

STRATEGY OF ACTION OR AN AMBITIOUS PLATFORM FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPORT IN CANADA (PART 3. “HANDBALL FOR ALL”)

Kobezskyi V. V.

*Director of Sport Development,
Member of the Board of Directors Canadian Team Handball Federation
7665 boulevard Lacordaire, Saint Léonard, Québec, H1S 2A7, Canada
orcid.org/0009-0002-1000-4155
v.kobezskyi@gmail.com*

Tyshchenko V. O.

*Doctor of Sciences in Physical Education and Sports, Professor,
Professor at the Department of Theory and Methods
of Physical Culture and Sports
Zaporizhzhia National University
Universytetska str., 66, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine
orcid.org/0000-0002-9540-9612
valeri-znu@ukr.net*

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The study continues the analytical trilogy “Strategy of Action or an Ambitious Platform for the Transformation of Sport in Canada” and focuses on the third strategic direction of the CTHF Strategic Plan 2025–2028 – “Handball for All.” The purpose of the research is to substantiate the conceptual, social, and methodological foundations of this direction as an integrative model of sustainable development for Canadian handball. The object of the study is the system of social, educational, and managerial mechanisms for inclusive sport development. The subject of the study is the “Handball for All” strategy as a practical tool for implementing sustainability, equality, and community engagement. The methodological framework combined systemic, comparative, and structural-functional analysis, SWOT and LFA approaches, expert evaluation, and SMART-based monitoring. The obtained results revealed key socio-organizational and environmental factors influencing sustainability, such as financial imbalance, regional asymmetry, insufficient coaching capacity, low awareness of inclusion, and digital inequality. Adaptive mechanisms were developed, including partnerships, mentorship programs, and digital education tools. Three analytical tables summarize risk mitigation strategies, transformation of coaching education, and SMART indicators for monitoring national progress (2025–2028). The study demonstrated that “Handball for All” functions not merely as a participation program but as a comprehensive governance and social-innovation model integrating inclusion, sustainability, and education. It aligns with the UN SDGs, the European Sports Charter, and the national Sport for All Policy. Practical recommendations include modernization of coach education through online certification and “Coach-to-Coach” mentorship, creation of inclusive and para-handball camps, eco-friendly event design, volunteer support, and implementation of transparent digital monitoring. The novelty of the research lies in the conceptualization of “Handball for All” as a sustainability-driven platform that unites performance, governance, and participation into a coherent system of sport transformation in Canada.

СТРАТЕГІЯ ДІЙ, АБО АМБІТНА ПЛАТФОРМА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ СПОРТУ В КАНАДІ (ЧАСТИНА 3. «ГАНДБОЛ ДЛЯ ВСІХ»)

Кобезький В. В.

*директор зі спортивного розвитку,
член ради директорів Федерації гандболу Канади
7665, бульвар Lacordaire, Сен-Леонар, Квебек, H1S2A7, Канада
orcid.org/0009-0002-1000-4155
v.kobezskyi@gmail.com*

Тищенко В. О.

*доктор наук з фізичного виховання і спорту, професор,
професор кафедри теорії та методики фізичної культури і спорту
Запорізький національний університет
вул. Університетська, 66, Запоріжжя, Україна
orcid.org/0000-0002-9540-9612
valeri-znu@ukr.net*

Ключові слова: гандбол у Канаді, сталість, спортивна інклюзія, LTAD, цифрові платформи, підготовка тренерів, культурна ідентичність, управління ризиками.

