

**EUROPEAN HANDBOOK FOR GENDER  
EQUALITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION IN SPORT:  
A PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE ERASMUS  
+ WOMEN-UP PROJECT**

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## CHAPTER 2: GOVERNANCE IN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS: A GENDER APPROACH

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### INTRODUCTION

Organizations, whether national or international, whatever their object and objective, are organized according to legal precepts that generally reflect the community's value frameworks. The empowerment of women in a society, that tends to be patriarchal has been a slow process, despite moving towards the equality advocated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The world of sports is neither an exception nor an isolated island; it has been and is organized according to the practices of the moment in history in which it takes place. The sporting phenomenon certainly finds its maximum exponent in the Olympic Games, where many of the idiosyncrasies of the modern world are materialized. Table 1 recaps, in leaps and bounds, the course of women's participation in the Olympic Games:

Table 1. *Evolution of women's participation throughout the Olympic Games since 1900*

Year	City	%
1900	Paris	2
1928	Amsterdam	10
1976	Montreal	20
1996	Atlanta	34
2012	London	44
2020	Tokyo	48
2024	Paris	50

Note: Adapted from IOC (2021)

The IOC presents itself as a cornerstone of the promotion and empowerment of women in the sporting world. In fact, it states:

*Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), as the leader of the Olympic Movement, bears a significant responsibility to act on gender equality, which is a fundamental human right and a Fundamental Principle of the Olympic Charter (IOC, 1996, p. 1).*

Driven by this purpose, the IOC, actively with the National Olympic Committees (NOC) and International Federations (IFs), has promoted the increase of female participation in the Olympic Games, having developed active policies of opening up eligibility in the various sports involved, filling

the quota places set by the IOC and filled by the IFs, and increasing the number of medal events for female athletes. Multiple new mixed-gender events have also been added to further promote gender diversity and equality (IOC, 2023a, para. 8).

Regarding women in sports governance, the IOC sought to mitigate the gap between men and women in decision-making positions as a result of the various conventions, which began in 1979 with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In 1995 the Women and Sport Working Group was created, and in 1996 amendments were introduced to the Olympic Charter, assuming that it is its obligation "to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures, with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women" (IOC, 1996, Rule 2, para. 5). This amendment to the Olympic Charter mandated that in 1996 the IOC recommend that the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the International Federations (IF's) have a minimum of 10% and 20% decision-making positions held by women by 2000 and 2005, respectively. The development of the process has allowed the target for 2020 to stand at 30%. Also, in 2020, the number of women IOC Executive Board members passed 30% when, in 1990, Flor Isava Fonseca was the first woman elected to the EC. Also, the representation of women in other domains such as "coaches, technical officials, and Games team leadership continues to be a priority for the IOC" (IOC, 2023, p. 4).

In this chapter, we will focus on women in sports governance as a problematic gender approach in sports organizations. We will start with scientific background analysis and empirical data interpretation regarding women in leadership positions on International Federations (IFs) and understanding the barriers that may be found in this process. Following that, on the Technical Information, we will look at case studies and guidelines promoted by International Policy Making Organizations such as the European Council and Sport Organizations such as the IOC. Finally, in the Pedagogical guidance, we will present some strategies to promote gender equity in sport organizations.

## SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND

Several theories have been used to analyze the inequality of women's participation in the performance of sports leadership roles (Fisher et al., 2013). The one that has prevailed is the Feminist Theory, which is a powerful model to help understand this phenomenon and promote the necessary measures so that more women can occupy this type of function. Pretend, therefore, to promote women's rights and empower women. On the other hand, this paradigm makes it possible to understand female points of view in male-dominated environments (Murray, 2022).

There are several barriers and obstacles that women face in accessing leadership positions in sports organizations. Thus, the main reasons for the under-representation of women in coaching and sports management and administration positions include the following (Henry & Robinson, 2010):

- Women are not considered for half of the jobs related to these two areas due to the mistaken belief that women cannot meet expectations in men's sports.

