

PINK CLAW®

PINK CLAW - 101090089 D4 - Exercise protocol results



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PARTNER RESPONSE ANALYSIS – STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES AND IMPACTS.....	5
Italy.....	6
France	8
Romania	10
Turkey.....	12
RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES	15
Recruitment strategies.....	15
Participation rate.....	15
Critical issues encountered.....	16
ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY DISCIPLINE	18
SATISFACTION LEVEL BY ACTIVITY BY COUNTRY.....	26
CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNTRIES	28
CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND GOOD PRACTICES BY COUNTRY	31
BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED	32
OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS__FOR FUTURE PINK CLAW PROGRAMMES	33

INTRODUCTION

The Pink Claw project was developed to offer women a sports-based journey that fosters personal growth, breaks down cultural barriers, and strengthens technical skills.

Within an all-female environment, participants have the opportunity to explore disciplines related to **OCR (Obstacle Course Racing), self-defense, tactical fitness, mindfulness, and first aid**. The project primary goal is to train women not only in sports techniques but also in confidence and self-esteem, while encouraging the development of a network of coaches and athletes committed to long-term progress.

This document presents the results of the implementation of the Pink Claw exercise protocol, carried out in two phases. The first phase involved 30 women per country over an eight-month period from September 2023 to May 2024, while the second phase from September 2024 to May 2025 sees the participation to other 60 women per country.

This report examines both the recruitment methods and the progress of training sessions across the participating countries. It provides a comprehensive overview of the experiences gathered in the participating countries (Italy, France, Romania and Turkey), highlighting key organizational aspects, main challenges encountered, and participant satisfaction levels. A comparative analysis of national experiences sheds light on how each context has addressed specific challenges, such as securing suitable training spaces and managing schedules, while simultaneously fostering both collective and personal empowerment. The ultimate goal of this document is to encourage future female coaches to start in their contexts a Pink Claw journey!

The methodological approach used to collect data and results combines both quantitative data (number of participants, dropout rates, attendance records) and qualitative insights (direct feedback, questionnaires, and coaches' observations). This enables this report to assess the impact of the activities and offer recommendations for future initiatives, with particular attention to the physical and emotional well-being of the participants.

This “**Exercise Protocol Results**” report is structured into several sections, each covering key aspects of the project’s implementation:

- **Partner Response Analysis – Strategies, Challenges, and Impact**

This section examines the experiences of the participating countries (Italy, France, Romania and Turkey), focusing on the recruitment strategies, challenges faced, and participants’ engagement levels.

- **Activities by Discipline**

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the disciplines included in the exercise training protocol:

- OCR
- Self-Defense
- Tactical Fitness
- Mindfulness
- First Aid

This section also includes reflections on each discipline, a comparative analysis of the participants’ satisfaction by activity and country, and participation trends.

- **Recruitment Strategies and Challenges**
This section presents the main obstacles encountered in the recruitment and participation, offering a comparative analysis across the different countries and identifying the most effective strategies to overcome them.
- **Best Practices and Lessons Learned**
This section summarizes the best practices identified during the first phase of the project, highlighting key success factors and potential areas for improvement.
- **Operational Recommendations for Project Replication**
This section provides concrete recommendations for future implementations of Pink Claw exercise protocol based on collected data and partner insights, with the aim of enhancing training continuity and ensuring a lasting impact.

PARTNER RESPONSE ANALYSIS STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES AND IMPACTS

The partners of the Pink Claw project participated in a **structured questionnaire** designed to gather detailed data on the implementation methods, recruitment strategies, challenges faced, and the overall impact of the program in their countries.

This survey provided a comparative overview of the different experiences, helping to identify strengths, weaknesses, and solutions adopted to enhance participation and the effectiveness of the proposed activities.

The questionnaire was divided into five key thematic areas, each exploring a crucial aspect of the project's implementation:

1. The first section focused on **recruitment and participation strategies**, with questions aimed at understanding the channels used to promote the initiative, the duration of the recruitment campaign, and the effectiveness of various outreach methods (social media, presentation events, word-of-mouth, and collaborations with local authorities). Partners were also asked to report the number of women who actively participated and those who dropped out over time, providing a clear picture of retention rates across different national contexts.
2. The second section examined **dropout factors**, investigating the main reasons why some participants left the program. This included exploring organizational obstacles, scheduling conflicts with work or studies, logistical difficulties, and specific characteristics of the activities offered. Partners were also encouraged to suggest strategies for reducing dropout rates, aiming to make the program more accessible and sustainable in the long run.
3. The third section analyzed **organizational and logistical challenges**, addressing potential issues related to the management of training spaces, the availability of suitable facilities, and the level of institutional support received. Additionally, partners were asked to highlight any unexpected logistical or weather-related challenges that impacted the training sessions, providing insight into the operational difficulties encountered in different countries.
4. The fourth section focused on **results and best practices**, highlighting the project's successes. Partners were asked to identify three key achievements and explain why they were significant. Furthermore, they were invited to share concrete examples of positive experiences from the training sessions, offering deeper insight into the program's impact on participants.
5. The final section explored **the role of female coaches**, with specific questions on how they influenced participant motivation, engagement, and the creation of a safe and inclusive environment. This section highlighted the added value of female leadership within the project, emphasizing the empowerment dynamics and mutual support among the women involved.

By collecting and analyzing responses, the questionnaire provided a solid foundation for understanding the project's dynamics and identifying areas for improvement. Comparing national experiences helped highlight both local specificities and common challenges, offering valuable insights for optimizing the model's replication in the future.

Italy

<p>Recruitment and Participation Strategies</p>	<p>The recruitment process in Italy, managed by Endas Italia, project coordinator, was highly effective. Even before the official launch of the first programme, 40 women had already been confirmed—exceeding the initial target. This early engagement allowed the program to start smoothly, with no major logistical setbacks. In the second programme, participation increased to 60 women, demonstrating both the attractiveness of the project and the ability to retain and expand the participant base. Strategies such as simplified registration, clear onboarding procedures, and consistent communication proved crucial in ensuring high levels of engagement from the outset.</p>
<p>Dropout Factors and Retention Challenges</p>	<p>Italy recorded no formal dropouts, which is a particularly remarkable achievement. While some women temporarily paused their attendance due to family or personal matters, none abandoned the program entirely. The success in retention was attributed to strong group cohesion, continuous engagement even during periods of absence, and the ease of joining or rejoining the program. Nonetheless, the second phase revealed some organizational challenges. The increased number of participants required more structured planning, especially in balancing different training locations, time slots, and personal availabilities. These complexities highlighted the need for more robust schedule management systems as the program expanded.</p>
<p>Organizational and Logistical Obstacles</p>	<p>One of the key logistical issues in the Italian implementation concerned the management of outdoor activities, particularly OCR training. Weather conditions sometimes forced sessions to be rescheduled or relocated, disrupting the program flow. Although indoor facilities ensured continuity for most modules, the unpredictable nature of outdoor training introduced inefficiencies. Developing alternative indoor locations or predefined contingency plans for such conditions was identified as a necessary step for improving future delivery.</p>
<p>Key Achievements and Best Practices</p>	<p>The Italian team's strengths included early and proactive recruitment, effective participant retention, and the ability to foster strong group cohesion. The environment created through these efforts helped reinforce the sense of belonging, emotional support, and continuity. Participants consistently reported feeling encouraged, supported, and included. One noteworthy indicator of success was the complete absence of dropout across both training phases. However, recommendations for improvement included enhancing coaches' training in psychological support and logistical coordination, as well as preparing more flexible structures to handle external disruptions such as weather or sudden schedule changes.</p>
<p>The Role and Impact of Female Coaches</p>	<p>Female coaches were central to the success of the Italian implementation. Their presence ensured that training was not</p>

only physically effective but also emotionally supportive. By recognizing early signs of disengagement and addressing concerns through tailored strategies, coaches helped maintain motivation and reduce dropout risks. Their leadership provided a tangible empowerment model, encouraging participants to take on more active roles within the group. Furthermore, their role extended beyond fitness: in at least one case, a woman facing a serious domestic situation was supported by the group and the coach, who helped her seek assistance. This episode exemplifies how female leadership within Pink Claw contributed to building a safe, inclusive, and transformative environment.

Major Areas of Success

1. Fostering Cohesion and Team Spirit

The use of personalized materials—such as uniforms and branded gear—helped reinforce a shared identity. This had a dual effect: on one hand, participants felt part of something larger; on the other, the coordinated team image boosted motivation and pride in belonging to the group.

2. The Role of Female Coaches

Female coaches played a crucial role at multiple levels:

- They served as **role models of leadership and technical expertise**, instilling confidence and challenging stereotypes about the accessibility of physically demanding disciplines.
- They provided **emotional support**, creating an empathetic environment where participants felt comfortable sharing personal struggles, whether related to family, work, or emotional well-being. This psychological safety net was fundamental in encouraging women to express vulnerability and seek help when needed.
- They acted as **motivators**, offering tailored guidance to help participants overcome insecurities. For women who were initially hesitant or less physically prepared, having a coach who understood their specific challenges was a crucial factor in their persistence and improvement.