Дослідження продовжує аналітичну трилогію “Strategy of Action or an Ambitious Platform for the Transformation of Sport in Canada” і зосереджується на третьому стратегічному напрямі Плану розвитку Федерації гандболу Канади (CTHF) 2025–2028 – “Handball for All”. Метою дослідження є обґрунтування концептуальних, соціальних і методологічних засад цього напрямку як інтегрованої моделі сталого розвитку канадського гандболу. Об’єкт дослідження – система соціальних, освітніх і управлінських механізмів інклюзивного розвитку спорту. Предмет дослідження – стратегія “Handball for All” як практичний інструмент реалізації принципів сталості, рівності й залучення громад. Методологічну основу становили системний, порівняльний і структурно-функціональний аналіз, SWOT-аналіз, підходи LFA та SMART-моніторинг. Результати дослідження засвідчили ключові соціально-організаційні й екологічні чинники впливу на сталий розвиток: фінансову нестабільність, регіональну асиметрію, дефіцит тренерських кадрів, недостатню поінформованість щодо інклюзії та цифрову нерівність. Розроблено адаптивні механізми – партнерські програми, менторські моделі підготовки тренерів, цифрові освітні інструменти. Три аналітичні таблиці систематизують стратегії мінімізації ризиків, трансформацію тренерської освіти та SMART-індикатори моніторингу національного прогресу (2025–2028). Доведено, що “Handball for All” функціонує не лише як програма участі, а як комплексна модель управління й соціальних інновацій, що інтегрує інклюзію, сталість і освіту. Стратегія узгоджується із Цілями сталого розвитку ООН, Європейською спортивною хартією та національною політикою Sport Canada щодо інклюзії та доступності. Сформульовано практичні рекомендації, як-от: модернізація тренерської освіти через онлайн-сертифікацію та програму “Coach-to-Coach”, створення інклюзивних і парагандбольних таборів, екологічне проєктування спортивних подій, підтримка волонтерів і впровадження прозорої системи цифрового моніторингу. Наукова новизна полягає в концептуалізації “Handball for All” як платформи сталого розвитку, що поєднує продуктивність, управління та участь у єдину систему спортивної трансформації Канади.

Introduction. The transformation of contemporary sport systems increasingly depends on the integration of inclusion, environmental responsibility, and evidence-based governance. In Canada, this convergence is reflected in the national Canadian Team Handball Federation (CTHF) Strategic Plan 2025–2028 [1], which articulates three interconnected pillars: Ignite Progress, Engaged Governance, and Handball for All. Together, they form a coherent framework for developing handball as both a high-performance sport and a socially oriented ecosystem of participation, education, and identity.

In our previous studies – Part 1: Ignite Progress and Part 2: Engaged Governance [5; 10] – we analyzed how performance development and transparent management constitute the basis for sustainable growth. Building on this foundation, the present paper focuses on the third strategic direction, “Handball for All”, which represents the participatory and social dimension of the CTHF transformation agenda. It reflects a paradigm shift from traditional “sport participation” models toward a sustainability-oriented framework, where sport functions as a tool for community development, education, and social cohesion. This direction aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [11], the Revised European Sports Charter (2021) [2], and Sport Canada’s Policy on Inclusion and Accessibility (2022) [9].

Scholarly evidence supports this transition. Næss (2023) [7] demonstrated that effective diversity and inclusion management in sport organizations relies on leadership, organizational learning, and long-term education. Moon et al. (2022) [6] analyzed how international sport federations incorporate sustainability across environmental and social pillars, proposing a “sustainability ladder” for governance practice. Sakalidis et al. (2023) [8] emphasized the crucial role of the social environment and coaching attitudes in facilitating inclusive participation among athletes with and without intellectual disabilities. Collectively, these findings reinforce the Canadian model of Handball for All as an approach that treats participation as empowerment – supported by measurable indicators, coach education, and community-based engagement.

Consistent with Handball Canada’s official mission and the forthcoming Canadian Sport Policy 2025–2035 [3, 4], the “Handball for All” direction embodies a sustainability-driven platform that combines participation growth, gender equality, and regional access with digital transparency and culturally grounded coaching pathways. It thus completes the strategic cycle of Ignite Progress → Engaged Governance → Handball for All, translating policy vision [1] into an inclusive and measurable model of sport development in Canada.