- Men use their existing connections with other men in sports organizations to help them get jobs in women's and men's sports. In turn, compared to men, female job candidates have fewer strategic connections and networks to obtain those jobs.
- Selection committees for job applicants are mainly composed of men who use evaluative criteria based on an orthodox gender ideology, which means that they argue that female applicants are less qualified than male applicants;
- Many women have not had the systems of stimulation, support and career development opportunities that many men have.
- Women may not choose careers in sports coaching and administration, as they know they will face many tough obstacles working in organizations that are male-dominated and may be evaluated and judged more severely than men;
- Women are more likely to experience sexual harassment, which discourages them from performing such roles.

These factors influence who applies for these jobs, how candidates feel during the selection process, and how they are evaluated and selected (Coakley, 2017). On the other hand, when women are hired, they are less likely than men to feel welcome and fully included in sports organizations.

Table 2. *Year and milestone event in gender equity and empowerment of women in sport*

Year	Milestone events
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
1994	1 <sup>st</sup> World Conference on Women and Sport, with the participation of 82 countries, leads to the Brighton Declaration, (the Magna Charta, in the subject of women equity) which has been signed by de IOC and reaffirmed in 2014 by the “Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration on Women and Sport”.
1995	Organized by the United Nations, the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development, and Peace with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
1996	amending the Olympic Charter in order to include the IOC's role in advancing women in sport.
1996	1 <sup>st</sup> World Conference on Women and Sport, held by IOC, was recommended, as minimum of 10 and 20% of women in decision-making positions, respectively by 2000 and 2005.
2014	The Olympic Agenda 2020 targets 50% female participation of female in the Olympic Games.
2016	The IOC Executive Board approved a minimum of 30% of women in the governing bodies of the Olympic Movement.
2017	The Gender Equality Review Project, integrating the IOC Members and representatives of National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Sports Federations (IFs), reached several recommendations approved by the IOC in 2018.
2021	21 Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives for 2021-2024, which were designed the way to stress the progress of the Agendaic Agend, 2020+5,

Adapted from the IOC (2023). Factsheet: Women in the Olympic Movement

It should also be noted that in sports programs or sports organizations where women are scarce, there is often pressure to recruit and hire women so that possible accusations of discrimination can be avoided. On the real level and structure of the sports organizations, with a forward-looking sense, "the IOC's Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives 2021–2024 include several actions that involve the IOC, IFs, NOCs, and Olympic Movement Stakeholders jointly working together to improve" (IOC, 2023b, p. 5) gender equality. Table 2 synthesizes the major events that try to lead to gender equity and women's empowerment in sport.

Specifically, as far as stakeholders are concerned, the IOC Portrayal Guidelines: Gender-Equal, Fair, and Inclusive Representation in Sport were published, defining portrayal as "The language (words and expressions), images, and voices used, the quality and quantity of coverage, and the prominence given, when depicting individuals or groups in communications and the media" (IOC, 2021, p. 5) and adding:

*Balanced portrayal practices should also ensure that diversity and intersectionality within and among different groups are both considered and reflected. After all, not all sportspeople look or sound the same, nor do they experience life exclusively as "women", "men" or "athletes". (IOC, 2021, p. 5).*

Nevertheless, at the IF level, there is some progress, but slow progress, in addressing gender balance asymmetries in the Executive Board, as reported in the Fourth Review of International Federation Governance. Indeed,

*A further 15 IFs had women comprising at least 25 percent of their board members with rules and/or policies to encourage gender balance, an increase of 12 previously. At the other end of the spectrum, five IFs had fewer than 15% of their boards made up of women, down from eight the previous year. The remaining 10 IFs had men filling 75–85 percent of their board positions. (ASIOF, 2022, p. 7) and "Only three IFs reached the threshold for at least 40 percent female representation at Executive Board (or equivalent) level..." (ASIOF, 2022, p. 30).*

The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sports practiced in accordance with Olympism and its values. Belonging to the Olympic Movement requires compliance with the Olympic Charter and recognition from the IOC. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Sports Federations (IFs), and National Olympic Committees (NOCs) are the three main constituents of the Olympic Movement. In addition to its three main constituents, the Olympic Movement also encompasses the Organising Committees of the Olympic Games (OCOGs), the national associations, clubs, and persons belonging to the IFs and NOCs, particularly the athletes, whose interests constitute a fundamental element of the Olympic Movement's action, as well as the judges, referees, coaches, and other sports officials and technicians. It also includes other organizations and institutions recognized by the IOC.