3. Social Support Beyond Sports

The group demonstrated its ability to **support members in difficult situations**, exemplified by a case where a participant facing a potentially dangerous domestic situation was successfully encouraged to seek external help. This underscores the project's role beyond physical training, fostering a network that empowers women to navigate personal challenges with collective strength.

Additional Key Outcomes

A further significant result was the **physical improvement and self-esteem growth** observed in many participants. The project engaged women who initially lacked athletic conditioning, proving that consistent training, combined with collective encouragement, can yield tangible results both physically and psychologically. Moreover, the close, personal connection between participants and coaches led many women to express **deep gratitude**, reinforcing the importance of a **human-centered approach** where relationships are integral to the sports experience.

Recommendations for Future Improvements

To further enhance the methodologies used in this exercise protocol, the following strategies could be implemented:

- **Integrating participant needs into program planning**, ensuring fluid communication to maintain engagement.
- **Equipping coaches with specialized training** to detect and address signs of disengagement early, using techniques from group dynamics and sports psychology.
- **Maximizing the transformative power of sports**, not just on a physical level but also on an emotional and social one, by emphasizing the positive impact of a strong support network on women's lives.

Looking ahead, the continued success of the project—measured by increased self-confidence, reduced psychological barriers, and the formation of a genuine support system—will depend on maintaining the **core principles that have made Pink Claw effective**: attentive listening, inclusivity, adaptability to participants' needs, and above all, recognition of **female coaches as a fundamental force in fostering empathy, leadership, and lasting change**.

France

<p>Recruitment and Participation Strategies</p>	<p>In France, the recruitment phase was initially dynamic and far-reaching. A total of 129 women registered in the first programme, thanks to a strategy that included widespread promotion on social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X), printed posters across Paris, and direct collaboration with local associations such as PSL and Cité Fertile. Despite this initial success in reaching a wide audience, retention proved problematic. Many women either never attended or dropped out after one session, often due to seasonal demotivation, scheduling conflicts, and unstable coaching. In the second year, the integration of the KABUBU association brought a noticeable shift, not only by offering access to a new group of refugee and migrant women with a strong need for structured activities, but also by significantly increasing the participants' level of commitment.</p>
<p>Dropout Factors and Retention Challenges</p>	<p>The first programme in France faced a high dropout rate. The reasons included lack of motivation during the winter months, unpredictable personal and professional schedules among participants, and insufficient continuity in coaching. These conditions affected participants' ability to stay involved over time. However, the second programme showed substantial improvement in retention, largely due to a clearer organizational structure, targeted engagement of socially disadvantaged women via KABUBU, and the stabilization of the coaching framework. This evolution allowed the project to regain participant trust and establish a more consistent training rhythm.</p>
<p>Organizational and Logistical Obstacles</p>	<p>The initial location at Cité Fertile, though centrally positioned and well-connected, was not without problems. Logistical challenges included the absence of dedicated staff for facility</p>

	<p>access, leading to delays or last-minute cancellations. Moreover, the concurrent Paris 2024 Olympics affected availability and planning. While the indoor setup was expected to help maintain participation during colder months, it did not sufficiently counteract seasonal demotivation. In contrast, the second year benefited from the logistical support and stable infrastructure provided by KABUBU, significantly improving the delivery of the training sessions.</p>
<p>Key Achievements and Best Practices</p>	<p>Among the key achievements of the French implementation was the transformation of the program from a general fitness offering to a socially oriented initiative with strong inclusion dynamics. The involvement of KABUBU enabled the integration of refugee and migrant women, enhancing both the program’s social relevance and its sense of community. A small but dedicated group of participants began forming social bonds beyond the training itself, demonstrating the emergence of trust and cohesion. Positive feedback emphasized the creation of a “safe space,” which helped many women reconnect with physical activity after long interruptions. Additionally, the coaches trained in the second year developed tailored approaches for working with diverse female groups, strengthening the program’s impact and adaptability.</p>
<p>The Role and Impact of Female Coaches</p>	<p>Initially, the lack of continuity among external trainers undermined participant confidence. Many coaches were unfamiliar with the project, and their irregular attendance disrupted the training experience. A turning point occurred with the implementation of an additional training session delivered in collaboration with Endas, which improved coaching consistency and enhanced trainer skills in managing inclusive, diverse groups. The presence of female coaches was instrumental in fostering an empathetic and empowering environment. Participants reported feeling safe and supported, enabling them to openly share both physical and emotional challenges. The reinforced role of coaches thus became central not only in terms of technical guidance but also in contributing to a broader sense of psychological safety and mutual support.</p>

Major Areas of Success:

1. **Increased Social Impact and Inclusion** – The collaboration with KABUBU improved access to sports for refugee and migrant women, fostering social cohesion and well-being.
2. **Enhanced Coach Training** – Additional training for coaches strengthened skills in engagement, conflict resolution, and empathetic communication, creating a more welcoming environment.
3. **Community Building** – A cohesive group of participants has formed, meeting outside official sessions, indicating a growing sense of belonging.
4. **Improved Organizational Efficiency** – The second-year reorganization enhanced program continuity and management, reducing dropout rates.

5. **Safe and Supportive Environment** – The space was perceived as safe and welcoming, encouraging participation and improving both physical and mental well-being.

Recommendations for Future Improvements:

1. **Strengthen Retention Strategies** – Introduce incentives to maintain consistent participation, such as mentoring programs or symbolic rewards for attendance.
2. **Improve Winter Engagement** – Offer more diverse and motivating indoor activities, potentially combining sports with social gatherings.
3. **Enhance Recruitment of Reliable Coaches** – Strengthen recruitment channels, focusing on professional networks rather than social media.
4. **Optimize Scheduling for Accessibility** – Adapt session times to participants’ work and family commitments, possibly offering flexible options.
5. **Expand Partnerships** – Establish new collaborations with local organizations to increase available resources and ensure greater project stability.

Romania

<p>Recruitment and Participation Strategies</p>	<p>In Romania, recruitment was conducted over a three-month period and successfully reached 85 women, of whom 41 officially enrolled. The strategy included social media outreach, printed materials placed in strategic locations, and direct involvement in university communities. This multifaceted approach ensured personal engagement and visibility within the academic context. Despite these efforts, the long duration of the training (eight months) and the intensity of the program posed participation challenges, especially for women balancing academic or professional commitments. The division into two groups (Tuesdays and Thursdays) offered some flexibility, but it wasn't sufficient for all participants. Several suggestions pointed to the need for integrating the program more formally within university structures, for example through training credits or official incentives.</p>
<p>Dropout Factors and Retention Challenges</p>	<p>While the dropout rate was not particularly high, maintaining consistent participation was difficult. Work and academic commitments often interfered with training schedules, especially during peak periods. Participants expressed appreciation for the program but found it challenging to sustain involvement over time. Feedback suggested that a modular and shorter program format, better aligned with university calendars and workload fluctuations, could enhance retention. The overall satisfaction level remained moderate to high, indicating that while logistical barriers existed, the quality and perceived value of the experience remained strong.</p>
<p>Organizational and Logistical Obstacles</p>	<p>Logistically, the Romanian implementation faced difficulties related to weather and facility access. Given Romania's long winters, OCR training was scheduled only in the spring, leading to an unbalanced timeline with an early emphasis on indoor activities. This separation complicated continuity and required careful coordination. Access to suitable outdoor spaces was not always easy, occasionally deterring participants. Additionally,</p>

	managing two weekly sessions with growing external commitments became a challenge for several women. These issues highlighted the need for more adaptable training formats and better planning for seasonal constraints.
Key Achievements and Best Practices	Despite the challenges, the Romanian implementation was characterized by strong coaching, a diverse and inclusive training structure, and meaningful group cohesion. The ability to offer multiple types of physical and mental training fostered a rich learning environment. Most participants rated their experience between 3 and 4, recognizing the value of both the content and the atmosphere created within the group. The trainers' capacity to maintain motivation and adapt sessions to various fitness levels allowed for personalized progression, while the group's mutual support fostered a sense of belonging that enhanced participant loyalty.
The Role and Impact of Female Coaches	Cristina Filip and Viorela Popescu played a pivotal role in the Romanian implementation, not only as instructors but as mentors. Their leadership ensured a welcoming and adaptive training space. They encouraged consistency among participants, tailored sessions to accommodate varying physical abilities, and incorporated mindfulness and mental well-being practices. Their holistic and empathetic approach was particularly effective in helping women overcome barriers related to motivation, fatigue, or confidence. While some activities, such as First Aid or yoga, were less appealing at first, the coaches succeeded in demonstrating their relevance, contributing to a more integrated and appreciated experience overall.

Major Areas of Success:

1. **High-Quality Coaching** – The selection of experienced and passionate coaches contributed significantly to participant engagement and motivation.
2. **Diverse and Well-Structured Activities** – The combination of indoor and outdoor training, as well as a variety of sports and self-defense modules, catered to different interests and fitness levels.
3. **Strong Community and Supportive Atmosphere** – The program fostered mutual support and collective motivation, enhancing the empowerment effect for participants.
4. **Flexibility in Scheduling** – The division of sessions into two different weekly slots helped accommodate participants with different availability.
5. **Overall Positive Impact** – The participants expressed interest in continuing the program, highlighting its effectiveness in boosting self-esteem and athletic progress.