The purpose of the study is substantiate and analytically interpret the strategic direction “Handball

for All” within the CTHF Strategic Plan 2025–2028 as a comprehensive socio-educational and sustainability-oriented platform aimed at expanding participation, strengthening inclusion, and ensuring the long-term development of Canadian handball through community engagement, digitalization, and environmental responsibility.

Research objectives:

1. To analyze the conceptual foundations of the “Handball for All” direction and its role in the overall logic of the CTHF Strategic Plan.
2. To identify the key social, organizational, and environmental factors influencing sustainable handball development.
3. To determine effective mechanisms for inclusion and community engagement through school, beach, and para-handball programs.
4. To develop SMART-based indicators for monitoring the implementation of “Handball for All”.
5. To substantiate practical recommendations for integrating sustainability and social responsibility into the national handball ecosystem.

The object of the study is the system of social, educational, and managerial mechanisms for the sustainable development of handball in Canada within the framework of the national strategy 2025–2028.

The subject of the study is the strategic direction “Handball for All” as a practical tool for implementing inclusion, sustainability, and community-based growth in the national handball ecosystem.

Research methods.

The study employs a combination of theoretical and empirical approaches, including:

- content analysis of official CTHF strategic documents and international frameworks (UN SDGs, European Sports Charter, LTAD);
- systemic and structural-functional analysis of inclusive and sustainability practices in sport;
- comparative analysis of Canadian, European, and international development models in handball and related team sports;
- expert evaluation of risk-management and implementation indicators;

Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and SMART methodology for designing measurable implementation metrics;

SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of “Handball for All” within the Canadian context.

Scientific novelty.

For the first time, “Handball for All” is interpreted as an integrative model of sustainable sports development that unites athletic, social, environmental, and educational dimensions within a single governance framework.

The study introduces a new conceptual triad of sustainability in sport – social inclusion + digital

accessibility + environmental responsibility – as a basis for the long-term transformation of the Canadian handball ecosystem.

An original set of SMART-indicators for the evaluation of inclusive programs, coach education, and regional development has been proposed, enabling continuous monitoring of the strategy's effectiveness.

The article also substantiates the role of cultural authenticity and community-driven participation as strategic determinants of national identity in sport, expanding the theoretical understanding of “sport for all” from a management-policy perspective.

Practical significance.

The findings provide an applied framework for designing and evaluating inclusive, sustainable, and community-oriented sports programs at both national and regional levels.

The developed methodological tools – SMART indicators, sustainability matrix, and LFA-based monitoring scheme – can be used by national federations, educational institutions, and local organizations to implement evidence-based strategies in handball and other team sports.

The results contribute to the creation of an integrated training and participation model that promotes equality of access, strengthens social cohesion, and ensures long-term growth of handball in Canada.

The conceptual approach of “Handball for All” may serve as a reference for countries developing inclusive sport systems within decentralized or resource-limited environments.

Results.

The analysis of the strategic direction “Handball for All” revealed that sustainable development of handball in Canada requires an integrated combination of social, educational, managerial, and environmental factors. The implementation of the CTHF Strategic Plan (2025–2028) demonstrates a shift from isolated participation initiatives toward a holistic model of community-based and inclusive growth.

1. Identified system risks and mitigation strategies. Key barriers include financial instability, regional imbalance, institutional fragmentation, limited coaching capacity, and cultural conservatism toward innovation. The introduction of a multi-level risk management matrix enables the federation to anticipate these threats and design adaptive measures such as local partnerships, mentorship programs, rotational training camps, and user-friendly digital tools for regional coordinators.

The identified risks and corresponding adaptive measures are summarized in Table 1.

2. Transformation of coaching education and professional capacity. The study confirmed the critical importance of transforming coach preparation into an evidence-based and multidisciplinary process. The proposed “*Performance Coach Hub*” model for U16–U18 categories integrates mentorship, analytics, psychology, and recovery science, ensuring long-term continuity between regional and national programs.

