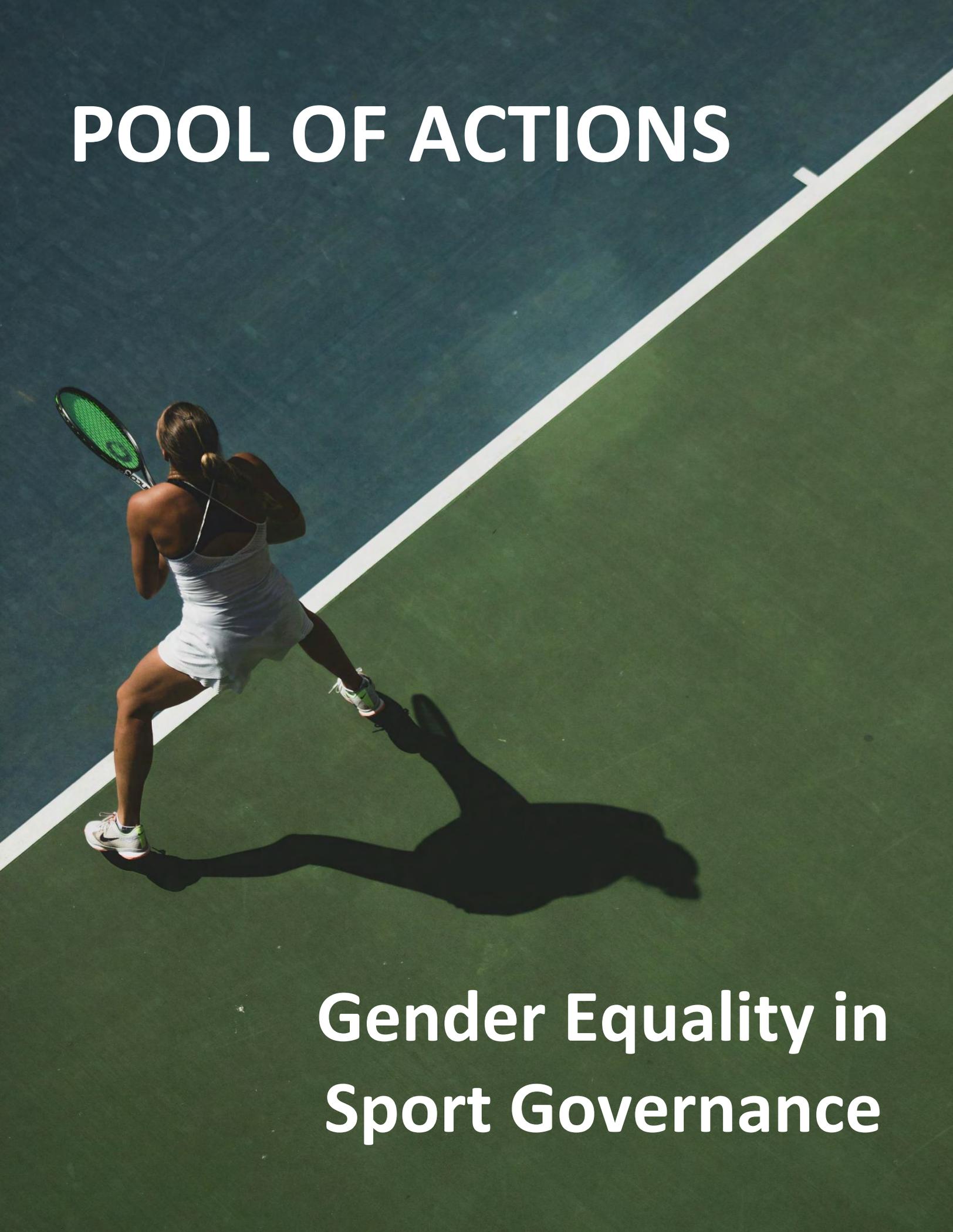


POOL OF ACTIONS



**Gender Equality in
Sport Governance**

February 2024

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The GAMES project is a 24-month project co-funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Sport Programme 2021 and coordinated by the EOC EU Office. It promotes integrity and good governance in sports by advocating for structural and cultural changes regarding gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions among NOCs and their member federations. The EOC EU Office is implementing GAMES together with 8 NOCs (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, North Macedonia, and Türkiye) and renowned experts in the field of gender equality and good governance, including Professor Emerita Kari Fasting from Equal Rights in Sports and I TRUST Sport. Furthermore, the GAMES project is supported by the International Olympic Committee.



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SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

The GAMES Pool of Actions has the scope to be a manual of concrete actions to promote gender equality in leadership positions among European National Olympic Committees (NOCs). Accordingly, the GAMES Pool of Actions and NOCs' National Action Plans developed in the framework of the GAMES project have complemented and mutually informed each other in identifying transferable and valuable strategies for sports organisations to progress towards gender equality in leadership positions. Hence, the GAMES Pool of Actions provides specific actions to guide NOCs, European and National Federations (EFs - NFs), as well as sports organisations at the grassroots level to strengthen gender equality in leadership positions whilst taking into account the organisation's current state of readiness and the political and socio-cultural barriers existing.

The Pool of Actions is structured into three main pillars that cover key topics (nine) to tackle gender equality in sports leadership.

PILLAR I STRUCTURAL MEASURES	PILLAR II PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN	PILLAR III CULTURE
1.1 Equal representation 1.2 Term limits 1.3 Election and nomination procedures of committees 1.4 Recruitment process	2.1 Women's development and mentoring programmes 2.2 Influencing member organisations	3.1 Communication 3.2 Removing existing barriers and development of gender-inclusive culture 3.3 Financial elements

Besides, the GAMES Pool of Actions also includes a series of ad-hoc advocacy strategies under each of the three pillars to receive the required support (*e.g. resources*) for the implementation of the aforementioned actions.

