Sport activities were used during university classes, giving students hands-on experience. Activities were also introduced and practised with children and families through BİKAMDER cooperation. These examples demonstrate practical use of JOY activities and interest in further implementation. Formal external adoption or testing specifically of Pack 2.0 remains to be confirmed.	Institutional discussions and cooperation created opportunities for future use of the project resources. Representatives stated that they would forward Educational Pack 2.0 to the responsible decision-makers. Individual coaches expressed their intention to use the activities and recommend them to colleagues.	Yalova, "Hareket Et, Rengini Bul" (14 May 2024; approximately 120 participants); BİKAMDER activities (22 November 2024; approximately 30); Çınarcık event jointly organised by Yalova University and YOSC, introducing the project and demonstrating activities to university students and teachers (3 May 2026; 37); Orhangazi event (5 May 2025; approximately 50); and the 4th South Marmara Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Student Congress, Bandırma (5 August 2026; approximately 300). Reported attendance across these five activities totals approximately 537. Further dissemination: Pack 2.0 was presented to 34 coaches during TBESF training on 27 September 2026. JOY in Sport was also presented at the IWBF event on 24–27 April 2025.
Finland – TUAS and TuTo	Policy-level dialogue at Erkki Alaja Symposium (16 Apr 2026); discussions with Finnish Olympic Committee and Youth Olympic Committee representatives (7 Sep 2026); meeting and webinar with City of Turku Sports Services representatives responsible for sports clubs, schools and early childhood education (scheduled for 11 Nov 2026)	48 football clubs at ÅIFK Spring Cup; TuTo, LiikU ry, sport federations, coaches and clubs from Turku and Helsinki	Finnish Olympic Committee and Youth Olympic Committee representatives; different sport federations represented	LiikU ry received tools (29 Sep 2026), The City of Turku meeting and webinar scheduled for 11 November 2026 have not yet taken place. LiikU influences, networks, increases competence and promotes daily movement in Southwest Finland. Four sport clubs, which have tested and adopted Educational Pack 2.0: TuTo, Kaarinan Ura Ry (athletics), ÅIFK, and Salon Pallo.	Discussion of future club implementation and network dissemination; no completed policy changes documented.	4 completed dated/2026 public activities with attendance: symposium ~60; Spring Cup hundreds (not exact); TuTo Family Day ~1,500; Olympic Day ~7,000. LiikU dissemination 29 Sep (count unknown). At least 5 events, with ~8,560 quantified attendees plus Spring Cup and LiikU

Annex 4: JOY Policy Engagement, Dissemination and Uptake Evidence

Country / partner	Policy meetings	Organizations and municipalities reached	Ministries / federations / Olympic or Paralympic bodies…etc	External adoption or testing of Educational Pack 2.0 at least 8 organisations outside of consortium	Policy / organisational changes	Dissemination events and participants
Portugal – CSA	Mayor meeting in March 2026 (1 documented engagement); not explicitly designated formal policy meeting. Meeting with Municipality councilor to promote projects among sports entities in city/ county. Meeting with Alcobaça School cluster board of direction to promote project within Gymnastic courses.	Alcobaça municipality/mayor; national handball and wheelchair cup events; regional beach handball event.	Portuguese Secretary of State for Sport present at wheelchair cup; handball and wheelchair sport contexts	Preschool and primary school students within Alcobaça School Cluster, Intervention carried out at the following schools: Vestiaria; Alcobaça; Ataíja; Maiorga; Aljubarrota; Évora de Alcobaça. Each school has an average of 60 students	Awareness-raising and distribution of JOY QR cards	3 dated sport dissemination events (7 Jun, 20 Jun, 18–19 Jul 2026) plus March mayor/press engagement. Potential audiences ~1,500 and 200; beach handball
Estonia – EFSEI	At least 3 institutional stakeholder meetings: Estonian Olympic Committee (EOK) Coaches Qualification Committee board meeting (25 Sep 2026); ESTCIS meeting to test Educational Pack in schools and kindergarten; Estonian Antidoping and Sports Ethics Foundation meeting to adopt parent behavior and rights;	Tallinn event; Estonian Olympic Committee, Ministry of Culture, sport federations and clubs, ESTCIS, Competence Centre for Physical Activity. Coaches Evaluation Committee members referenced.	Ministry of Culture; Estonian Olympic Committee (EOK) Coach Qualification Committee; Estonian Antidoping and Sports Ethics Foundation / ESTCIS; sports federation representatives.	EOK Coaches Qualification Committee discussion on applying Pack 2.0 exercises in coaching qualification. Interest from an Estonian Physical Activity Competence Centre (CCPA) integrating the Educational pack into resources for school and kindergarten physical education teachers. The CCPA was also interested in producing additional videos linked to the Educational Pack.	Proposal to award coaching qualification credits for use of Pack 2.0 exercises; under discussion; ESTCIS proposal to test Educational Pack in schools and kindergarten under the work.	Tallinn multiplier event (21 Apr 2026): 70 participants. Coaches Qualification Committee members meeting (28 Oct 2026; 75 participants).