In order to discuss common problems and decide on their events calendars, the summer federations, the winter federations, and the recognised federations have formed associations: the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), the Association of International Olympic

Winter Sports Federations (AIOWF), and the Association of IOC Recognised International Sports Federations (ARISF).

The Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) as been founded on 30 May 1983 by the 21 International Federations governing the sports included at the time on the program of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games. It represents the major top institutionalized Sports Organizations regarding international federation institutionalization and today includes 33 International Federations (31 Full Member IFs and two Associate Member IFs).

Because they are the top well-organized International Federations in the world in different sports and disciplines, with the best governance regarding the best values of Sport, it is s good sample we will use to make direct observations regarding Gender Equality policies.

We made a direct observation of all the official websites recorded on ASOIF (<https://www.asoif.com/members>) of all members, and by alphabetic order, from June 8<sup>th</sup> to June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 we entered each official website and observe:

- i) If the president was a woman or man,
- ii) Number of officials on top of governance bodies
- iii) Number of female officials in top governance bodies
- iv) Achieved the percentage of female officials in top governance bodies;
- v) The existence of a strategic plan regarding Gender Equality policies
- vi) the existence or not of commissions or committees on Gender Equality or Women.

There is a big heterogeneity in the kind and number of officials in the top governance of each International Federation (Tables 3 and 4). Some have a kind of executive board with a minimum number of 7 and others have a board of directors with 38 we did not find the minimum value of an executive board and we found an average number of 18 members on top governance of IF's.

The number of women in the top governance of IF ranges from 1 (two of them as Rugby and Wrestling) to 10 and an average of less than 5 (Table 4). The minimum percentage value of women in top governance of IF's is 9% (Rugby), and even if some IFs achieve 50% (Rowing), the average is still 27% of the top governance of the representative sports in the Summer Olympic Games. Only 2 IFs (Golf and Triathlon) have a woman as President, representing 6% of the 33 IF's of ASOIF.

Table 3. *International Sports Federations of Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024) data regarding Women on Governance*

<b>International Sport Federation</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>N Top Officials</b>	<b>Woman in top</b>	<b>% Woman</b>	<b>Strategic plan</b>	<b>Woman Commission</b>	<b>Official website</b>
Badminton World Federation	Man	30	10	33.3	No	No	bwfbadminton.org
Fédération Équestre Internationale	Man	21	9	42.8	Yes	No	fei.org

Fédération Internationale de Football Association	Man	38	8	21.05	Yes	No	fifa.com
Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique	Man	25	8	32.00	No	Yes	fig-gymnastics.com
Fédération Internationale de Volleyball	Man	13	4	30.77	No	No	fivb.com
Fédération Internationale d'Esclime	Man	21	6	28.57	No	No	fie.org
International Basketball Federation	Man	28	6	21.43	Yes	No	fiba.basketball
International Boxing Association	Man	17	5	29.41	No	No	iba.sport
International Canoe Federation	Man	15	3	20.00	No	No	canoeicf.com
International Federation of Sport Climbing	Man	11	3	27.27	No	No	ifsc-climbing.org
International Golf Federation	Woman	11	4	36.36	No	No	igfgolf.org
International Handball Federation	Man	16	2	12.50	No	Yes	ihf.info
International Hockey Federation	Man	16	5	31.25	No	No	fi.h.ch
International Judo Federation	Man	26	5	19.23	Yes	No	ijf.org
International Shooting Sport Federation	Man	18	4	22.22	No	No	issf-sports.org
International Surfing Association	Man	9	3	33.33	No	No	isasurf.org
International Table Tennis Federation	Man	12	2	16.67	No	Yes	ittf.com
International Tennis Federation	Man	17	3	17.65	No	No	itftennis.com
International Weightlifting Federation	Man	27	9	33.33	No	Yes	iwf.net
Union Cycliste Internationale	Man	19	6	31.58	Yes	Yes	uci.ch
Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne	Man	21	4	19.05	No	No	pentathlon.org
United World Wrestling	Man	7	1	14.29	Yes	Yes	unitedworldwrestling.org
World Aquatics	Man	8	2	25.00	No	No	worldaquatics.com
World Archery Federation	Man	15	4	26.67	No	No	worldarchery.org
World Athletics	Man	8	2	25.00	Yes	No	iaaf.org
World Baseball Softball Confederation	Man	20	5	25.00	No	No	wbsc.org
World DanceSport Federation	Man	14	3	21.43	No	Yes	worlddancesport.org
World Rowing	Man	8	4	50.00	Yes	No	worldrowing.com
World Rugby	Man	11	1	9.09	No	No	worldrugby.org
World Sailing	Man	11	4	36.36	No	Yes	sailing.org
World Skate	Man	21	5	23.81	No	No	worldskate.org
World Taekwondo	Man	36	9	25.00	No	Yes	worldtaekwondo.org
World Triathlon	Woman	21	8	38.10	No	Yes	triathlon.org