Under each topic is showcased a set of actions to promote gender equality in sports leadership, also aligned with a series of recommendations of IOC and/or European institutions.

The actions are divided between “fundamental” and “additional”. In this regard, the actions listed as “fundamental” actions should be seen as key to laying the foundation to reach gender equality in sports governance. Accordingly, a set of examples under each “fundamental” action aims to provide further valuable insights on the implementation of the recommended actions and any barriers or challenges previously encountered by sports organisations. Besides, the “additional” actions should be understood as being complementary to boosting gender equality in sports leadership within the organisation and beyond.

Aligned with the recommendations and action plan from the [High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport \(2022\)](#), the GAMES Pool of Actions incorporates the key transversal topics with complementary examples to holistically implement gender equality in sport governance. In addition, it includes a series of monitoring indicators to evaluate the results emerging from the implementation of the recommended actions in the framework of the GAMES Pool of Actions. There are also annexes with additional examples and a glossary of the key terminology.

In this context, **LEADERSHIP** refers to those within the NOCs or other organisations (i.e., EFs – NFs) with roles such as:

- President, Vice-President(s)
- Members of the Executive Body/Board
- Secretary General/CEO,
- Chairs of committees
- Chef de Mission
- Staff with direct line-management responsibility
- Staff with a job title such as “director” or “head of...”

Therefore, the GAMES “Pool of Actions” is designed to provide a roadmap of actions to tackle structural procedures and cultural barriers which reinforce the gender gap whilst promoting pathways for gender equality. The ultimate scope is to strengthen gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions within NOCs, NFs and sports organisations at all levels (i.e. grassroots sport clubs) across Europe – and beyond.

INTRODUCTION



Gender equality is one of the founding democratic values of the European Union and a fundamental principle of Olympism. The need to work toward achieving gender equality in sport, as in wider society, has long been recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the European Olympic Committees (EOC) and many other organisations. European NOCs are increasingly dealing with strong public opinion and governmental pressure to change the status quo and respond to socio-demographic changes by implementing policies and strategies that represent national and civil society demands, specifically, enabling women to have equal access to leadership roles in sports organisations ([XG GG, 2013](#)). And yet, while the number of women and men competing at the Olympic Games now approaches parity and many policies and strategies exist, research shows that gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions is a long way from being achieved in the European NOCs as a whole.

Data from Deloitte's 2022 *Women in the boardroom report* indicates that progress toward increasing gender equality on boards globally is very slow, with only around 20% of board seats being occupied by women. At this pace, equality will not be reached until 2045 at best. In addition, women's average tenure as board members is significantly lower than men's, with 5.1 and 7.7 years respectively (Deloitte 2022:12). Sport seems to replicate the same hierarchical ranking of women in other areas of decision-making in which women remain a minority. Adriaanse (2016) showcased that women's underrepresentation in sports is globally evident and remains most apparent in leadership and decision-making positions such as board directors, board chairs and chief executives. Accordingly, these trends seem to be replicated among European NOCs which along with other institutions in sport, appear to be male-dominated in leadership and decision-making positions, whether in elected roles or as employees (IOC, 2021).

This tendency seems to be highlighted in the findings that emerged from the baseline study submitted to the GAMES partners' NOCs and pre-selected NFs. Indeed, there was a significant male majority in terms of General Assembly voters and representation in senior management and executive roles. Besides, only a minority of partners NOCs (25%) and NFs (42%) had a "gender equality"/"women in sport"/"diversity and inclusion" policy in place with others planning to develop one. Notably, there is an apparent correlation between sports that have

historically been very male dominated in terms of participation and visibility and larger male majorities in decision-making roles (i.e. football vs. gymnastics).

Academics have discussed different trends which may reinforce the gender gap including vertical segregation with women being recruited to less prestigious and lower-paid leadership positions in sports organisations ([EIGE, 2017](#)). Furthermore, procedures for election or nomination to leadership positions often do not consider gender criteria. In turn, these trends could be partly explained by the different values, attitudes and behaviours historically associated with women and men - as seen in other sectors - but also by the gendered job context and masculine connotations of sport ([EIGE, 2017](#)). This includes the language, policy, and structural procedures in which sports organisations operate, which in turn may reproduce and normalise gender inequality and women's underrepresentation in sports governance. In this regard, notably, men's overrepresentation is perceived as a non-discriminatory *modus operandi* along with unequal access or treatment, and gender stereotypes, among others (Shaw and Slack, 2002; Pape, 2020: 83). Hence, the barriers faced in terms of gender equality should be better understood as being the results of multi-layered dynamics (*structural, cultural and social*) which may favour/discourage a gender-sensitive culture (Adriaanse, 2016).

From an organisational perspective, the impacts of gender inequality in leadership positions are multi-layered: they create reputational damage which in turn may lead to the termination of sponsorship contracts and overall asset depreciation. Besides, regarding cost-benefit, there should be awareness of the risks of profound damage. On the other hand, various pieces of research show the benefits linked with gender equality in leadership positions (Terjesen, Sealy, and Singh, 2009).