Annex 4: JOY Policy Engagement, Dissemination and Uptake Evidence

Country / partner	Policy meetings	Organizations and municipalities reached	Ministries / federations / Olympic or Paralympic bodies…etc	External adoption or testing of Educational Pack 2.0 at least 8 organisations outside of consortium	Policy / organisational changes	Dissemination events and participants
Poland – INNOCAMP	At least 3 institutional stakeholder meetings: Gdańsk Municipality Department of Sports leadership, coordinated by Mr. Zbigniew Weinar; Gdynia Vice Mayor responsible for education, sports and youth affairs; Ashoka Poland in Warsaw. Additionally separate meetings with smaller foundations and sports clubs in Gdynia	Gdańsk and Gdynia municipalities; municipal Department of Sports in Gdańsk; municipality-financed sports clubs in Gdańsk; smaller foundations and sports clubs operating in Gdynia; Ashoka Poland, Warsaw, through its Sports for Changemakers programme. The total number of individual clubs and foundations reached has not been quantified.	Municipal sports and education authorities in Gdańsk and Gdynia engaged. No national ministry, sports federation or Olympic/ Paralympic body consultation confirmed.	Educational Pack 2.0 disseminated through Gdańsk municipality-funded sports clubs and Ashoka's Sports for Changemakers network. Engagement with Gdynia foundations and sports clubs example Karate "NIDAN", SMS "Stolem" Gniewino, ARKA GDYNIA RUGBY reported. Sports Academy in Gdansk adopted and tested with international students of sports education and coaching.	Municipal-level cooperation and dissemination channels established in Gdańsk and Gdynia. Ashoka supported wider dissemination through its existing programme.	Completed dissemination through municipal meetings, local foundations, sports clubs and Ashoka Poland; participant numbers not reported. One dissemination event planned for mid-November 2026 at School No. 57 in Gdańsk, with support from Gdańsk Municipality and the European Solidarity Centre