Table 4. *International Sports Federations of Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024) Summary data regarding the percentage of Women in Governance*

International Sport Federation	N° Top Officials	Women in Top	% Women	Woman President
Average	17.91	4.76	26.65	6.06%
Minimum Value	7	1	9.09	0



Maximum Value	38	10	50.00	1
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These organizations are changing, but the intentionality of change still requires more evidence. We found that some federations with election rules changed to include more women in top governance, while others still did not make this move. Only 24% of IFs have a strategic plan for those changes, and 30% have a women's commission for Gender Equality policies on their sports and disciplines (Table 5).

Table 5. *International Sport Federations of Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024) Changing Intentionality regarding Women on Governance*

Changing Intentionality	Strategic plan	Woman Commission	Woman President	Woman in Top
Yes	8	10	2	33
Not Found	25	23	31	0
<b>Total</b>	33	33	33	33
<b>Intentionality degree</b>	24.24%	30.30%	6,06%	100,00%

Even in ASOIF, with the policies for changing and with Strategic Plans and Woman Commissions working in changing activities for all levels of Sports Governance, we can observe that the percentage of Women in Top is low, probably because the members have a low percentage of women as Presidents and on Top Governance bodies of IF's as members. We can see that in the following data in Table 6.

Table 6. *ASOIF data regarding Women on Governance in May 2023*

International Sport Federation	President	N° Top Officials	Woman in Top	% Woman	Strategic plan	Woman Commission	Official website
Association of Summer Olympic International Federations	Man	8	1	12.50%	Yes	Yes	asoif.com /about/council

The Council of Europe also mentions that the under-representation of women in leadership roles in sports organizations can be explained by the fact that sports have a male preponderance, by the existence of stereotyped gender roles or partial institutional norms and procedures. However, many executive members are elected by their peers, who often tend to elect new directors with similar attributes (Council of Europe, 2016).

Despite the progress made, sports is a place of materialization and the realization of male dominance (Craig & Hill, 2016). Explanations of gender differences in sports range from those that focus on biology to those that emphasize the social and cultural construction of gender. The persistence of

patriarchal power structures that sustain male hegemony in society and sports continues to be a significant disadvantage for women.

However, it is essential to be aware of the barriers that may be encountered in this process. Among them, Coakley (2017) highlights:

1. Budget cuts often constrain gender equity.

Compared to programs for boys and men, programs for girls and women are more vulnerable to cuts owing to several factors, notably because they have less market presence and generate less potential financial income.

2. Resistance to government regulations.

Those who benefit from the status quo or oppose gender equity often resist government legislation that demands change.

3. The existence of few models of women who occupy positions of leadership and power in sport

4. A cultural emphasis focused on “Cosmetic Fitness” for women.

Girls and women live with confusing cultural messages about their body image and sports participation. Although they see powerful female athletes, they cannot escape images of fashion models whose bodies are shaped by food deprivation, use of pharmaceutical products, or cosmetic surgery.

5. Banalization of Women’s Sports

The most visible and popular sport in society is based on male values and experiences. They often emphasize skills and assessment standards that disadvantaged women, especially in high competition. For example, women play soccer, but do not kick as hard as men. That is, they practice sports, but they do not practice sports like men do.

6. Sports organizations are named/identified/male-centric.

Sports remain closely tied to orthodox forms of masculinity. Men have long used sports to establish their identity as men and to promote and gain status in the community.