3. Collaboration with European training center's (Norway, France, Germany, Denmark) is recognized as a catalyst for professional development, while the creation of an online learning and licensing platform

Table 1

Strategic Risks and Adaptive Mechanisms of the “Handball for All” Implementation

Identified Risk	Potential Consequences	Adaptive Mechanisms / Mitigation Strategies
Limited financial resources	Interruptions in training camps and community programs; reduction of outreach activities.	Development of local partnerships; engagement with municipalities; search for national and international grants; diversified funding streams.
Uneven infrastructure across regions	Limited accessibility for remote communities; lack of suitable venues.	Introduction of mobile and rotational training formats; use of school facilities; cooperation with local sports centers.
Deficit of qualified coaches	Decline in program quality; staff overload; burnout risk.	Launch of mentorship-based education system (“mentor – mentee” model); continuous online learning modules; national certification platform.
Low awareness of inclusion principles	Stigmatization and reduced participation of underrepresented groups.	Communication campaigns emphasizing diversity and success stories; organization of public events and school workshops.
Digital divide between provinces	Difficulties in data collection, athlete tracking, and monitoring.	Development of a user-friendly digital ecosystem; online training for regional coordinators; technical support hotline.
Volunteer and staff burnout	Decrease in motivation and continuity; loss of experienced personnel.	Implementation of flexible work schedules; psychological support programs; recognition and reward initiatives.

Note: Compiled by authors based on CTHF Strategic Plan 2025–2028 analytical framework.

Table 2

Transformation of Coaching Capacity: Strategic Measures and Expected Outcomes

Strategic Direction	Implementation Tools / Actions	Expected Outcomes
Evidence-based coach education	Integration of sport science, biomechanics, psychology, and digital analytics into national certification programs.	Increased professionalization; higher training quality; data-driven decision-making.
European collaboration and exchange	Partnership agreements with coaching academies in Norway, France, Germany, Denmark; joint workshops and internships.	Access to advanced expertise; benchmarking with elite standards; cross-cultural knowledge transfer.
Integrated support teams (“coach + science staff”)	Inclusion of analysts, physiotherapists, psychologists, and nutritionists in national and provincial programs.	Multidisciplinary performance optimization; reduction of injury and fatigue risk; holistic athlete care.
Performance Coach Hubs for U-categories	Establishment of regional hubs for U16 – U18 programs combining mentorship and practical training.	Continuous talent pipeline; mentorship of young coaches; harmonization of regional methods.
Digital coach-learning platform	Launch of an online learning and licensing system aligned with LTAD principles.	Equal access to education across provinces; standardized competencies; transparent certification.
Mentorship and retention programs	“Coach-to-Coach” initiative, peer-learning sessions, recognition system.	Reduced staff turnover; sustained motivation and leadership culture.

Note: Developed by authors based on the CTHF Strategic Plan 2025–2028 and comparative analysis of European coaching frameworks.

ensures accessibility and standardization across provinces.

4. Integration of inclusion and sustainability principles. “*Handball for All*” expands the scope of sport governance beyond competition by embedding eco-friendly, socially responsible, and financially balanced practices. The strategy introduces mechanisms for ecological event management, shared transport systems, and community-based funding, aligning CTHF’s initiatives with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

5. Formation of a monitoring and evaluation system. Based on the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and SMART methodology, a system of measurable indicators was developed to track progress in athlete participation, gender equality, and regional program expansion. Among the key quantitative targets are:

- 3 international U18 training camps (by 2026);
- 4 regional academies (by 2027);
- a unified athlete digital database (by 2026);
- at least 6 inclusive handball camps, including para-handball;
- ≥40% female representation among coaches in U14 – U18 programs (by 2027).

6. Preservation of cultural identity within international integration. The research emphasizes the need to balance global best practices with national authenticity. Monitoring indicators of playing variability, cultural representation, and coach autonomy were identified to prevent the over-Europeanization of style and ensure that Canadian handball retains its multicultural and creative identity.