Project-wide evidence status 31.10.2026

Reporting category	Evidence status
Country / partner	Project-wide evidence status – JOY Consortium
Policy meetings	Policy and institutional engagement documented across all five partner countries (Türkiye, Finland, Portugal, Estonia and Poland), involving municipal authorities, sports governance bodies, coaching qualification structures and social innovation networks. Meetings include local government representatives, Olympic Committee stakeholders and national-level sports organisations. A consolidated number of formal policy meetings remains to be verified.
Organizations and municipalities reached	Multi-country outreach involving municipalities, universities, sports clubs, federations, coaching organisations, schools, civil society organisations and social innovation networks. Key institutional partners and stakeholders include the municipalities of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Alcobaça, the Estonian Olympic Committee Coaches Qualification Committee and Sports Federations Coaching evaluation committees, Finnish sports networks, Turkish Yalova University, BİKAMDER, and Ashoka's Sports for Changemakers programme, a dissemination partner supporting wider outreach. Total unique organisations reached not yet consolidated.
Ministries / federations / Olympic or Paralympic bodies	Engagement includes the Finnish Olympic Committee and Youth Olympic Committee, Estonian Olympic Committee Coaches Qualification Committee, Estonian Competence Centre for Physical Activity, international wheelchair basketball networks and municipal sports authorities in several partner countries. Participation of the Portuguese Secretary of State for Sport in a dissemination event also reported. In Türkiye, contact was made with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Turkish Sports Federation for the Physically Disabled (TBESF). The Yalova Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports was also engaged through meetings. Engagement represents consultation, networking and dissemination rather than confirmed institutional endorsement.
External adoption or testing of Educational Pack 2.0	Educational Pack 2.0 shared with sports clubs, coaching organisations, municipal networks and civil society partners across participating countries. Ashoka's Sports for Changemakers programme supports dissemination through its established network. Discussions regarding integration into coaching qualifications and club activities indicate potential uptake. Four Finnish clubs (TuTo, Kaarinan Ura Ry , ÅIFK and Salon Pallo) are reported to have tested and adopted the pack, and a Sports Academy in Gdańsk reports adoption and testing. Formal external adoption or independently documented testing remains to be confirmed.
Policy / organizational changes	The project has strengthened cooperation between sports organisations, municipalities, educational institutions and social innovation partners. In Estonia, recognition of Educational Pack 2.0 activities within coaching qualifications has been proposed. Municipal dissemination cooperation in Poland and engagement with Olympic Committee stakeholders in Finland provide potential pathways for future institutional uptake. No completed formal policy change has yet been substantiated.

Annex 4: JOY Policy Engagement, Dissemination and Uptake Evidence

Reporting category	Evidence status
Dissemination events and participants	Multiple dissemination activities completed across five partner countries, including sporting events, stakeholder meetings, symposiums, community activities and institutional networking. Documented event audiences include approximately 8,560 in Finland from events with quantified attendance (excluding the Spring Cup and LiikU dissemination), approximately 537 in Türkiye and 145 across Estonia's Tallinn multiplier event and Coaches Qualification Committee meeting, in Portugal reported 1500 potential reach and unquantified outreach in Poland. Ashoka's Sports for Changemakers network provides an additional dissemination channel. A further event is planned in Gdańsk in November 2026.

Project-wide dissemination and sustainability: The JOY project demonstrates multi-level engagement across five European countries, connecting grassroots sports organisations with municipal authorities, educational institutions, sports governance bodies and social innovation networks. The involvement of Ashoka's Sports for Changemakers programme as a dissemination partner strengthens opportunities for wider European outreach and continued use of Educational Pack 2.0 beyond the project lifetime. While formal policy adoption remains under development, the established institutional relationships and dissemination channels provide a foundation for future uptake, replication and sustainability.

About the Joy Consortium

The project consortium consists of 6 members from 5 different countries:

INNOCAMP PL
– Innocamp Poland

Turku University of Applied Sciences LTD (TUAS)
– https://www.turkuamk.fi/

Cister Sport de Alcobaça
– Cister Sport Alcobaça Andebol

Yalova Ortopedikler Spor Kulübü
– https://www.facebook.com/yalovaosk/

Turun Toverit RY
– https://www.tuto.fi/

Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information
– www.spordiinfo.ee

Associated partners:
Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego I Sportu Im Jed Pl - https://awf.gda.pl/

Lounais-suomen Liikunta Ja Urheilu Ry - https://www.liiku.fi/yhteystiedot/

Finnish Olympic Committee - https://www.olympiakomitea.fi/en/

Türkiye Bedensel Engelliler Spor Federasyonu - https://www.instagram.com/tbesf/?hl=en
Yalova University - https://www.yalova.edu.tr/en

Please read more on the project homepage: www.joyinsports.com. Social media: Facebook and Instagram.



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www.joyinsports.com

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The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors. The views expressed 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.

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