Thus, sport is traditionally a male-dominated sector, and progress towards gender equality in this area is hampered by social constructions of femininity and masculinity, which often associate sport with 'masculine' characteristics such as physical strength and resilience, speed, and a highly competitive ability and spirit of confrontation. In this sense, women who practice sports can be seen as “masculine”, while men who are not interested in sports can even be considered “not masculine” (Instituto Europeu para a Igualdade de Género, 2015).

According to some studies, gender inequality in sport has its origin in reasons that involve organizational, sociocultural, interpersonal and personal barriers (Grupo de Trabalho para as Políticas Públicas em Matéria de Igualdade no Desporto, 2023). Organizational, social and cultural barriers include the lack of opportunities for women to train, the perception that these tasks are male dominated and gender stereotypes associated with factors such as lack of exposure and visibility and opportunities for international experience, and lack of interest in these issues on the part of those in the leadership of sports entities. Interpersonal barriers involve a lack of support and negative

interactions with male colleagues, exacerbated by gender stereotypes and a higher risk of exposure to gender violence. Personal barriers include the lack of adequate remuneration, increased difficulties in reconciling personal, family and professional life and practicing full-time sports, the impact of gender stereotypes on self-confidence/self-esteem and the lack of adequate educational programs.

#### TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Despite all the difficulties experienced in the process of promoting gender equality in sport, some sports organizations have implemented, or have been successfully implementing, various measures or initiatives for this purpose.

Thus, the European Commission's Proposal for Strategic Actions for Gender Equality in Sport (2014-2020) recommended achieving the following targets by 2020 (Council of Europe, 2016):

- A minimum of 40% women and men in the executive boards and governing bodies of national sport commissions and 30% in international sport organizations located in Europe.
- A minimum of 40% women and men in the management of professional sports administrations and government bodies.

The International Olympic and Paralympic Committees were committed to increasing the number of women in leadership positions. Both international committees have set targets (20% and 30% respectively) to increase the number of decision-making positions for women (mainly in executive bodies) in the Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Both international committees undertook complementary initiatives to support the achievement of these goals.

The WoMentoring Project was promoted by the International Paralympic Committee and the Agitos Foundation, lasted 18 months and was implemented between 2014-2016 (Council of Europe, 2016). This project was created to help contribute to the Paralympic Movement's goal of having 30% women in leadership positions. It involved 16 pairs of mentors and disciples in an education and development program, enabling its participants to develop skills to become strong leaders. Several disciples recognized that guidance and support. Several disciples recognized that the guidance and support of their mentors was crucial in gaining the confidence and skills to achieve their goals. The positive impact of the approach was clear, as the pupils were able to be promoted and gain various positions of influence within the National Paralympic Committees and sports organizations.

The Council of Europe proposed a set of measures to integrate a gender perspective into sports decision-making processes (Council of Europe, 2016). Among them we highlight the following:

- Implement transparent and fair procedures to identify and elect candidates that do not benefit either gender and recognize different knowledge and experiences to perform a given role.
- Publicly and widely advertise job vacancies for professional management positions in sport.
- Ensure gender-balanced representation on selection and nomination committees.

- Create gender-sensitive human resources policies that make it possible to reconcile work and private life (that is, that make it possible to reconcile family responsibilities with decision-making positions).
- Amend internal regulations and statutes to promote gender balance as a principle of good governance.
- Develop and fund programs and projects to raise awareness of the benefits of gender diversity in leadership positions and develop leadership skills of the underrepresented sex.

The High Level Group for Gender Equality in Sport, set up by the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, presented, in March 2022, an action plan and recommendations for the European Commission, Member States EU, national and international sports bodies and grassroots organizations to achieve more gender equality in sport (Grupo de Trabalho para as Políticas Públicas em Matéria de Igualdade no Desporto, 2023). In this regard, in terms of leadership, given that women are underrepresented in leadership positions, the following recommendations were made:

- i) commitment to measures to ensure gender equality in places of power and decision-making;
- ii) raise awareness of the value of balanced representation on executive committees;
- iii) establish a 50% representation quota for the underrepresented sex in all decision-making bodies and set term limits;
- iv) establish programs to raise awareness of the prejudices that push women away from positions of power and decision-making;
- v) work with specialized groups to evaluate and implement policies that promote balanced representation in places of power and decision-making.

