

Gender equality in sport

Sport implies two different perspectives that are increasingly considered at EU level: professional sport and sport as a leisure activity. In both cases, sport represents a large and fast-growing sector of the economy and makes an important contribution to growth and jobs.

Sport encourages social interaction, which is important for both young and old, women and men, and promotes physical and mental health. It can also foster education, communication, negotiation skills and leadership, vital for women's empowerment.



Levelling the playing field

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union. The European Commission expressed its commitment, in both the Women's Charter and the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010–2015, to address and eliminate the gender gap in decision-making.

Following the EU Conference on Gender Equality in Sport in 2013, the proposal for Strategic Actions on Gender Equality in Sport 2014–2020 was approved. Recognising that there is still a lot to do, the actions and recommendations contained in the proposal encourage sports governing bodies and non-governmental organisations to develop and implement national and international strategies for action on gender equality in sport, supported by coherent and concrete measures at EU level.

The Council conclusions on Gender Equality in Sport encourage sports organisations to increase gender balance on executive boards and committees, and in management and coaching. They also support the removal of non-legislative obstacles which prevent women from taking up such functions (20 May 2014).

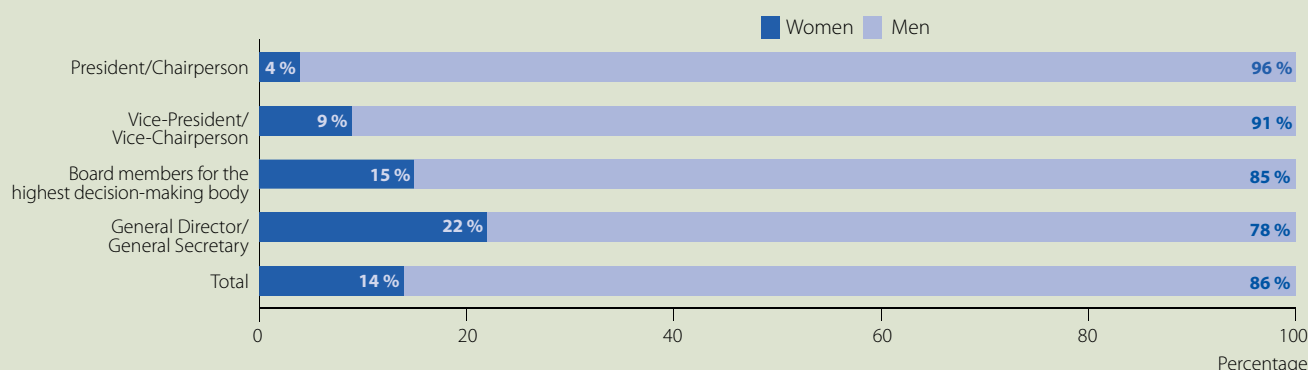
Hurdles

Women side lined from decision-making

Despite the gradually increasing participation of women in sport, women remain underrepresented in the decision-making bodies of sporting institutions at local, national, European and global levels.

Data from the report on women in power and decision-making, prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) for the Luxem-

Figure 1 – Proportion of women and men in decision-making positions in continental confederations of Olympic sports in Europe, 2015



Source: Data were collected from all 28 continental confederations of Olympic sports in Europe (May–June 2015).

bourgish Presidency of the Council of the EU, shows that at **European level**, on average, women make up 14 % of **decision-making positions** in the continental confederations of Olympic sports in Europe. From the 28 confederations surveyed, there was only one woman president or chairperson and eight vice-presidents out of a total of 91. These figures reflect trends found in other areas of decision-making, where the more senior the position, the wider the gender gap.

Across **Member States**, the representation of women among the **top decision-making positions** in sports organisations remains very low. On average in 2015, only 14 % of all positions were occupied by women, ranging from 3 % in Poland to 43 % in Sweden.

Sport is considered a men's arena

Sport is traditionally a male-dominated sector and progress in gender equality in this area is hindered by the social constructions of femininity and masculinity, which often associate sport with 'masculine' characteristics, such as physical strength and resilience, speed, and a highly competitive, sometimes confrontational spirit. Women who engage in sports may be perceived as 'masculine', while men who are not interested in sports could be considered 'unmanly'. Prevailing gender stereotypes affect

not only women's participation in decision-making within sporting organisations, but also their participation in sporting activities.