Recommendations for Future Improvements:

1. **Enhance Time Flexibility** – Consider offering shorter training formats or replicating modules in different time slots to better fit participants' schedules.
2. **Improve Accessibility to Outdoor Training (OCR)** – Address travel and logistical barriers by providing alternative locations, transport solutions, or additional indoor options.

3. **Increase University Involvement** – Collaborate with universities to integrate the program into the academic calendar, possibly offering incentives such as training credits.
4. **Refine Module Offerings** – Adapt less engaging activities, such as first aid, by making them more interactive or integrating them into dynamic sessions.
5. **Weather-Adaptive Planning** – Adjust outdoor training schedules to better align with Romania’s climate, ensuring a smoother transition between indoor and outdoor activities.

Turkey

<p>Recruitment and Participation Strategies</p>	<p>The Turkish team selected a university campus as the core setting for Pink Claw activities, leveraging its dynamic and socially active environment to attract participants efficiently. Recruitment focused heavily on digital channels like Instagram and WhatsApp, combined with high visibility at university events and the distribution of printed promotional materials. This multi-channel strategy led to strong initial interest, with approximately 150 women participating in at least one session. The use of trial classes also helped attract participants, though it exposed limitations in maintaining their long-term engagement. A key insight was the importance of aligning training with academic calendars to avoid clashes with exam periods and maximize consistent attendance.</p>
<p>Dropout Factors and Retention Challenges</p>	<p>Despite a successful recruitment phase, around 30 women dropped out, citing issues such as physical fatigue, academic pressure, and preference for specific types of training (e.g., yoga over OCR or tactical fitness). The absence of formal incentives like academic credits reduced motivation for sustained involvement. Fragmentation in training preferences also weakened attendance continuity. To address this, a hybrid training model was proposed, integrating varied modules within the same session. This approach aimed to balance individual preferences with group consistency, enhancing peer bonding and reducing selective attendance, which often preceded dropout.</p>
<p>Organizational and Logistical Obstacles</p>	<p>One of the main challenges stemmed from the rigidity of the academic calendar, which dictated participants’ availability. Training sessions scheduled during exam-heavy periods saw lower turnout. Although the university context offered great outreach potential, it also meant dealing with the unpredictability of student schedules and commitments. The lack of incentives or institutional integration (such as credits or official recognition) further complicated retention. These constraints revealed the need for greater flexibility, planning responsiveness, and institutional alignment to ensure smoother participation continuity.</p>
<p>Key Achievements and Best Practices</p>	<p>Despite the difficulties, several successes emerged. One particularly meaningful result was the transformation of a participant into a certified yoga instructor, showing the long-term empowerment potential of the program. The diversity of</p>

	<p>the participant group—ranging from students to civil servants—also fostered intergroup communication and solidarity. The creation of mixed training modules was proposed as a scalable solution to increase engagement and mitigate selective dropout. The emphasis on personalized support, peer interaction, and digital communication (especially via WhatsApp) proved effective in maintaining participant connection and morale.</p>
<p>The Role and Impact of Female Coaches</p>	<p>Female coaches were instrumental in building a safe and motivating environment. Their empathetic approach allowed women to open up about personal and physical challenges, enhancing trust and continuity. Their presence acted as a powerful model of leadership and resilience, encouraging women to stay engaged and believe in their potential. Beyond motivation, female coaches provided essential guidance in adapting training intensity and style to suit varying levels of fitness. Their role was crucial not only in facilitating the sessions but in anchoring the social-emotional framework of the project. The example of a participant becoming a coach underscores the value of investing in female trainers to foster long-term impact and sustainability.</p>

Major Areas of Success:

1. **Strategic Location & Recruitment Success** – Choosing the university campus as the training site effectively reached the target audience, ensuring a broad pool of potential participants.
2. **Effective Multi-Channel Promotion** – The use of digital platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp), in-person events, and printed materials created strong initial engagement and widespread awareness.
3. **Inclusivity & Community Building** – The program successfully brought together students, academics, and professionals, fostering networking and a sense of belonging.
4. **Empowerment Through Female Role Models** – The presence of female coaches provided participants with inspiring role models, reinforcing confidence and engagement.
5. **Transformative Impact** – Some participants progressed beyond the program, with one even becoming a certified yoga instructor, demonstrating the potential for long-term personal and professional growth.

Recommendations for Future Improvements:

1. **Align Training with Academic Schedules** – Synchronize sessions with university timetables to minimize conflicts with study and exam periods.
2. **Increase Training Flexibility** – Offer modular or hybrid sessions that integrate both high-intensity and low-intensity activities to maintain engagement across all fitness levels.
3. **Improve Participant Retention Strategies** – Introduce personalized orientation phases, fitness assessments, and trial sessions to better match individuals with suitable training paths.

4. **Enhance Progress Tracking** – Implement periodic evaluations (e.g., fitness benchmarks, personal goal setting) to help participants recognize improvements and stay motivated.
5. **Strengthen Social Support & Group Cohesion** – Foster informal interactions, peer encouragement, and structured goal-sharing to enhance commitment and continuity.
6. **Expand Digital Engagement & Support** – Maintain active online communication for motivation, feedback, and real-time interaction, ensuring participants feel continuously connected.
7. **Develop Female Coach Training Programs** – Invest in training new female instructors to sustain the program's impact and further encourage women's leadership in sports.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Recruitment strategies

The effectiveness of the Pink Claw project is closely linked to the ability to involve a significant number of participants through targeted recruitment strategies. However, each country faced specific challenges in recruitment, depending on the cultural context, the available infrastructure and the response of the participants. In this chapter, we analyze the strategies adopted in the four countries involved –Italy, France, Romania, Turkey – highlighting both the successful actions and the main critical issues encountered.

Each country has chosen different recruitment methods, adapting to their local realities.

- **Italy:** The success of the participation was largely due to word of **mouth** and the inclusion of the project within **networks of gyms already frequented by women**. The **advance scheduling of activities** facilitated the involvement of participants who could organize their time in advance to join continuously.
- **France:** Here the recruitment was based on a **targeted mailing campaign** aimed at **local associations**, with the support of the **PSL (Association Profession Sport et Loisirs)** and strong promotion on **social media**. The aim was to involve women from different social backgrounds, including those less active in the world of sport. In the second year, the choice to collaborate with a local association in Paris facilitated the process of acquiring the participants in the course.
- **Romania:** The most effective recruitment strategy was direct **contact with female university students**, supported by the use of **social media** and the involvement of **local volunteers**. The collaboration with universities has made it possible to reach a wide young female audience, particularly interested in developing sports and self-defense skills.
- **Turkey:** Recruitment was based on strong **digital promotion**, with the use of **Instagram and WhatsApp** to reach female university students. In addition, participation in **events on campuses** represented a key opportunity to present the project and attract new members.

These strategies have made it possible to obtain a good number of registrations, but not without difficulty.

Participation rate

The fig. below highlights the success of the Pink Claw project in involving a high number of participants in all the participating countries, although with differences in the retention rate. In Italy, the project maintained an exceptionally stable engagement rate.

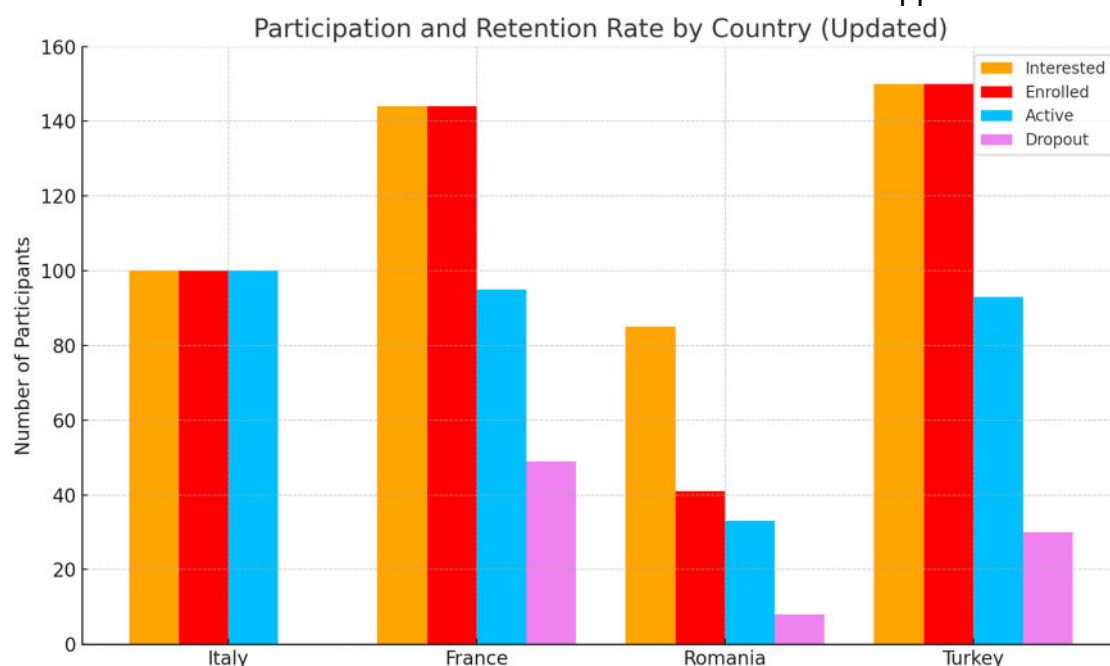
Out of 100 women who expressed interest and enrolled, all remained active, resulting in zero formal dropouts. This consistency reflects the strong group cohesion, effective communication strategies, and supportive environment fostered by the **Italian team**.