On the other hand, regarding good practices in terms of gender equality, due to its high multiplier effect, we highlight the Women Lead Sport's programme, promoted by ASIOP's, which in 2023 carried out its third edition, online. 35 women participated, from the most diverse countries and modalities. According to ASIOP (2023, p. 3):

*The aim of the course is to empower potential female leaders to serve in elective positions of their respective International Federation (IF), Continental Association or National Federation (NF), thereby increasing systematically the number of women in leadership positions across the Olympic Movement.*

So far, 140 women have completed the program, with relevant repercussions within the national and international Federations, in the most diverse positions, namely President and Boards members of NF and even in the IF Executive Boards or Councils.

Also, some IF's made proposals for Gender Equity representations as the World Athletics on the website regarding council election members (<https://worldathletics.org/about-iaaf/structure/council>), made decisions such as:

*There is a minimum gender requirement in the composition of Council. Of the total 26 members, there must be a minimum of seven of each gender for the elections in 2019; 10 of each gender for the elections in 2023 (c. 40%); 13 of each gender for the elections in 2027 and thereafter (ie 50%).*

## PEDAGOGICAL GUIDANCE

In view of the unequal participation of women in leadership positions in sports organizations, we advocate greater and better investment in education and training that could help to improve this situation. This investment should be made to change the policies in sports organizations, at international, national, regional and local levels, emphasizing students in schools, to reach families and all the people connected with sports.

In addition correcting gender inequalities, the presence of women in leadership positions has proven to have positive impacts on an organization's effectiveness. For example, the presence of women in leadership roles correlates with better decision-making processes, a richer pool of ideas, and better financial performance. Furthermore, when women are on boards of directors, they contribute to organizational innovation and better decision-making regarding conflicts (Torchia et al., 2018). On the other hand, thinking about leadership requires advanced communication skills, high levels of emotional intelligence and a greater ability to emotionally relate to one's experiences (Yang, Chawla and Uzzi, 2019). Some researchers confirm that these skills are generally more prevalent in women (Zheng, Surgevil, & Kark, 2018).

The consequences of this reality are negative for everyone. In the first place for women, due to the impossibility of enjoying the same conditions and benefits (namely social, economic and cultural) as men, due to their involvement in sport and the free expression of their potential in multiple dimensions (athletes, referees, coaches, managers). Then for society, because an inexorable human purpose is not fulfilled, which is to create conditions of justice in access opportunities (Silva & Lucas, 2018).

In this sense, it is important to know about strategies that help women to overcome the multiple barriers and obstacles they face in their journey with a view to achieving gender equality in the performance of important functions in sports organizations. Thus, in the study developed by Cosentino et al. (2021), the participants, who held leadership positions in professional sports organizations in Canada, revealed that they overcame many complex constraints in their paths. They also present some suggestions for women who seek to play leadership roles in sports organizations, namely: finding and later becoming role models, mentors and sponsors; create access to networking and opportunities; develop self-promotion strategies; deliberately build a very diversified sports career.

One aspect that is important to highlight and about which there are few studies, and which deserves to be deepened, has to do with the lack of evidence on electoral procedures for choosing women to hold positions in sports organizations (Evans & Pfister, 2021). These authors reveal that researchers

have many difficulties in gaining access to data on the practical aspects of elections, recognizing that records of internal discussions and some organizational statutes are often not available. Thus, the association between the structured practice of elections (or the lack of transparency) and recruitment was considered an area where evidence is needed to know and highlight best practices. This lack of clarity was considered a serious deficit for the ability of sports organizations to promote gender equity policies.

The implementation of quotas for the presence of women in sports organizations has been a measure under debate. However, there is a lack of consensus on this measure (Evans & Pfister, 2021). In this sense, there is a lack of evidence on how governments or sports organizations could apply quotas, if they did. In particular, members of NGOs and sports regulatory bodies did not know exactly why in some circumstances the implementation of some quotas was successful and in others less so. They also reveal uncertainty regarding the need to impose sanctions if the recommended quotas are not implemented. On the other hand, they felt that the selective imposition of rules and regulations on different federations or member organizations could be seen as unethical and/or unfair.