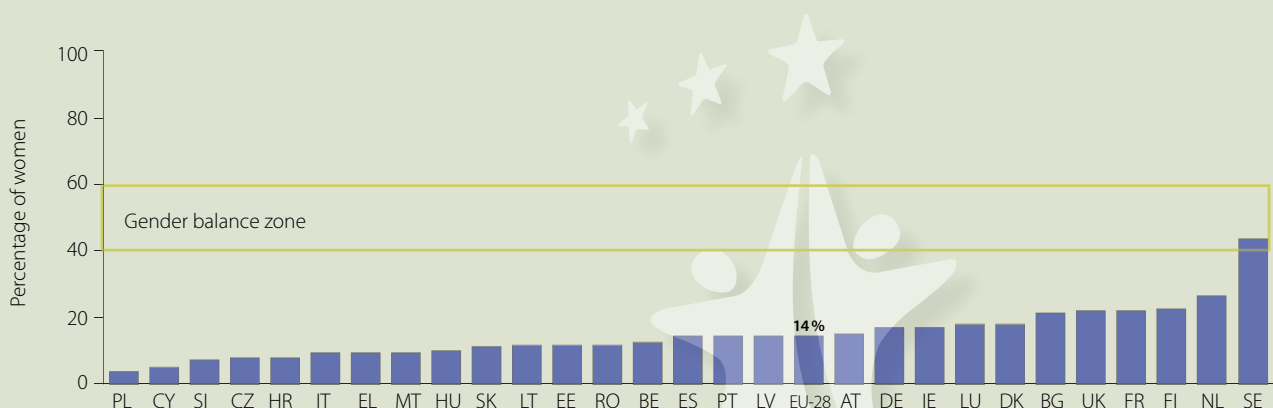
Traditional gender roles may dictate how many hours women spend on caring responsibilities, which can have a ripple effect on how much time is left over for sporting activities. EIGE's Gender Equality Index clearly shows that while women spend more time on caring activities, compared with men, they participate less in other social activities, such as sporting, cultural or leisure activities.

Men dominate the coaching profession

Coaching is another area of sports where women are largely underrepresented. Based on figures in seven **EU Member States**, it is estimated that only 20 % to 30 % of all sports coaches in Europe are women¹. Women coaches are more likely to be found in sports that have a high proportion of women participants (e.g. dancing, gymnastics, figure skating and equestrian sports) and they predominantly work with women, adolescents or children who compete at local and regional levels. There are also more men than women employed in sports, and data from EIGE's Gender Statistics Database shows that at **European level**, from 2012 to 2014, women's employment in sports actually decreased, whereas men's increased.

¹ European Commission (2014), Gender Equality in Sport: Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014–2020, p.19.
http://ec.europa.eu/sport/events/2013/documents/20131203-gender/final-proposal-1802_en.pdf

Figure 2 – Proportion of women among all decision-making positions in national sport federations in the EU-28, 2015



Source: Data were collected from the 10 most popular national sport federations in each of the 28 Member States (280 in total), between May and June 2015.

Note: The following positions are included: president/chairperson, vice-president/vice-chairperson, general director/general secretary and other board members. To avoid double counting, each person is counted only once, even if (s)he occupies several positions.

Stereotypes in the media keep women offside

The media can play a significant role in either reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes in sports. In reality, gender stereotyping of women and men athletes by the media is well documented and women athletes are often sexualised. They are frequently depicted in a way that contributes to the marginalisation of women's achievements in sport, due to the emphasis placed on femininity and sexual attraction instead of strength and skills.

There are also significant differences in the media coverage given to women's and men's sports, with the latter receiving far more attention². The absence of women in sports journalism is another challenge. At the 2012 London Olympics, only 15 % of the journalists and photographers were women. The gender gap in sports journalism further extends into media organisations, where women hold less than a third of senior management positions³.

What is being done about it?

Several international and continental federations in Europe, responsible for the promotion and development of sports, have already shown a commitment to gender equality by introducing **gender quotas**.

In 2015, nine of the 28 European confederations had a gender quota for the highest decision-making body (executive committee, presidium or board of directors) and only one failed to meet this quota, i.e. had no women in top decision-making posts. In four of the remaining 19 European confederations without a gender quota, women were absent from the highest decision-making body.

Additionally, women's commissions or committees are present in five organisations:

- European Boxing Confederation (EUBC)
- European Taekwondo Union (ETU)
- European Union of Gymnastics (UEG)
- FIBA Europe
- Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)

At the **national level**, voluntary targets for gender balance in the governance structures of sports federations have been proposed or are already introduced in five Member States (DE, FR, FI, SE, UK (England)).

However, further measures are required if gender equality in sports and decision-making is to be achieved.

² Ibid, p. 33.