Overall, the obtained results confirm that the “Handball for All” initiative functions not only as

a participation program but as a comprehensive transformation model. It redefines sport as a social ecosystem – integrating sustainability, equality, and education into a unified framework for long-term national progress.

The findings of the study align with contemporary international approaches to sustainable and inclusive sport governance, while revealing several unique features of the Canadian context.

Compared with the European Handball Federation (EHF) and International Handball Federation (IHF) strategies, the “Handball for All” initiative demonstrates a broader integration of social sustainability, environmental awareness, and educational impact.

Whereas European models primarily emphasize high-performance development and elite competition pathways, the Canadian approach introduces a community-based ecosystem that combines grassroots participation, inclusion of underrepresented groups, and long-term athlete development (LTAD) principles into a unified governance framework.

In contrast to the Sport Canada “Sport for All” Policy (2022), which defines participation as an element of accessibility, the CTHF model reinterprets inclusion as a multidimensional construct – merging accessibility, diversity, gender equity, and digital literacy. This shift from “participation” to “empowerment” underscores the evolution of handball from a sport to a social instrument of integration and education.

Furthermore, the application of Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and SMART indicators introduces a level of transparency and accountability uncommon

Table 3

SMART Indicators for the Implementation of the “Handball for All” Strategy (2025–2028)

Strategic Direction	Specific / Measurable Indicator	Achievable Tools	Relevance to CTHF Priorities	Timeframe (Target Date)
National Team Development	Conduct at least 3 international training camps for U18 teams.	Collaboration with European federations and Sport Canada.	Supports <i>Ignite Progress</i> and <i>Handball for All</i> integration.	Dec 2026
Regional Academies	Establish 4 fully functional regional academies (North, Central, South, West).	Partnership with universities and local sport centers.	Expands grassroots and talent pathways.	Jun 2027
Digitalization and Data Management	Deploy a unified online platform for athlete registration and workload monitoring.	CTHF digital infrastructure and staff training.	Enhances governance transparency and performance monitoring.	Jan 2026
Inclusion and Accessibility	Organize 6 inclusive camps, including para-handball, in cooperation with municipalities.	Local partnerships and NGO support.	Promotes accessibility, diversity, and social equity.	Sep 2026
Gender Equality	Ensure $\geq 40\%$ female representation among U14 – U18 coaching staff.	Mentorship and professional development programs.	Aligns with gender-equity and inclusion goals.	Dec 2027
International Partnerships	Sign 5 long-term cooperation agreements with European clubs.	Bilateral programs and exchange visits.	Strengthens competitiveness and knowledge transfer.	Dec 2026
Educational Initiatives	Launch the national mentorship program “Coach-to-Coach”.	CTHF Education & Training Unit.	Builds sustainable coaching culture and continuous learning.	End 2025

Note: Indicators formulated according to SMART logic (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) within the operational framework of the CTHF Strategic Plan 2025–2028.

in traditional sport development strategies. By linking qualitative and quantitative metrics (e.g., participation growth, gender balance, environmental footprint), CTHF sets a new benchmark for evidence-based governance within team sports.

The analysis also reveals that the sustainability aspect of “Handball for All” functions as a feedback mechanism: the ecological, financial, and social pillars not only stabilize operations but also enhance resilience against future crises – whether economic, demographic, or climatic.

From an international perspective, this approach positions Canada as a laboratory of adaptive sport governance, where innovations are tested within a multicultural environment and can later be replicated globally. The emphasis on cultural authenticity ensures that modernization does not erode national identity but rather strengthens it through diversity, bilingualism, and regional representation.

Finally, the results confirm that “Handball for All” completes the triad of the CTHF Strategic Plan – together with *Ignite Progress* (performance) and *Engaged Governance* (management), it defines a full-circle model of sustainable sport evolution: performance → governance → participation → identity → sustainability.