Several case studies showcase the organisational governance and economic benefits associated with equal gender participation in leadership and decision-making positions. Women bring a set of unique know-how, skills, perspective, experience and sensitivity, while playing the key role of inspiring others, which leads to deeper integrated gender culture with a reduced pay gap between genders (Cohen and Huffman, 2007; Stainback, Kleiner, and Skaggs, 2016, Pape 2020:85). Notwithstanding, it has been argued that a "critical mass" of

women is needed in leadership and decision-making positions to create the desired change (Joecks, Pull, and Vetter 2013; Torchia, Calabrò, and Huse 2011; Konrad, Kramer, and Erkut 2008). In this regard and aligned with Kanter's notion of "critical mass" from 1977, Adriaanse (2016: 150) suggests that *"women need to occupy a minimum of 30 % of board positions or three positions to enhance firm performance"*. Accordingly, boards with a "critical mass" of women appeared to be *"significantly more active in promoting non-financial performance measures, such as customer and employee satisfaction, as well as considering measures of innovation and corporate social responsibility"* (Terjesen, Sealy and Singh, 2009:329).

In this regard, it is important to create changes within the organisations - and their members - that promote alterations to the structures, practices, and values of the organisation to achieve the required reforms to ensure gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions (Pape, 2020). Accordingly, organisations should avoid implementing simply "symbolic actions" that do not holistically promote the multi-layered changes required to reach gender equality in leadership positions and to embrace gender equality as an organisational principle within a cohesive environment (Edelman, 1992; Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly, 2006).





**PILLAR 1:
STRUCTURAL
MEASURES**

Structural measures refer to the organisational characteristics, policies and procedures of sports organisations (i.e. statutes, elections procedures...). In terms of structural measures, the common modus operandi appears to include (among others):

- There is a limited turnover in the membership of Executives across sports organisations.
- Recruiting processes of sports organisations tend to be shaped by normalised/institutionalised personal networks and informal selection procedures.
- Many Executive members are nominated and elected by their peers, who often tend to elect new leaders that feature similar characteristics as themselves.
- Women often describe being nominated and/or putting themselves forward for election as an unpleasant experience; likewise, when elected women tend to experience and be perceived as a “token” board member (i.e. women elected to quota positions that are specifically reserved for women).

PILLAR I STRUCTURAL MEASURES
1.1 Equal representation
1.2 Term limits
1.3 Election and nomination procedures of committees
1.4 Recruitment process

1.1: EQUAL REPRESENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

[Council of Europe](#)

Adopt a regulation/charter that recognises the principle of gender parity within all decision-making bodies and processes.

Governmental bodies responsible for the policy area of sport also have a role to play in promoting measures to increase the number of women in sports leadership positions.

[High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport \(2022\)](#)

Adopt a gender equality strategy, with leadership as a key topic and entrench gender equality targets for decision-making positions, including good governance principles such as a minimum target for the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

[International Olympic Committee “Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives 2021-2024”](#)

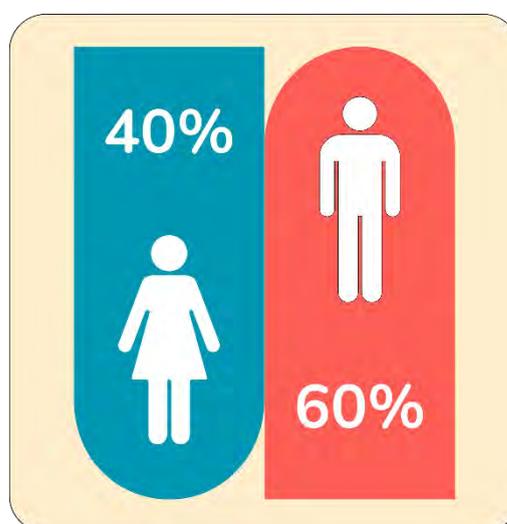
“As part of good governance, the IOC encourages IFs and NOCs to transition to gender-balanced representation in their decision-making bodies with a minimum of 30 per cent women’s representation”.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

1.1.1 ACTION: Design and implement a Gender Equality policy/strategy for the organisation; accordingly, include leadership as one of the main pillars and SMART objectives in terms of gender targets.

It is vital to create a strategic roadmap that provides the mandate to pursue a gender equality agenda, aligned with specific actions, inclusive of clear gender equality standards and targets for the NOCs/NFs, whilst being also a guideline to further strengthen mechanisms to prevent, respond, monitor/evaluate discriminatory acts (IBU, 2021).

1.1.2 ACTION: The recommended ratio for equal gender representation should be of 40%-60% for the organisations' Executive Boards, Commissions and working groups, as well as among General Assembly delegates - with a progressive framework and set timeline depending on the organisation's stage of readiness. Accordingly, amend statutes and by-laws to ensure adherence to equal gender representation – when equal representation refers to 40% - 60% of each gender.



The 40-60% represents a “balanced group”, according to (Joecks et al.2013) notion of group composition. This group composition is vital to reduce gender-based categories as the equal representation of both genders leads to perceiving women as qualified and skilled individuals rather than as the “exception”. Likewise, it has been shown that the leadership of organisations with equal representation of gender on the board are more aware of gender composition and stereotypical behaviour, whilst those with a gender-skewed board (less than 15% women’s representation) did not question women’s underrepresentation (Adriaanse, 2016: 151).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

1.1.3 ACTION: Age quotas may support ensuring diversity in decision-making.

EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Design and implement a Gender Equality policy/strategy

In 2021, the [International Biathlon Union \(IBU\)](#) launched its [Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026](#) to promote gender equality within the organisation and its member federations' activities – at all levels. This has the ultimate aim to strive for better governance, gender sensitivity, as well as equal and diverse representation in decision-making. Accordingly, IBU's [Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026](#) includes a series of set targets for each pillar; the “governance pillar” expressly states:

- 30% in applications for men and women to IBU Committees, Working Groups by 2022.
- A minimum of 30 % representation of one gender in the Executive Board and Technical Committee in 2026.