³ Data from the presentation by Anthony Edgar, IOC head of media operations, 'The Olympic Games: Meeting New Global Challenges', Oxford University Club, Oxford, 'The Future of Reporting at the Olympic Games', 13–14 August 2012.

Gender quotas in European sports confederations, 2015

Gender quota for the highest decision-making body

At least one woman & one man

United World Wrestling Europe (UWW-Europe)
European Fencing Confederation (EFC)
European Handball Federation (EHF)
European Shooting Confederation (ESC)
European Weightlifting Federation (EWF)
Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)

At least 2 women & 2 men

European Hockey Federation (EHF)
FIBA Europe

At least 3 women & 3 men

European Triathlon Union (ETU)

Gender quota for councils, committees and commissions

European Handball Federation (EHF)
European Shooting Confederation (ESC)
European Table Tennis Union (ETTU)
European Taekwondo Union (ETU)
European Triathlon Union (ETU)

Source: Data derived from the statutes of federations.

Note: The highest decision-making body includes the executive committee, presidium, and board of directors.

What more can be done?

Applying a gender perspective

One way to strengthen gender equality in sports is to mainstream gender in the relevant policy areas. Gender mainstreaming can be described as the integration of a gender equality perspective into every stage of development and implementation of a policy or programme.

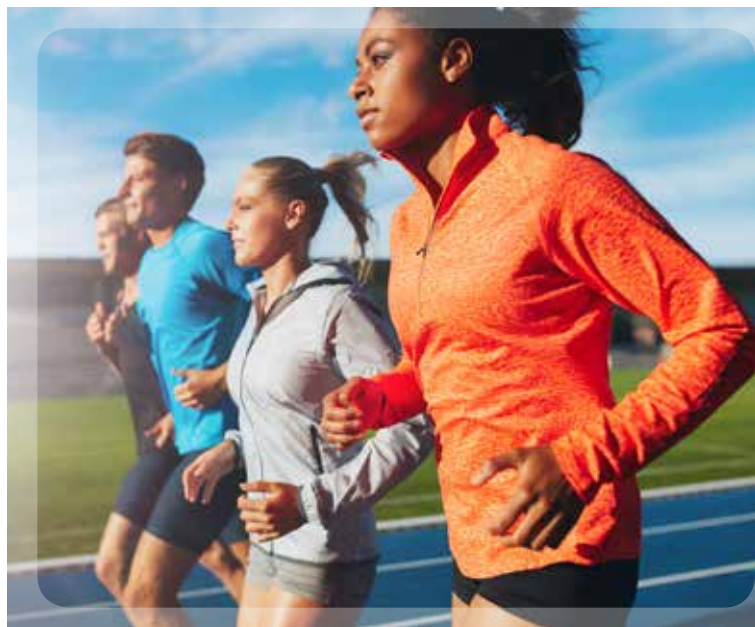
To support the staff of the EU institutions and governmental bodies with the integration of a gender perspective in their work, including the area of sport, EIGE has developed an online Platform on Gender Mainstreaming, which will be accessible to the public through EIGE's website by the end of 2015.

Targeted measures and initiatives

Achieving gender equality and increasing women's decision making in sports would benefit from a wider array of targeted measures, such as public debates, training, mentoring schemes and proactive policies which encourage young women to stay in sports. The effect of legislative and voluntary measures could be reinforced by efforts to increase public awareness and combat prescriptive gender roles. Eradicating gender stereotypes plays a crucial role in eliminating barriers that limit women's access to leadership positions in sports.

Higher quality data at EU level

EIGE's research has identified that measuring the extent of change in decision-making in sports is hampered by the absence of suitable indicators



Eradicating gender stereotypes is crucial to strengthening gender equality in sports and decision-making

at EU level. Although some data already exists, sex-disaggregated data that can be compared across all Member States is not available. The lack of suitable information prevents policy makers from adopting policies that reflect the different needs of women and men and encourage a more equal engagement.

To assist EU policy makers with their work, EIGE has developed a Gender Statistics Database⁴, which will be available to the public through EIGE's website by the end of 2015. Furthermore, EIGE's Resource and Documentation Centre provides many different types of publications on sport through its e-library. Resources are available in English, German, Swedish, Dutch, French, Danish, Italian, Greek, Norwegian and Portuguese, and can be accessed through the following link: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc>

⁴ Data on 'Women and sports' in the database is to be found under 'EU Strategies' (EU Strategy for Equality between women and men 2010–2015 – Gender roles in youth, education and sports) and under 'Policy Area' – culture, education and youth.

European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policy makers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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