France initially recorded 129 registrations in the first year, which later increased to a total of 144 participants across 44 sessions in the second phase. However, the number of active participants was significantly lower, around 50, with 95 dropouts. This gap was mainly due to logistical complications, seasonal disengagement, and limited support from

training facilities during the initial phase. Nonetheless, improvements were made in the second year through partnerships with local associations, resulting in a more socially inclusive approach.

Romania reported 85 interested women, with 41 formally enrolling. Among them, 33 remained active throughout the program, while 8 dropped out. The primary reasons for dropout included scheduling conflicts and difficulty accessing certain training facilities, particularly for outdoor modules like OCR.

Turkey saw the highest overall engagement, with 150 women showing initial interest and enrolling. Out of these, 93 participants remained active, while 30 formally dropped out. The remaining 27 likely engaged sporadically or transitioned out without official withdrawal. Challenges included academic workload and the perception of physical demands being too intense for some participants. Nevertheless, Turkey's ability to retain over 60% of enrolled women underscores the effectiveness of its outreach and support mechanisms.



*Figure 1 - Participation and Retention Rate by Country - The graph shows the number of interested and active participants in the four countries involved in the Pink Claw project. The light blue bars represent the total number of women initially affected, while the dark blue bars indicate the participants who maintained constant activity. High retention is observed in **Turkey and Italy**, where the number of active participants is close to the number of interested parties. In **Romania and France**, on the other hand, there is a greater discrepancy, indicating difficulties in maintaining participation over time, probably due to logistical and organizational obstacles.*

Critical issues encountered

Despite effective strategies, each country faced specific challenges related to participation and retention of members.

- **Italy:** The main obstacle was the **balance between training and private life**. The women involved, often busy between work and family, sometimes found it difficult to maintain consistent attendance, although the sense of belonging to the group helped to minimize drop-outs.
- **France:** The biggest criticality was the **low effective attendance** at the sessions. Despite a significant number of registrations, many participants did not follow the meetings regularly, also due to the **lack of active support from the host locations**. The problem has been addressed and supported by all the other

partners, outlining an ability to manage the problems of the individual partner in agreement and giving mutual support by highlighting the potential of transnational support of European projects.

- **Romania:** The biggest difficulty was the **duration of the course**. Being long and structured, many participants found it complicated to reconcile it with work and academic commitments, leading to a reduction in the number of active presences over time.
- **Turkey:** Although initial recruitment was very promising, there was a **difficulty in maintaining consistent participation after university exams**. Many female students dropped out of the project to focus on their academic pursuits.

The recruitment strategies adopted had a positive impact on the diffusion of the *Pink Claw* project, although logistical, academic and organizational difficulties influenced the retention rate. Experience shows that effective recruitment must be accompanied by loyalty strategies, such as flexibility of schedules, organizational support and consolidation of the sense of community among the participants.

Schema Delle Strategie Di Recruitment E Criticità Nei Diversi Paesi

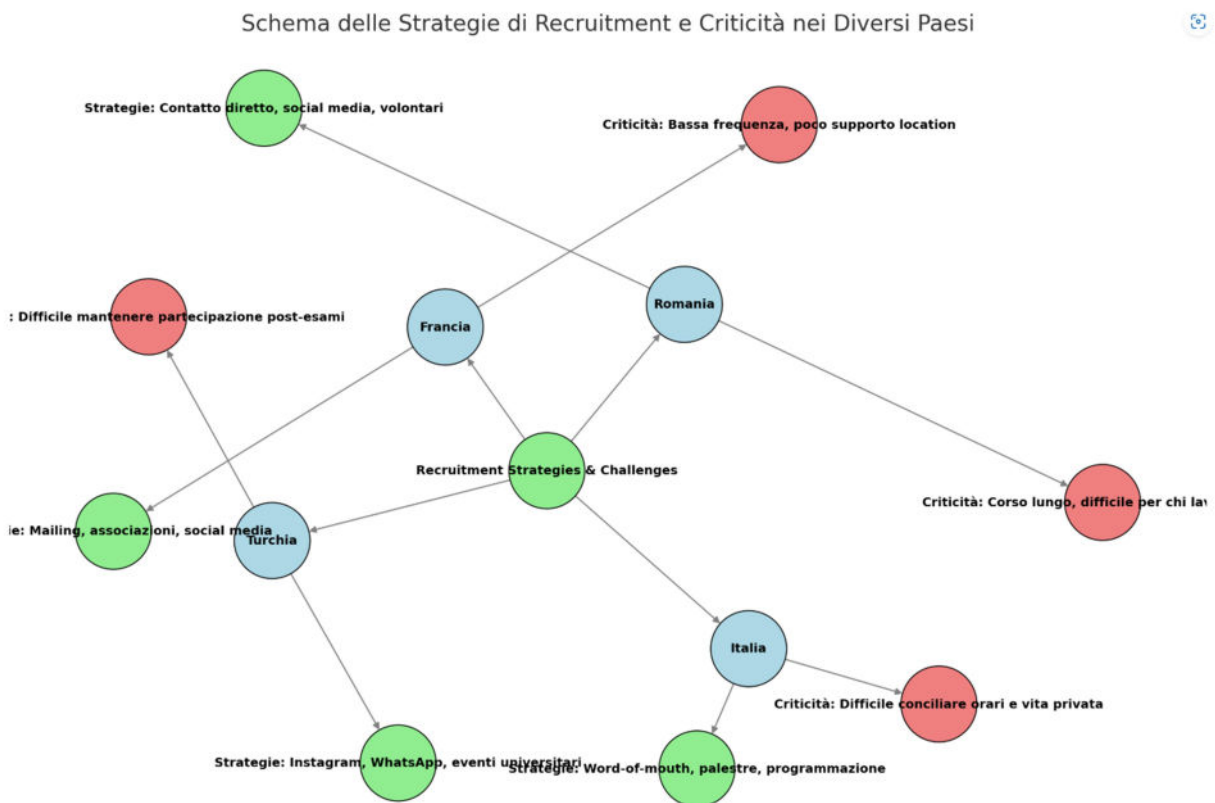


Figure 2 - Recruitment Strategies and Critical Issues in the Participating Countries - The diagram represents the recruitment strategies (in green) and the critical issues (in red) that emerged in the four countries involved in the *Pink Claw* project (Romania, Turkey, Italy, France). Each country is linked to the effective strategies adopted and the main difficulties encountered in the involvement and retention of participants. The analysis highlights differences in recruitment methods and factors that influenced the continuity of participation.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY DISCIPLINE

Below is an analysis of the five disciplines on which the Pink Claw project was based (OCR, Self-defense, Tactical Fitness, Mindfulness, First Aid), with a focus on the methods of carrying out and the differences found in the various participating countries (Italy, France, Turkey and Romania). The aim of this section is to show how each disciplinary area has been declined in the different contexts, with particular attention to the practical organization, the response of the participants, the challenges encountered and the solutions undertaken. In this way, it is possible to highlight the specific contribution of each partner within a common project system, while simultaneously identifying the strengths and weaknesses in each national reality.

OCR (Obstacle Course Racing)

OCR represents a discipline that combines running with the overcoming of obstacles of various kinds, often inspired by military routes but revisited in a sporting and recreational key. The goal is not only to improve physical qualities (endurance, explosive strength, agility) but also to encourage cooperation and mental resilience. In the framework of the Pink Claw project, the OCR has taken on a symbolic value of "challenging barriers", as it has pushed women to confront concrete obstacles (walls, tunnels, climbing nets, carrying weights) by overcoming them together and supporting each other.

In **Italy**, the OCR has occupied a very important place and has received a high level of approval, as emerges from the questionnaires administered to the participants. The country boasts a decent tradition of OCR competitions on a national scale, so it was relatively easier to identify collaborations with industry associations, specialized instructors and locations with stable routes. In the first phase, which took place in the autumn months, the group worked on muscle conditioning exercises, improving running and familiarity with small indoor obstacles. Subsequently, with more favorable weather conditions, the sessions moved to equipped outdoor parks, where it was possible to simulate short-medium length routes with artificial obstacles (wooden walls, monkey bars, sandbag transports). Italy, among the countries involved, seems to have recorded the lowest dropout rate, thanks both to the regularity of training and to the perception of "fun" that characterizes OCR. It has often been emphasized that the presence of female coaches was a decisive element: many participants felt more comfortable asking for advice and discussing technical doubts, especially in the presence of exercises that require lifts or suspension passages, activities that sometimes discourage those who are poorly trained. In addition, the use of gadgets and uniforms, with specific logos and colors, helped to create a sense of belonging to the OCR "team", encouraging motivation.