EXAMPLE: Ratio for equal representation

World Athletics, in line with its [2016 Governance Structure Reform](#), implemented a progressive framework to reach gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions. The progressive framework sets specific targets within a set timeframe with the last aim being to reach 50% - 50% by the 2027 elections:

- At the 2019 election, there was a minimum target of seven men and women elected from among the total of 26 Council members (including 1 Vice President and 1 female and 1 male athlete representative). Following the 2019 election, there are currently eight women (30%) on the World Athletics Council.
- At the 2023 election, there should be a minimum of 10 men and women elected from among the total of 26 Council members (including the 1 Vice President and 1 female and 1 male athlete representative, i.e. 40%).
- At the 2027 election, there should be 13 men and women on Council (including the 2 male and 2 female Vice Presidents, i.e. 50%).

1.2: TERM LIMITS

RECOMMENDATIONS

[High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport \(2022\)](#)

Adopting good governance principles such as no more than three terms in the same position, as well as encouraging rotation in gender representation for all key elected positions (i.e. president, treasurer, secretary).

[Sport and Recreation Alliance](#)

Directors should have term limits. This means that directors must only be elected or appointed for a defined term and should be eligible again for election or appointment only for a defined number of terms.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

1.2.1 ACTION: The recommended number of renewable mandates – term limits – should be a maximum of three terms of four years (i.e. 12 years overall) for leadership and decision-making positions such as presidents and secretaries general, executive board members and directors (among others).

The renewable mandates appear to be extremely relevant to promoting diversity and encouraging gender balance in decision-making and leadership positions in sports organisations. Notwithstanding, the implementation of renewable mandates remains extremely challenging (i.e. different roles, retrospectives...); accordingly, these should be understood and tackled holistically as good governance (Henry and Robinson, 2010).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

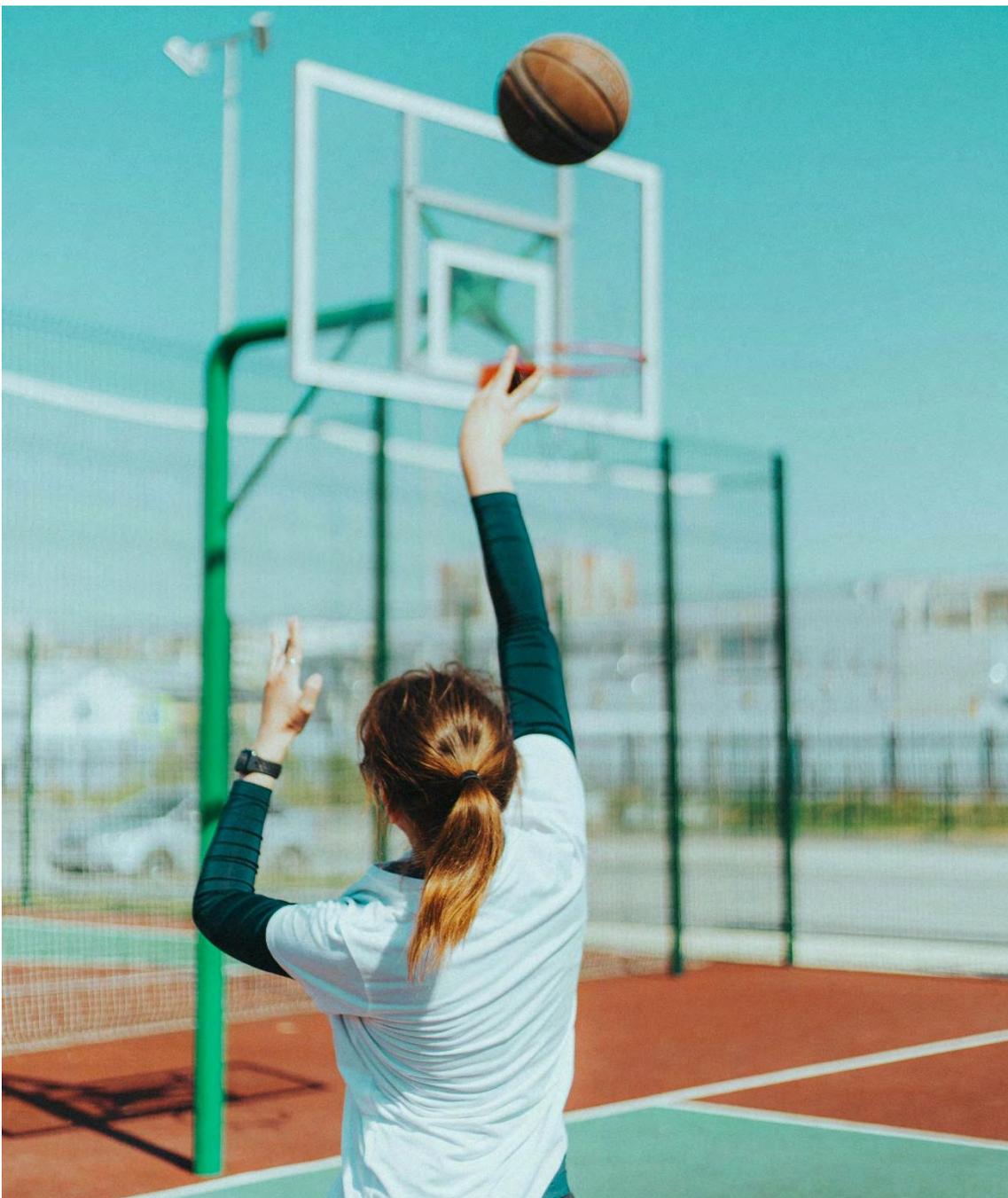
1.2.2 ACTION: Set specific age limits for leadership and decision-making positions, as well as succession planning to encourage the continuity/legacies of the organisational leadership's knowledge, priorities and actions.



EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Term limits

In 2017, the Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI) introduced term limits for Executive Committee members in its [constitution](#) (Article 18 and 19). Accordingly, each member can serve a maximum of two terms of four years, including transitional arrangements.



1.3: ELECTION/NOMINATION OF COMMITTEES

RECOMMENDATIONS

[Loughborough Report](#)

It is recommended that Nomination Commissions be established for all NOCs and IFs with a responsibility to identify credible candidates of both genders for membership of the board and other significant roles. (Loughborough Report, 2010:16)

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

1.3.1 ACTION: Safeguard equal gender representation across all committees/commissions; accordingly, ensure that roles and tasks are distributed equally among board/committee members to avoid executive roles (such as president) being taken by men and non-decision-making positions by women.

The equal allocation of decision-making roles to board/committee members is vital to promote gender equality whilst avoiding replicating social practices and gendered division of labour. Accordingly, women should also occupy influential positions within the committees/boards such as being responsible for important portfolios and/or being the committee chair (Adriaanse and Schofield 2013; Adriaanse, 2016: 158).

1.3.2 ACTION: Appoint a commission/committee responsible for designing, overseeing and monitoring gender equality objectives, aligned with the Gender Equality strategy/policy. The commission should have equal gender representation.

It is recommended to appoint:

- *an equality commission/committee with equal gender representation rather than a women's committee. This is to better represent the multilayered nature of gender equality and the relevance of involving both genders whilst avoiding segregation, which in turn limits the organisation's capacity to holistically embed the desired changes to reach gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions (Pape, 2020: 101).*

- a staff member responsible to liaise with the equality commission/committee and implementing the strategy for gender equality (i.e. Coordinators for Gender Equality) - unless the commission has an executive role with an appointed commissioner responsible for setting thematic/portfolio (i.e. gender equality) ([IOC, 2022](#)).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

1.3.3 ACTION: Establish an election/nomination commission/committee with technical skills and knowledge to safeguard the transparency and impartiality of the elections/nominations related to leadership and decision-making positions. The commission should have equal gender representation.

EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Equal gender representation across the committee/commission

The [Olympic Federation of Ireland \(OFI\)](#) has been extensively working on the equal gender representation across all the committees/commissions both within the organisation and its member federations, as well as at the European level. In 2022, OFI's member federations approved the 40% minimum of both genders on OFI's board; subsequently, the same mechanisms for equal representation were implemented by the Athletes' Commission. Ultimately, OFI has also supported the European Olympic Committees to implement equal representation mechanisms for its committees/commissions. Accordingly, the European Olympic Committees is implementing a Gender Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy which includes changes in its Executive Committee's election procedure to guarantee a more gender-balanced representation.

EXAMPLE: Equality commission/committee

NOC Belgium appointed a "Gender Equity Commission" with the aim - among others - to improve the visibility of women's sports via its platform "Empowering Women in Sports". Accordingly, its basic mission is to identify obstacles to female participation in sports and to propose innovative solutions to improve the situation of gender equality.

1.4: RECRUITMENT PROCESS

RECOMMENDATIONS

[High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport \(2022\)](#)

Implement gender-sensitive and transparent selection processes for recruitment and succession planning.

[Council of Europe \(2019\)](#)

Pay attention to using inclusive language and not only masculine forms. Use images that show diversity in sport.

Proactively contact candidates of the underrepresented gender and contact female candidates directly when a post is vacant instead of waiting for applications. Make use of female networks/NGOs/federations and look further afield for the skills required.

Be clear about the skills needed and avoid gender stereotypes, such as leadership qualities being associated positively with men and negatively with women.

Reflect on technical ability and the soft skills required.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

1.4.1 ACTION: Ensure that the job description for the available positions adopts a gender-sensitive language and clearly states the organisation's commitment to equal gender representation.

Hovden's (2010) and Acker's (2012) studies show that the "design of the job" remains a common barrier for women to apply for leadership and decision-making positions. Indeed, job positions tend to be designed and/or presented in ways that require gender-typical attributes and/or replicates masculine stereotype, which, in turn, make the job positions appear as being reachable for men, only. Hence, it is important for the organisation to design the job description using gender-neutral language and design in the foreseen responsibilities, expectations and required qualifications, as well as to officially state

the organisation's commitment to gender equality throughout the recruitment process. Hence, it has been shown that designing the roles through gender-neutral lenses encourages an increase in women's representation within the organisation (Pape, 2020).

1.4.2 ACTION: Set up clear and transparent recruitment including mixed review and interview panels procedures – with equal gender representation of personnel from human resources, as well as external experts with gender equality knowledge and training on “unconscious bias”.

It is vital to involve personnel with knowledge and awareness of gender equality related biases as women tend to be less likely to be considered for leadership positions since they are systematically perceived as not being fit to be hired, even when they have similar qualifications to male candidates (Burton et al. 2011; Burton et al. 2009). Notably, some organisations have recruitment policies which adopt “positive discrimination of women” in cases of equal qualifications among applicants to encourage gender equality. And yet, it should be acknowledged that sports organisations with limited resources should at least employ mixed review and interview panel procedures for leadership and decision-making positions, initially. This is expected to encourage a process in which a mixed leadership group sets good examples for the organisation to promote a more diverse and inclusive environment (Council of Europe, 2019).