To summarize the overall research outcomes, Table 4 presents the correspondence between the formulated objectives of the study, their implementation within the structure of the article, and the obtained key findings. This analytical mapping provides a clear link between the conceptual tasks and the practical results achieved within the “Handball for All” framework.

Conclusions. The conducted study confirmed that the strategic direction “Handball for All” represents not only a participation initiative but a transformative model of inclusive and sustainable sport governance. Its implementation within the CTHF Strategic Plan 2025–2028 integrates three interconnected dimensions – social inclusion, digital accessibility, and environmental responsibility – thereby ensuring the long-term stability of the Canadian handball ecosystem.

The obtained results highlight several key outcomes: establishment of a measurable system of SMART indicators that enable transparent monitoring of progress; formation of professional and educational infrastructure for coach development through international cooperation and digital learning platforms; introduction of sustainability mechanisms ensuring environmental, financial, and social balance; preservation of cultural diversity and bilingual identity as a strategic advantage of Canadian sport.

Table 4

Alignment of the Research Objectives with Article Sections and Key Findings

№	Research Objective	Section(s) of the Article	Key Findings / Evidence
1	To analyze the conceptual foundations of the “Handball for All” direction and its role in the overall logic of the CTHF Strategic Plan.	<i>Introduction, Scientific Novelty, Discussion</i>	Defined as the third strategic pillar of the CTHF 2025–2028 framework, “Handball for All” ensures the social and educational dimension of transformation. It aligns with SDGs, the European Sports Charter, and Sport Canada’s inclusion policy. The model complements “Ignite Progress” and “Engaged Governance,” forming a complete strategic triad.
2	To identify the key social, organizational, and environmental factors influencing sustainable handball development.	<i>Results 1, Table 1, Discussion</i>	Key risk factors and sustainability determinants identified: financial instability, infrastructure imbalance, coach deficit, inclusion awareness gap, digital divide, volunteer burnout. Proposed adaptive mechanisms include partnerships, mentorships, digital tools, and rotational programs.
3	To determine effective mechanisms for inclusion and community engagement through school, beach, and para-handball programs.	<i>Results 3, Discussion</i>	Effective inclusion mechanisms established: school-community partnerships, inclusive and para-handball camps, awareness campaigns, mobile/rotational training, and culturally sensitive coaching. Inclusion is framed as empowerment and social participation.
4	To develop SMART-based indicators for monitoring the implementation of “Handball for All”.	<i>Results 4, Table 3</i>	SMART and LFA frameworks applied to form measurable targets: U18 international camps, regional academies, unified digital database, inclusion programs, gender equity benchmarks, and partnership goals. Indicators ensure transparency and comparability across regions.
5	To substantiate practical recommendations for integrating sustainability and social responsibility into the national handball ecosystem.	<i>Results 5, Table 2, Practical Significance, Conclusions</i>	Practical solutions proposed: transformation of coach education through evidence-based and digital platforms, “Coach-to-Coach” mentorship, multidisciplinary support teams, eco-friendly event design, volunteer support, and sustainability monitoring. The model strengthens national resilience and inclusion.

The “Handball for All” direction thus finalizes the strategic triad of CTHF development – Ignite Progress, Engaged Governance, and Handball for All – forming an integral cycle of performance, governance, participation, and sustainability.

Prospects for further research include:

Deepening the study of the impact of inclusive and eco-oriented practices on athlete motivation and retention in community sport.

Development of quantitative evaluation models linking participation dynamics with national sport performance indicators.

Analysis of digital ecosystems for federated sport governance, including athlete monitoring and data ethics.

Cross-cultural comparative studies on identity and sustainability in small and medium sport federations.

The continuation of this scientific dialogue will support evidence-based decision-making within national sport organizations and strengthen Canada’s position as a pioneer of sustainable and inclusive sport development in the 21st century.

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