In **France**, OCR was scheduled but then often postponed, due to difficulties in finding suitable facilities and due to the scarce availability of outdoor areas during the winter months. The initial idea envisaged an urban park where temporary obstacles could be installed, but municipal authorizations and set-up costs proved to be more complex than expected. As a result, many OCR sessions considered have been reduced to preparatory functional training in the gym. The participants who were able to actually experience an obstacle course, in some rare days of testing on a specially prepared circuit, showed great enthusiasm and team spirit, but the continuity was not optimal. In post-activity interviews, some women reported that the distance from the designated location and the lack of punctual public transportation were a disincentive. However, the intention emerged to re-propose the OCR with a more defined calendar in the second phase of the project, and to collaborate with associations that already organize women's "bootcamps". On a

motivational level, the OCR sessions in France turned out to be very "social", with a strong relational involvement: the participants helped each other concretely in overcoming obstacles, consolidating a climate of cooperation that made the experience particularly enriching from an emotional point of view.

In **Romania**, OCR was planned as the last phase of the activities, starting in spring, due to the particularly harsh weather conditions in the winter months. The participants, during the first months, carried out functional strengthening sessions and basic training in the gym, aimed at improving general physical fitness and muscle tightness. Only with the arrival of milder weather, and consequently with the availability of adequate open spaces, was it possible to set up small obstacle courses. Among the major difficulties encountered is finding a stable place: unlike more "portable" disciplines (such as self-defense or mindfulness), OCR requires specific structures, a safe outdoor area and the preparation of sometimes bulky materials (walls, ropes, obstacles to be overcome in suspension). The Romanian team worked in synergy with some local sports associations, which provided adequate peripheral spaces, although not always easily accessible by the participants. This logistical aspect influenced the constancy of attendance, especially for those who did not have their own means of transport. From the point of view of emotional response, the women involved often said that they perceived OCR as a sort of "final goal": facing an obstacle course in a context of full female collaboration turned out to be a moment of great personal and collective satisfaction. Many participants were initially intimidated by the idea of jumping over walls or dragging themselves into simulated trenches, but the support of their teammates and coaches turned these tests into motivating experiences, useful for building confidence in their abilities.

In **Turkey**, the implementation of the OCR module encountered specific challenges and behavioral trends among participants. While the module was part of the structured training offer, it was perceived by many as physically demanding, which contributed to selective attendance. Several participants who joined the project expressed enthusiasm for trying new forms of physical activity, but when confronted with OCR's intensity, they opted instead for less strenuous modules such as yoga or mindfulness. This led to an imbalance in attendance rates across disciplines and contributed to disengagement among those who did not feel adequately prepared for high-impact training.

The campus setting, while logistically advantageous for general sessions, posed certain limitations for OCR implementation. In some cases, adequate outdoor space, equipment, or conditions were not consistently available, and no strong incentive system (such as recognition or academic credit) was in place to motivate participants to persevere. Additionally, the academic calendar and exam periods reduced the likelihood of full engagement with a physically intensive module like OCR.

To mitigate these issues, the Turkish team proposed blending OCR with more accessible components, creating hybrid sessions where participants could engage with different physical intensities in a single training experience. This approach aimed to improve retention by making the OCR module less intimidating and fostering a more cohesive group dynamic. Although not the most popular module, OCR remained an important part of the holistic training design and served as a challenge that, when approached gradually and inclusively, had the potential to empower participants and build confidence.

Self-defense has been included in the Pink Claw curriculum to offer women tools for physical and psychological self-defense, but also to increase awareness of their body, limits and potential. The basic idea was to respond not only to the need to learn techniques to protect against risk situations, but also to strengthen self-esteem and self-confidence. This module, in many cases, involved collaboration with instructors specialized in martial arts (Judo, Karate, Krav Maga) or with experts in practical defense techniques, adapted to the needs of women of different age groups.

In **Italy**, self-defense has been implemented with a hybrid approach, combining basic techniques (levers, blows, blocks) with moments of reflection on the management of stress and emotions in dangerous contexts. The instructors selected came from mixed martial arts schools and dedicated themselves to specific sessions for women only, an element that many participants emphasized as fundamental to feeling comfortable. Italy, having a fairly large number of participants overall, divided the groups according to experience levels, in order to ensure more targeted learning: those starting from scratch were able to focus on elementary movements and defense postures, while those who already had an advanced sports base experimented with more complex exercises, such as simulations of scenarios with multiple attackers. Numerous women have also reported that they have also benefited from a psychological point of view, in particular greater mental alertness and a reduction in anxiety in crowded spaces. The collaboration with local anti-violence centers has made it possible to structure parallel information meetings, dedicated to issues such as domestic violence and the prevention of abuse, thus promoting a concrete link between self-defense and social support.

In **France**, self-defense was initially affected by unstructured membership, as classes were held in the evening in a gym associated with La Cité Fertile, and many women had difficulty attending regularly. In addition, the presence of competing sports activities (such as general fitness classes) has sometimes diverted attention from this specific module. However, those who participated consistently expressed a high level of satisfaction. The French coaches have focused heavily on the concept of "empowerment": each defense technique has been presented not only as an athletic gesture, but as a way to gain awareness of one's body, one's rights and one's ability to react. This setting helped to create an atmosphere of sisterhood and exchange of experiences. Some young women, enrolled for the first time in a self-defense course, expressed gratitude for having learned basic protection tools and for having discovered a welcoming environment, where they felt emotionally supported.

In **Romania**, the Self-defense sessions were among the first to start and saw a good number of participants. The coaches, in collaboration with some experts from the world of martial arts, structured weekly meetings in the gym, mainly focused on basic techniques such as freeing oneself from holds, close-range strikes, defense from frontal aggressions. The participants appreciated the opportunity to learn practical strategies, telling how they felt safer even in everyday situations. In the university context, where part of the lessons took place, the afternoon schedules proved convenient for many female students. However, those who were already busy at work reported some difficulty in participating constantly. The Romanian coaches have also adopted a "gradual" approach from an emotional point of view: in the first lessons, the focus was on the principles of prevention and warning, gradually introducing more physical techniques. It has been reported that a significant number of participants have developed the conviction to continue with self-defense courses even outside the project, a sign that this module has had a sustained impact.

In **Turkey**, self-defense found a very fertile ground, as the participants considered it essential to learn how to protect themselves and manage potential dangerous situations. The sessions were held inside the university facilities, with a practical and interactive slant: in some cases, simulated security devices were also used to stage possible scenarios of aggression. The initial enthusiasm was high, but there was a drop in attendance close to university exams and during the colder months. The main coach emphasized how learning self-defense techniques requires consistency and regular training, to develop reflexes and coordination. Some women, however, preferred to focus on disciplines that they perceived as more "relaxing" or with less physical impact, such as yoga and mindfulness, especially in times of academic stress. Another interesting aspect noted in Turkey was the motivational contribution generated by the instructor, who was able to create a non-judgmental and supportive environment, where each participant felt free to express doubts and fears. Some women reported a significant improvement in their safety in university and urban environments, telling of facing evening trips or potentially risky situations with greater serenity.

Tactical Fitness

Tactical Fitness is a set of training methods that take their cue from the physical preparation of the military, law enforcement or special forces, with exercises aimed at developing endurance, functional strength, speed and coordination. In a female context, Tactical Fitness was introduced to foster empowerment and resilience, promoting an approach to fitness in which physical strength and mental determination become tools for personal growth.

In **Italy**, Tactical Fitness has received excellent feedback, being, together with OCR, among the most popular activities. The combination of functional strength exercises, aerobic components and practical simulations (such as moving weights, carrying "injured" teammates, running with a weighted backpack) helped to create a cohesive group atmosphere, in which collaboration was often essential to overcome certain challenges. In several sessions, the training was set up with exercises in pairs or small groups, encouraging the participants to support each other. The Italian women involved told how this module has significantly increased their self-esteem: overcoming a demanding workout, in an environment where everyone encourages each other, restores a very positive perception of themselves and lowers the fear of not making it. In addition, the possibility of attending gyms affiliated with ex-military instructors or specialized in functional training techniques has guaranteed a high level of professionalism and attention to safety. Injuries have rarely occurred, thanks to an adequate warm-up and attention in dosing the intensity.

In **France**, Tactical Fitness was proposed as one of the key activities, although the lack of adequate space and the absence of a real sports center managed by the local partner made it more difficult to fully implement it. The sessions were partly held in a multi-purpose room at La Cité Fertile, but the presence of other activities at the same time often reduced the area that could actually be used. In addition, the harsh winter and logistical limitations did not allow simulations involving obstacles or carrying weights over long distances to be carried out outdoors. Nevertheless, the participants who consistently took part in the Tactical Fitness workouts expressed positive reviews, emphasizing the effectiveness of a work that combines strength, coordination and endurance. In particular, for some women who returned to sport after a long period of sedentary lifestyle, the possibility of training in

a structured and progressive way, with a group of peers, represented a very strong incentive not to give up and to gradually improve their performance.