1.4.3 ACTION: Ensure that the information about the available positions is actively advertised/communicated across organisational channels (i.e. online and offline means), publicly available channels and women's networks.

It is vital to implement a clear procedure to ensure that the information is duly advertised as the notion of “access discrimination” suggests that the existing network or structure may prevent women from accessing specific jobs (Burton, 2015; Walker & Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). In this regard, it has been recommended to widely advertise available positions through internal media channels, as well as being displayed in common areas of the organisation (i.e. social areas). Likewise, there should be wide publicity of the post throughout the online channels of the organisation and relevant stakeholders (i.e. job websites, newspapers, LinkedIn, member organisations and women network channels...) (Council of Europe, 2019).

1.4.4 ACTION: Set procedures to ensure that available positions are re-advertised if no women are shortlisted in the recruitment. Accordingly, stimulate accountability by requiring written justifications for recruitment and promotion shortlists that do not include women.

Various studies have shown that there are processes of the recruitment and selection procedures which systematically reinforce gendered job context and masculine attributes (Claringbould and Knoppers 2007, Hovden 2010, Kihl et al. 2013; Schull et al. 2013). Hence, it is recommended to implement a re-advertising procedure if there are no women in the applicant pool, as well as requiring departments and committees to justify recruitment and promotion shortlists that do not include women (EIGE, 2022).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

1.4.5 ACTION: Consider the relevance of adopting policies that embrace a family-friendly and flexible work approach.

1.4.6 ACTION: Implement recruitment procedures that encourage diversity and do not discriminate against applicants with career breaks or non-traditional career paths.

1.4.7 ACTION: Create a pipeline with candidates who could fulfil leadership and decision-making roles. The pipeline should be enriched with alumni from educational programmes, training courses, and mentorship initiatives organised and followed by the organisation (among others).

EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Organisation commitment to gender equality

The International Hockey Federation (FIH) in its [Gender Equality policy](#) clearly states that “*FIH wants to ensure that the creation of awareness of gender equality is not only about the numbers of female and male representatives but also about the (recruitment) processes*”. Accordingly, it states that “*Any breach of this policy in the form of discrimination, victimization or bullying whilst carrying out duties on behalf of FIH or otherwise acting as a representative of FIH shall result in disciplinary proceedings*”.

EXAMPLE: Transparent Recruitment Process accompanied by experts.

In 2019, the [Union Cycliste Internationale \(UCI\)](#) obtained the [EDGE Move certification for gender equity](#) – becoming the first world sports governing body to achieve this. The EDGE certification for gender equity involves a rigorous third-party review of representation across the pipeline, equal pay, effectiveness of policies and practices, and inclusiveness of an organisation’s culture. As an integral part of the assessment, employees receive a comprehensive survey to assess perceptions of gender equity in the workplace. Accordingly, UCI procedures in terms of recruitment and equal pay - among others - go through the regular EDGE Assessment, the initial independent validation and benchmark of an organisation’s commitment, in order to identify the progress made to reach the set standard (i.e. increasing the number of women in management positions, and further leveraging third-party expertise to evaluate internal policies and procedures to remove gender bias). Currently, women represent between a quarter and a third of members across the UCI Management Committee, UCI Commissions and continental executive committees.

EXAMPLE: Gender-sensitive dissemination

The [NOC of the Netherlands](#) created a “Diversity Charter” and encouraged the National Federations to sign the Charter; accordingly, 26 National Federations signed up for the Charter to promote more diversity in sports.