Other authors, not subscribing to the existence of quotas, since it is the most reductive way of affirming the social role that women have in the current context, recognize, however, that the creation of positive discriminative stimuli that promote the involvement of women, must also be valued in sport. (Silva & Lucas, 2018). They also argue that the dissemination and promotion of women who perform leadership roles in sports could generate the stimulus for increasing demand for these positions by women.

It could also be important to organize programs that promote gender equality in sports organizations (Murray, 2022). However, many organizations have not worked as hard to build women's sports programs as men's programs. On the other hand, women's programs are not always encouraged and developed with the same dimension as men's initiatives.

Finally, we also understand that Physical Education classes can make an important contribution to raising awareness and promoting gender equality in sports. However, there are no easy and straightforward answers to the question of how to provide gender equity in physical education and sport for young people (Flintoff, 2011). Some suggestions can be made: i) think about the type of opportunities and activities that are provided to boys and girls - it must be taken into account that providing equal access does not necessarily mean that this results in equal opportunities; ii) adopt an explicit co-educational pedagogy; recognize differences in masculinity and femininity in the learning environments provided; Physical Education teachers in their reflections and daily actions should be concerned with promoting gender equity.

## CONCLUSIONS

Gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union (EU), enshrined in treaties and other official documents, and it is presented as a major objective that the EU actively seeks to achieve

- more closely through its Strategy for Equality 2021-2025. This strategy aims to give all people, in all their diversity, the freedom to pursue their life projects and equal opportunities to prosper, participate and lead European society.

As we have seen, in the last decade, many instruments have been developed across Europe to understand the participation and impact of women in sports, and initiatives are being developed to contribute to greater integration of women in Sports. Statistical data reveal that women are still a minority in sports leadership and face many obstacles in accessing positions of power and decision-making in sports.

We found that the number of women in the top governance of IFs varies from one to 10 with an average of less than five. Also, the minimum percentage of women in top governance committees of IFs is 9%, and even if some IF's achieved a 50%, the average is still 27% of those top governance of the representative sports on Summer Olympic Games (ASOIF). We found also that only two IFs have a woman as President, representing 6% of the 33 IF of ASOIF. Some of those top IFs have developed election rules to include more women in top governance, and others still do not make these changes. On the other hand, only 24% of IFs have a strategic plan for those changes and 30% have a woman's commission for Gender Equality policies on their Sport and disciplines. We conclude that those organizations are changing but the intentionality of change still needs more evidence based on acceleration to targeting, as possible, the 50%.

The data consulted allows us to conclude that we are at a turning point, since the participation of women in recent years has increased significantly, but still needs continuous stimulation. We believe that this project "Women in Sport: Gender Relations and Future Perspectives", could also contribute to accelerating the change we need.

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## ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What percentage of women's participation in the Olympic Games is projected for the year 2024?

- a. 10%
- b. 20%
- c. 30%
- d. **50%**

2. According to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), sport is a powerful platform for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. What is the IOC's responsibility in relation to gender equality?

- a. **Taking action and promoting gender equality in sports governance.**
- b. Setting quotas for female athletes in the Olympic Games.
- c. Advocating for women's rights outside of sports.
- d. Implementing measures to promote gender diversity in mixed-gender events.

Answer: a. Taking action and promoting gender equality in sports governance.

3. What are some of the barriers faced by women in accessing leadership positions in sports organizations?

- a. Lack of opportunities for women to train in sports.
- b. Resistance to government regulations.
- c. Existence of few female role models in sports leadership.
- d. **All of the above.**

4. Which organization implemented the WoMentoring Project to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the Paralympic Movement?

- a. International Olympic Committee (IOC)
- b. European Commission
- c. Agitos Foundation
- d. **International Paralympic Committee (IPC)**

5. What are some strategies suggested to promote gender equity in sports organizations?
- a. Implementing transparent and fair procedures for candidate selection.
  - b. Advertising job vacancies for professional management positions.
  - c. Developing gender-sensitive human resources policies.
  - d. **All of the above.**