In **Romania**, Tactical Fitness sessions alternated with OCR sessions, especially in the initial months, when the weather conditions did not allow outdoor activities. The coaches set up a path in stations in the gym: plyometric exercises, pull-ups, kettlebell training and high-intensity circuits. The main benefits found concerned the increase in the cardiovascular strength and endurance of the participants, as well as an enhancement of group motivation. Some women, initially skeptical, began to appreciate the feeling of challenging their limits, realizing that they could perform exercises considered "too hard" for themselves. This psychological shift emerged clearly in the questionnaires, where several participants spoke of a "change in mentality" that pushed them to overcome cultural and personal barriers related to the concept of women "unsuitable" for intense exercises.

In **Turkey**, Tactical Fitness has met with varying interest. On the one hand, some participants, mostly students with a background in athletic training, found the idea of a military workout, built on circuit exercises and load simulations, stimulating. On the other hand, some women who had approached the project for quieter activities (such as yoga and mindfulness) perceived Tactical Fitness as too challenging, especially in periods of high university stress. The coaches tried to structure the sessions in a modular way, allowing each participant to choose the level of intensity, introducing small breaks or simplified alternatives to the harder exercises. This strategy has helped to contain withdrawals, although Tactical Fitness remains a challenging discipline for those unfamiliar with strength training or HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) protocols. Some positive feedback concerns the fact that, after an initial period of adaptation, many participants actually recorded tangible progress, such as greater muscle tone and an improvement in the aerobic threshold, factors that pushed them to persevere.

Mindfulness

The Mindfulness module, understood as a set of practices of awareness and stress management, has taken on a complementary role to the more physical disciplines, offering a space for "self-return" and psycho-emotional balance. The overall goal was to promote holistic well-being, teaching participants breathing, muscle relaxation and concentration techniques that could help them not only in sports, but also in everyday life.

In **Italy**, the Mindfulness module was developed with an integrated approach: not only moments of traditional guided meditation, but also workshops that combined breathing, gentle movement and small yoga sequences. The training made use of the collaboration of instructors specialized in holistic disciplines, able to propose "body scan" exercises, relaxations in pairs and short sessions of verbal sharing on what emerged on an emotional level. The Italian women involved greatly appreciated the possibility of combining physical training with a "protected space" dedicated to introspection. Some, for the first time, have approached meditative practices, discovering an effective way to manage anxiety, especially in conjunction with intense work periods or university exams. It was noted that the Mindfulness group was very heterogeneous in age: there were very young participants alongside older women, sometimes mothers who found in this practice a fundamental moment of decompression. Even in Italy, the appreciation for Mindfulness was high, although sometimes the participants more oriented towards hard training considered the discipline "too soft". However, the coexistence of different training styles has contributed to increasing the richness of the overall offer.

In **France**, Mindfulness has taken on a special meaning due to the partner's desire to create a space of inclusiveness and acceptance, especially in an urban context such as Paris, where city stress is often high. The sessions took place in parallel with the yoga sessions, sometimes being merged into hybrid classes, with a first part of light stretching exercises and postures, followed by guided meditations and relaxations. The French participants reported that they greatly appreciated the collective dimension of these activities, finding mutual support in sharing their daily experiences. Winter was also a difficult time for Mindfulness, as the environment in which it was practiced did not always have adequate heating or spaces free of external noise. However, the intimate atmosphere created in the more constant small groups allowed the women to form bonds of friendship that extended outside of the classroom. From a methodological point of view, extensive use was made of relaxing music, scented candles and soft lighting, to encourage a sensory immersion that could combat the inertia of cold winter days. The result was a particularly healing experience, according to the testimonies collected, especially for those who were unfamiliar with inner listening activities.

In **Romania**, Mindfulness has been integrated as a moment of decompression after the most intense workouts. Many OCR or Tactical Fitness sessions ended with guided breathing exercises, short meditations on the body and moments of group discussion. This practice has proved particularly valuable for female students, who are often under pressure for exams and deadlines. Even some working women, with family commitments, have shown high appreciation, seeing in these moments of Mindfulness an opportunity to recharge mentally. The questionnaires returned the image of an apparently "quiet" discipline, but perceived as extremely useful for regaining concentration and emotional management. The Romanian coaches, not all of whom are specialized in Mindfulness, made use of the support of external experts, who conducted sessions focused on the basic techniques of guided meditation, autogenic training and progressive relaxation.

In **Turkey**, yoga and mindfulness were among the most popular modules in terms of constant participation. Many women have considered this discipline as a counterweight to the hardest workouts or university commitments, finding in it a space for inner well-being and anxiety management. The idea of ending the day with a meditation session or breathing concentration exercises was enthusiastically received, so much so that some participants signed up almost exclusively for these moments, preferring to skip more physically demanding activities. It emerged, however, that in certain phases the group was very large, creating some difficulty in maintaining silence and concentration, especially if the room was not soundproofed or if the campus was in turmoil for parallel events. Turkish coaches have tried to overcome this problem by choosing less crowded times, such as late evening or early morning, but the massive turnout has still made it necessary to introduce mandatory reservations to avoid overcrowding. From the point of view of effects, numerous testimonials describe an improvement in mood, greater mental clarity and a general reduction in perceived stress levels.

The last module examined is the one dedicated to First Aid. The main objective was to provide participants with fundamental knowledge on the management of basic medical emergencies, such as recognizing the signs of cardiac arrest, performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), using a defibrillator (if available), dealing with injuries or burns, and understanding the correct procedures to follow in the event of sports accidents. The added value of this module lies in its transversality: emergency response skills are not only useful in the sports field, but in every context of daily life.

In **Italy**, the First Aid module was structured with a certain flexibility: some sessions were held monthly, others in the form of intensive workshops on weekends. Field experience has shown that first aid is not always considered by participants as an integral part of training; So, the winning strategy was to create "special days" dedicated to learning these skills. Participants could try bandaging, immobilization and resuscitation maneuvers on a dummy, thus gaining confidence not only from a theoretical point of view, but also from a practical one. Italy has also distinguished itself by inviting people from outside the project, such as friends or family members of the participants, to take part in first aid training sessions, in an attempt to extend the impact of the Pink Claw to the entire community. This openness has generated a very positive climate, since, in the face of such a socially important issue, sharing and collective participation have been particularly effective. The presence of health personnel and instructors with experience in 118 (the Italian emergency service) guaranteed a high standard of preparation, ensuring that women felt adequately trained. Many of them, following the courses, declared that they perceived greater confidence in the management of any sports accidents, being able to evaluate critical situations more lucidly.

In **France**, the First Aid module was proposed from the beginning of the project, but encountered some logistical planning difficulties, as it was necessary to have large spaces available and equipped with the appropriate equipment, such as dummies or teaching aids. Often the lessons had to be coordinated with volunteers from the Civil Protection or specialized associations, and the times did not always match those of the participants. The low frequency sometimes found is also due to the fact that many women were more interested in actual sports activities, judging first aid as "notional" or less stimulating. However, those who followed the module continuously expressed a high level of satisfaction, considering learning resuscitation and emergency management maneuvers valuable. As in Italy, some French participants proposed to extend these sessions to partners or friends, with the idea of transforming first aid training into a moment of shared responsibility. This "community building" perspective, although not fully realized in the first phase, remains a goal for the future, when organizational barriers can be overcome thanks to more coordinated programming.

In **Romania**, First Aid was organized in collaboration with university health facilities and some volunteers from the local Red Cross. The meetings were concentrated in a few intensive weekends, since it was considered more effective to dedicate entire afternoons to practical demonstrations and simulations. The participants were able to practice with CPR dummies, learning how to perform cardiac massage correctly and how to manage the airway. Particular emphasis has also been placed on immobilization techniques in the event of trauma, which is especially useful in sports such as OCR or Tactical Fitness. Although many women initially showed less interest in this module, perhaps considering it less "attractive" than the other activities, the final questionnaires showed a good level of satisfaction, probably because the participants understood the practical importance of knowing how to intervene in emergencies. Some, in particular, said that they had already

applied the notions learned in small domestic accidents or in helping friends in situations of minor injury.

In **Turkey**, First Aid followed a mixed model: theoretical part, with the help of slides and videos, and practical part, carried out through laboratory sessions. Participation was concentrated especially in the first weeks of the project's start-up, when curiosity was high and university calendars were less busy. As the lessons intensified and the exams approached, the attention to this module decreased, as many students preferred to attend the activities they considered most useful for their immediate psycho-physical well-being. Nevertheless, the practical component of First Aid, especially that dedicated to CPR and airway unobstruction maneuvers, has aroused the interest of those who worked or intended to work in healthcare settings. It was also emphasized that the collaboration with some hospitals close to the university area has made it possible to obtain certifications of participation, an incentive for those who wanted to enrich their curriculum. On the emotional side, those who attended regularly appreciated the possibility of feeling more "ready" to face potential emergencies, in the sporting or family context.