EXAMPLE: Procedure for women’s representation in shortlists

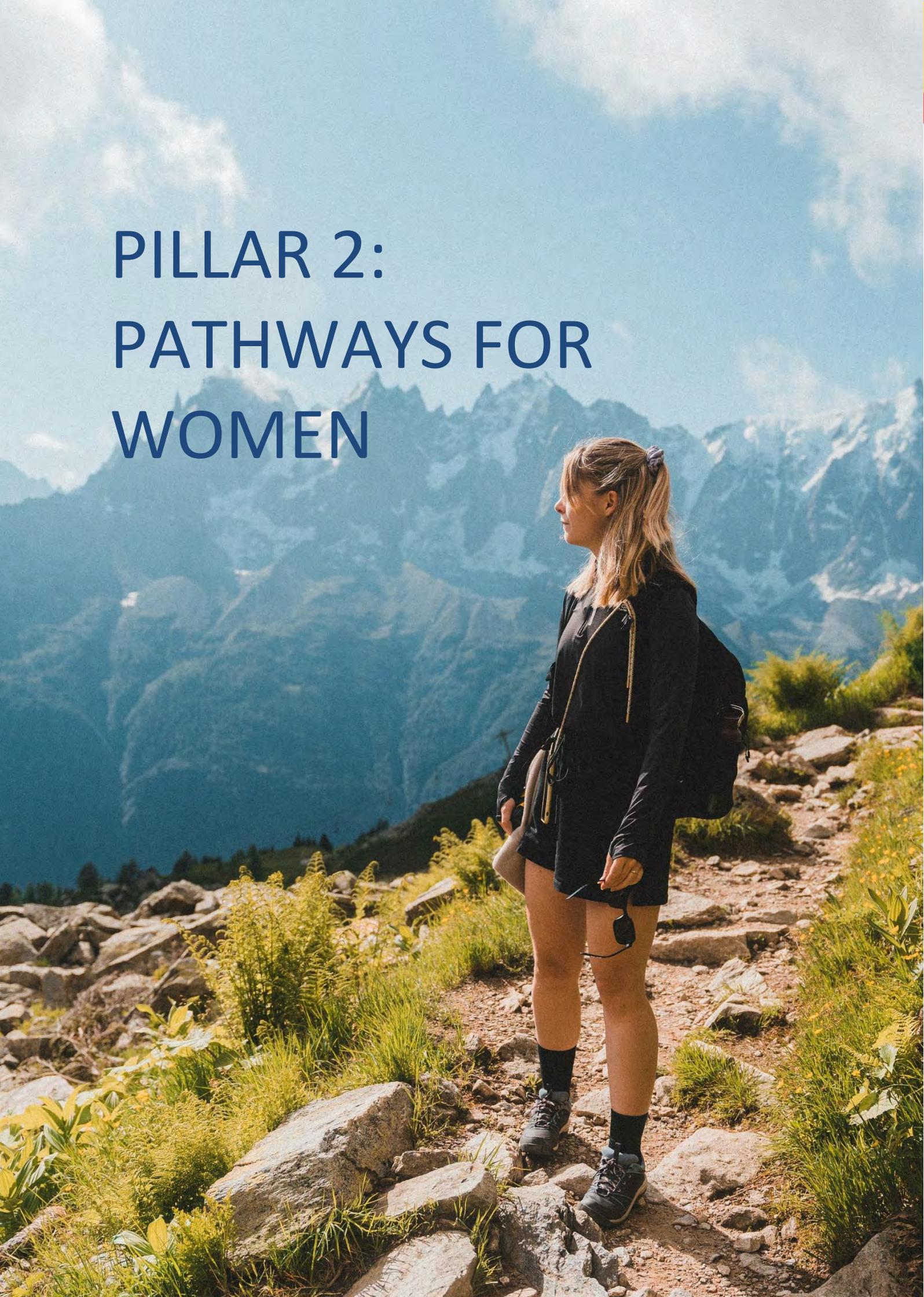
Since 2020, the [English Football Association](#) has set specific procedures for tackling inequality across senior leadership positions, team operations and coaching roles. Notably, shortlists for interviews must have at least one male and one female candidate (when applicants meeting the job specifications apply). Accordingly, procedures are in place to obtain further justifications on the limiting factors for which the recruitment targets in terms of gender equality and diversity have not been met (i.e. within the end-year report). Subsequently, it is expected to use the data collected from the process to improve their recruitment in subsequent years.

LOBBYING STRATEGIES

- Gender equality should be presented as a business case for sports organisations; accordingly, collect existing evidence (qualitative and quantitative data, case studies...) on the impact of diversity on organisational success.
- Mapping of stakeholders including decision-makers whose agenda aligns with gender equality; accordingly, create alliances and invite stakeholders to become “enablers/ambassadors” (i.e. men as allies).
- Public funding is increasingly interlinked with good governance principles including gender equality and gender budgeting; accordingly, collect evidence (qualitative and quantitative data, case studies...) on the importance of adhering to gender equality standards to receive financial support (i.e. sponsors, European Commission, Olympic Solidarity...).
- “Carpe diem” is a fundamental principle when aiming to create structural changes; accordingly, advance the topic when allies are in power/decision-making positions, as well as taking into account the overall timeline to adapt and adopt statutes (i.e. General Assemblies).



PILLAR 2: PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN



In this section, the scope is to present the recommendations and suggested actions ensuring equal gender representation in educational and mentoring pathways/programmes. Accordingly, regarding women's pathways, the common modus operandi appears to include (among others):

- Existence of so-called "labyrinth" and "glass ceiling" for women in sport governance.
- Lack of development opportunities or programmes provided by the organisation.

PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN

2.1 Women's development and mentoring programmes

2.2 Influencing member organisations

2.1: WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AND MENTORING PROGRAMMES

[High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport \(2022\)](#)

Implement gender-sensitive and transparent selection processes for recruitment and succession planning.

Develop leadership programmes to empower and prepare women to apply for decision-making positions.

[International Olympic Committee \(2018\)](#)

Introduce a co-mentoring programme for women, partnering potential governance candidates with senior-level board members. This should include mentoring, networking and training related to succession planning.

[Council of Europe \(2019\)](#)

Support women to take on new positions through training or other specific actions such as mentoring, including specific programmes for former female athletes.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

2.1.1 ACTION: Design training, mentorships, scholarships, and job-shadowing programmes for women working in the organisation to tackle succession planning for decision-making and leadership roles, accordingly, these should provide women with the skills required to be confident candidates for election/nomination.

2.1.2 ACTION: Provide awareness training and workshops for management and leadership roles in the organisation - including both women and men - on the importance of respecting gender equality, diversity and inclusive leadership, identifying obstacles faced by women concerning decision-making and leadership, as well as overcoming unconscious bias (among

other key topics). Ultimately, these trainings/workshops should be included in mandatory leadership courses for all those involved in the organisation, including employed, elected and nominated members.

2.1.3 ACTION: Ensure equal gender representation among mentors and trainers of these training, mentorship and job-shadowing programmes in order to promote peer-to-peer networking and knowledge/experience sharing between genders, as well as among women only.