Final Thoughts on Disciplines

An analysis of the five areas reveals a heterogeneous picture, in which each country has approached and declined its activities in a way that is consistent with its resources, available infrastructures and sports culture of reference. OCR is confirmed as the most complex activity to organize, for logistical and meteorological reasons, and yet, when carried out, it generates a very high emotional involvement. Self-defense is particularly appreciated in all contexts, although participation undergoes fluctuations due to the perception of "physicality" of the course and the temporal needs of those who have an already busy agenda. Tactical Fitness, despite being a demanding module, has collected good feedback especially in Italy and Romania, where the offer of space and orientation towards physical performance have found fertile ground. Mindfulness represents a point of balance: in Turkey and Italy it has been very popular, offering a refuge against university and work stress. As for First Aid, its importance is universally recognized, but it often struggles to become as "attractive" as sports disciplines: as a result, many partners have opted for intensive sessions or dedicated workshops, maximizing practical relevance and certification of skills.

SATISFACTION LEVEL BY ACTIVITY AND BY COUNTRY

In order to assess the levels of satisfaction of the participants in the program, a structured questionnaire was administered to collect data on the different aspects of the lived experience. Through this survey, it was possible to understand the degree of involvement, identify the most appreciated activities and analyze the main critical issues encountered.

The questionnaire included questions about the participants' demographic characteristics, allowing factors such as age, marital status, occupation and family commitments to be correlated with their ability to adhere to training regularly.

Another central aspect of the questionnaire was the assessment of the participants' previous sports experience, to understand if Pink Claw represented a first approach to sports practice or if the participants already had a background in structured physical activities. Subsequently, the evaluation focused on the different training modules, asking them to express an opinion on their effectiveness and satisfaction. The collection of this data made it possible to identify which disciplines had a greater positive impact and which encountered more difficulties, both at the organizational level and in terms of use by the participants.

A further section explored the obstacles encountered, with particular attention to the management of schedules, logistics and continuity of participation. Finally, the questionnaire asked the participants if they were interested in continuing the program, even in a possible paid formula, with the aim of evaluating the future sustainability of the initiative. The data collected is an important resource for improving the project and ensuring an increasingly inclusive and accessible experience.

The fig. below shows that OCR and Tactical Fitness scored highly in Italy and Romania, thanks to better organization and higher adherence. In Turkey, despite strong initial interest, the score is lower due to the difficulty in maintaining participation. Mindfulness is particularly appreciated in Turkey and Italy, where it has been integrated with yoga, while in France it has been affected by logistical conditions. First Aid has a stable score, but less overall enthusiasm than more physical activities. Overall, the differences reflect country-specific approaches and organisational contexts.

These divergences and convergences in national experiences clearly show the versatility of the Pink Claw project, which adapts to the needs of the participants and at the same time comes up against organizational, cultural or calendar obstacles. The unifying element remains the presence and guidance of female coaches, who have been able to create a climate of mutual support, encouraging the participants to test themselves and overcome preconceptions about what a woman can or cannot do in sports and self-defense. In addition, the exchange of experiences between different countries is essential to understand which practices are most successful and how less popular modules can be improved. The end result is a process of collective empowerment, in which every single module, from the most extreme (OCR, Tactical Fitness) to the most meditative (Mindfulness), contributes to the creation of an inclusive and educational environment,

oriented towards the health, well-being and personal growth of the women involved.

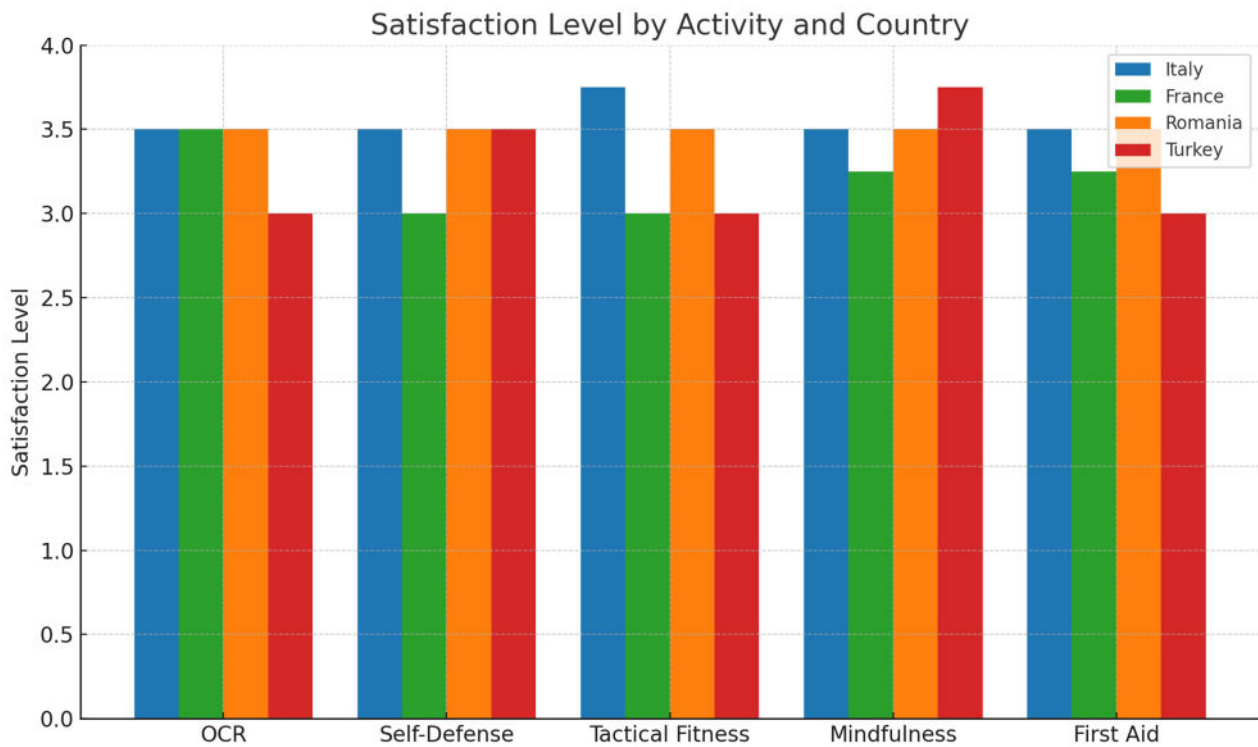


Figure 3 - Satisfaction Level by Activity and Country - The graph shows the average level of satisfaction with the different activities of the Pink Claw project (OCR, Self-Defense, Tactical Fitness, Mindfulness, First Aid) in the four participating countries (Romania, Turkey, Italy, France). The scores, expressed on a scale of 1 to 4, highlight variations in the preferences and experience of the participants. Mindfulness and OCR record higher levels of satisfaction, while First Aid and Tactical Fitness show more marked differences between countries, suggesting a different perception of the usefulness and intensity of activities.

CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNTRIES

In **Italy**, the differences found reflect both the local sports culture and a better organizational predisposition, which has led to more positive results in terms of active participation and continuity. The strategy based on word of mouth, the consolidated network of local gyms and an early scheduling of sessions has favored stable and lasting participation, with extremely high retention compared to other countries. This organizational success can be attributed mainly to two elements: first, the ability to build a sense of belonging and community among women, thanks to the use of established gyms and regular sessions that created a motivating climate; second, the strategic choice to integrate the proposed activities into the weekly calendar of the participants, with advance planning that allowed women to organize themselves in advance. However, even in Italy there has been no shortage of critical issues, especially related to the reconciliation of training schedules with private life, especially for women with family commitments. This problem was partly mitigated by the flexibility of the instructors, but still represented a limit for an even wider participation.

The situation in **France** has proved to be particularly challenging from an organizational point of view. Despite a good number of initial registrations thanks to targeted mailings to local associations and promotion via social media, the actual participation was fluctuating and lower than expected. The difficulties encountered were mainly focused on two logistical aspects: the lack of support from the host structures and the difficulty in ensuring regularity and continuity of the sessions, especially in winter. From a cultural point of view, it can be assumed that French participants are less likely than in other countries to attend sports sessions if they are perceived as not immediately useful or logistically complicated to reach. The French partner relied mainly on a mailing strategy aimed at associative networks and local structures, obtaining a good initial response, but insufficient results in terms of regular attendance at the actual activities. This suggests a combined cultural and organizational criticality: if on the one hand the mode of communication was effective in collecting adhesions, on the other hand the absence of a real integration of the project into the daily life of the participants (for example with flexible hours or nearby and easily accessible places) compromised its long-term effectiveness.

In **Romania**, the organizational and cultural context played a decisive role in determining the profile of the participants and their experience. The university environment has constituted a solid basis for recruitment, favoring direct contact with young students already involved in internal associative networks. This proximity to the academic world has allowed effective word of mouth among female students, strengthened by targeted campaigns on social media and the support of volunteers already active in the area. However, a critical element regularly encountered in Romania concerns the overall duration of the activities (eight months), considered excessive by many members, especially those who are already working or following demanding university courses. This difficulty caused a significant dropout, affecting the continuity of sports sessions. In cultural terms, in Romania an initial reticence towards some physically intense disciplines such as OCR and Tactical Fitness was highlighted, overcome thanks to the creation of a reassuring and motivating environment, entirely female, which allowed women to gradually approach even the most demanding activities.

In **Turkey**, the organisational specificity was reflected in the university context of the participants, with a strong emphasis on the use of digital technologies for recruitment. The strategic use of Instagram and WhatsApp to disseminate information attracted a high number of young women, generating initial enthusiasm and encouraging participation in the first meetings. However, the university environment turned out to be a double-edged sword. Despite the excellent initial participation, participation suffered a clear drop coinciding with the exam periods, a period during which many female students no longer perceived the project as a priority over academic commitments. From a cultural point of view, this suggests a lower willingness of young Turkish participants to invest time in sports activities in times of academic stress, preferring to focus on more relaxing disciplines such as Mindfulness and yoga, considered less demanding and more compatible with study needs. Another relevant issue was the limited availability of infrastructure suitable for carrying out OCR and Tactical Fitness sessions, which further complicated maintaining consistent attendance, especially in times of academic overload.

Looking across the experiences of the four countries, some relevant considerations emerge. Firstly, where the project managed to integrate into existing social networks (Romania and Italy), the success in terms of participation was greater. Secondly, where it was possible to adopt widespread communication through social media and digital tools (Turkey), the project initially attracted many young women, although with a higher risk of dropping out over time. Thirdly, the combination of logistical difficulties and poor integration of activities in local structures (France) has generated a more limited and discontinuous participation, but which, thanks to the support of the partners, has achieved stability and project objectives.

It is useful to underline how fundamental it is, for future similar initiatives, to take into account these specificities. For example, to improve the situation in France and Turkey, it would be important to schedule more flexible sessions, adaptable to periods of greater academic and work commitment. In addition, creating stronger, longer-term partnerships with gyms, local associations, and universities could drive greater retention and regular attendance.

From an organizational point of view, the need to prepare "modular" and less rigid sessions clearly emerges, capable of better integrating with the daily life of the participants. This could mean offering short lessons, intensive workshops at strategic times of the year, or mixed modalities (online and face-to-face) to expand the usability of the activities.

From a cultural point of view, the perception of sports activities as a priority is different between countries. In Italy, sporting activity, especially if carried out in a group, seems to be an integral part of an already established psychophysical well-being routine, while in Turkey and Romania the interest is strong but tends to be subordinated to academic commitments. In France, on the other hand, there is a greater distance between the moment of registration and actual participation, perhaps linked to a less immediate perception of the importance of the proposed activities compared to the daily needs of the women involved.

The lessons learned from these differences allow us to suggest, for the next phase of the project, some targeted strategies: maintaining the initial involvement (already effective) and at the same time strengthening loyalty actions through an organization attentive to the specific needs of the participants. In particular, it will be useful to strengthen the social dimension of the project, creating a broader sense of belonging and community among the

participants, an element that, especially in Italy, has contributed significantly to the success of the proposed activities.

CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND GOOD PRACTICES BY COUNTRY

The cross-sectional analysis of the activities carried out in the four countries of the Pink Claw project highlighted good practices and successful strategies specific to each national context. While there are common elements that have contributed to the overall success, each country has been able to identify effective ways that are suitable for their reality, maximizing participation and promoting retention.

In **Italy**, the main success factor was the integration of sports activities within pre-existing social networks, especially gyms already frequented by women's groups. Word of mouth created a strong motivation, ensuring stable and lasting participation. The advance scheduling of training also allowed better planning of the participants' personal activities, favoring a high and constant attendance over time. The main difficulty encountered – reconciling training and private life – was mitigated by a strongly positive group climate and organizational flexibility, crucial elements that contributed to the success of the activities.

In **France**, the most effective approach was the involvement of local associations through targeted mailings and social media promotions, together with the support of the PSL (Association Profession Sport et Loisirs). Although these strategies led to a good initial level of membership, the main problem was low effective participation. This criticality indicates that, although the recruitment techniques were valid, there was a lack of continuous support from local structures and better logistical organization. A strategy to address these difficulties could be a greater integration of the project into the regular activities of the structures, encouraging a more active and participatory role of local partners.

In **Romania**, the best organisational practice has been the integration of the project into the university context. Direct contact with university students has proved to be a particularly effective tool in recruitment, thanks to its proximity to the main target and the possibility of immediately intercepting the interest of young women. The strategic use of social media and the support of local volunteers also contributed to effective and widespread communication. Among the good practices that emerged, the choice to use local volunteers as intermediaries has favored word of mouth and the credibility of the initiatives, creating a greater sense of community.

Finally, in **Turkey**, the best practice adopted has been digital promotion, in particular through Instagram and WhatsApp. This approach has been effective in quickly attracting numerous female university students, allowing for significant initial engagement. In addition, the launch events held directly on university campuses have made it possible to reach a young and dynamic audience, interested in discovering new sports and recreational activities. However, the main critical issue in this country concerned the difficulty of maintaining constant participation of girls after the exam period, a problem that could be solved with more flexible or modular sessions during the academic year.

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The implementation of the Pink Claw project has made it possible to identify both virtuous practices and critical aspects, highlighting valuable experiences and lessons for the future replicability of the program.

The main best practices that emerged from the partners and the key aspects to be improved to maximize the effectiveness and sustainability of the project are summarized in a clear and operational way below.

1. **University Networking:** The direct involvement of female students through universities and local volunteers is effective but should be supported with shorter and more flexible sessions.
2. **Targeted digital promotion** via Instagram, WhatsApp and social channels proved to be essential to quickly involve a large number of young participants.
3. **Word-of-mouth and local communities** (e.g. gyms that are already frequented) promote retention, creating a strong sense of belonging.
4. **Early scheduling** of activities allows for better personal organization and more consistent participation, significantly limiting dropout.
5. **Integration with existing activities** (such as yoga for Mindfulness) improves the general level of satisfaction and helps to effectively manage the stress of the participants.
6. **Events open to outsiders** (such as First Aid workshops) help to increase the visibility of the project, involving participants who are not directly registered and enhancing the social utility of the activities.
7. **Collaborations with local associations** and university networks significantly increase visibility and initial recruitment, if supported by active and constant support over time.
8. **Continuous and targeted communication** with the participants (via WhatsApp, newsletters, informal meetings) keeps interest high and limits dropouts.
9. It is important to consider a **modular structure of activities**, with short or intensive workshops, to reduce the risk of dropping out due to incompatibility with work and academic commitments.
10. **Logistical and organisational flexibility:** Adapting how and where sessions are held (e.g. hybrid online and offline solutions) helps to overcome climate and infrastructure challenges, maximising participation.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PINK CLAW PROGRAMMES

The replicability of the Pink Claw project depends on the ability to identify, address and solve the critical issues that emerged during implementation in different national contexts. At the same time, it is essential to enhance those elements that have proven to be particularly effective in maximizing the success of the program.

A first recommendation concerns the duration and structure of the courses offered. Experience shows that long courses, such as the one held in Romania, can be difficult to sustain for participants who are already studying or working. Therefore, structuring courses into shorter, more intensive and well-defined modules would allow for more flexible participation and greater retention. For example, sessions concentrated on weekends or single days could better meet the needs of the participants, reducing the phenomenon of abandonment.

Logistical difficulties, particularly in France and Romania, indicate the need for strong support from host facilities. To improve this, it is advisable to establish precise agreements with the host locations from the beginning of the project, including clear commitments on the availability and accessibility of spaces. Creating a network of reliable facilities, which offer continuity and practical-logistical support throughout the process, would help to ensure an environment conducive to regular participation and the effectiveness of activities.

The enhancement of existing social networks, such as universities and gyms, has proven to be a key factor for success in terms of women's constant participation and emotional involvement. In the Italian and Romanian contexts, where this strategy worked particularly well, the participants showed a high sense of belonging to the project, significantly reducing the risk of dropping out. Replicating this strategy, it is essential to identify already consolidated social or professional networks that can act as catalysts for the dissemination of project activities, favoring the construction of cohesive and lasting groups over time.

A further aspect that can be improved concerns the management of activities during critical periods of the year, such as university exams in Turkey. To mitigate the loss of participants due to academic commitments, it is suggested to schedule activities with greater flexibility, providing for optional sessions or dedicated recovery times. In addition, it could be effective to implement hybrid modes of participation, combining face-to-face meetings and online activities, in order to offer viable alternatives in times of personal overload.

Another element that could increase the effectiveness of the project is the strategic use of social media and digital platforms, which in Turkey has shown a strong ability to quickly attract the interest of young participants. Taking advantage of immediate communication channels such as Instagram and WhatsApp, to promote events and keep interest alive throughout the project, could be an effective lever to increase retention and stimulate constant involvement.

The opening of the activities also to participants outside the project is another good practice already successfully tested, especially in the First Aid sessions in Italy. This approach allows not only to broaden the visibility of the project, but also to underline its social and community value, generating a positive effect that encourages further registrations.

Finally, the consolidation of a positive and inclusive group climate, as effectively experienced in Italy, is an essential strategic element. It is therefore recommended to invest resources in strengthening team spirit and regularly organizing aggregative and informal moments. This sense of community is crucial for the retention of participants, who, feeling part of a welcoming and supportive reality, are more likely to overcome any logistical and organizational obstacles.