The aforementioned actions/programmes should be understood as being complementary to each other. Indeed, these are expected to encourage positive organisational effectiveness and cohesion by reducing conflict, and staff turnover, enhancing innovation, as well as boosting job satisfaction and performance. Besides, training programmes are expected to widen the pool of gender allies/champions, in future. And yet, additional mechanisms should be designed to reinforce their strategic effectiveness, particularly concerning leadership and decision-making positions (i.e senior staff, executive board members, vice presidents, presidents...) ([IOC, 2018](#))

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

2.1.4 ACTION: Provide ad-hoc training for those involved in the delivery of the activity (i.e. recruiters, advertisers, mentors/trainers...) to review the verbal/body communication and implicit biases at all stages (i.e. advertisement/recruitment language, mode of advertisement/training delivery...).

2.1.5 ACTION: Create policies offering staff and board members of both genders the opportunity to undertake continuous professional development training to update/enhance their knowledge on key transversal topics related to gender equality.

2.1.6 ACTION: Design/implement career transition programmes for women involved in the organisation as athletes, coaches, referees and officials to steadily be more involved in the leadership and governance of the organisation.

EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Training, mentorships, scholarships and job-shadowing programmes for women working in the organisation.

The NOC of France launched the “[En route pour la Mixite 2024](#)” initiatives; accordingly, an action plan was put in place to achieve the goal of parity and diversity. Notably, all initiatives are based on the relevance of boosting mentorship and networks, as well as the sharing of experiences:

- “Club de la mixité” was created to measure, promote and help in increasing gender equality in the federations;
- “Club des 300” is designed to assist women in high ranks of the sports movement to achieve their goals while benefitting from the network;
- “Dirigeantes” programme which includes the testimony and journey of women who reached high ranking positions.

Currently, the aforementioned initiatives are showcasing progress whilst these remain ongoing intending to further reach sports stakeholders (i.e. federations, clubs...).

EXAMPLE: Awareness training and workshops overcoming unconscious bias (among other key topics).

[IBU](#) has organised a training course focusing on unconscious bias to further raise awareness of what constitutes bias; accordingly, the relevance to be aware and avoid replicating implicit prejudice and stereotypes in the portrayal of women and men in all aspects related to the sport, its leadership and governance.

EXAMPLE: Equal gender representation among mentors and trainers of these programmes.

World Sailing launched The Magenta Project Mentoring Programme to bring mentoring into sailing at the top level by connecting aspiring female sailors with mentors who can help them map out their sporting development pathway, motivate them to succeed at the highest level possible, and address any issues that might stand in the way of their advancement or potential, or even cause them to quit the sport early. Many mentees have had the chance to sail aboard high-performance boats with their well-known mentors. Some have had the chance to work beside them ashore. The competition between a mentor and mentee in a race to the Azores where the mentee triumphed was a success highlight.



2.2: INFLUENCING MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

[International Olympic Committee \(2018\)](#)

Allocating funds specifically for sportswomen and employing funding as an incentive for organisations to implement gender equality.

[High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport \(2022\)](#)

Educate members about the need for equal working conditions for women.

Ensure to build gender equality capacity among members of the organisation.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

2.2.1 ACTION: Entrench gender equality into policies and statutes to encourage member organisations to strengthen/adhere to the set targets for gender equality in leadership and governance (i.e. present/adopt a proposal to encourage member organisations to attend key decision-making events such as General Assembly/Annual meetings-seminars with representatives – and ensure gender balance when sending more than one representative).

2.2.2 ACTION: Offer incentives to member organisations to implement gender equality strategies/policies and related women’s pathways, as well as to reach the set targets in this field (i.e. Gender awards/label) and encourage accountability by setting sanctions (i.e. financial) for cases of non-compliance.

The aforementioned actions are key to encouraging genuine changes among member organisations in terms of gender equality in leadership positions. Notably, women cannot be elected if the member organisations do not nominate women’s candidates (European Commission, 2014). In this regard, it has also been shown that long-established federations may be less responsive to the required changes due to stereotypes/procedures being deeply ingrained in the organisation’s modus operandi (Sotiriadou and de Haan, 2019:380).

It should be acknowledged that not all organisations have the status or authority to force policies, distribute resources and/or sanctions on member organisations. Notwithstanding, these organisations can lead by example and encourage member organisations to adopt gender equality policies in leadership and governance, notably through non-financial incentives such as awarding a “Gender Label” to the most committed member organisation(s) (High-Level Group, 2022).

2.2.3 ACTION: Design training, mentorship programmes, roundtable discussions and networking events on gender equality to be attended by representatives of the member organisations – each member should ensure gender balance among its representatives.

It is recommended to cover a wide range of topics interconnected with gender equality as these initiatives/programmes should ultimately offer key insight, knowledge and guidance on the importance of gender equality and diversity, inclusive leadership, the main barriers faced by women concerning decision-making and leadership, as well as, the relevance of women’s pathways, succession planning, overcoming unconscious bias and reaching equal working conditions for both genders (among other key topics) (European Commission, 2014).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

2.2.4 ACTION: Design/implement career transition programmes for women involved in the organisation as athletes, coaches, referees and officials to steadily be more involved in the leadership and governance of the organisation.

EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Change of policies and incentives

The [Swedish Sport Confederation](#) changed its statute which meant that boards in (national) specialist sports federations should have a gender balance in which no gender is represented by less than 40 per cent. In the nomination committees, the gender balance must be 50-50. The charter entered into force in 2021. If the specialist sports federations do not reach the targets established by the statute in 2021, it will be considered a contravention of the statute’s regulations. The maximum penalty for a contravention is exclusion from the Swedish Sports Confederation.



EXAMPLE: Incentives to member organisations to implement gender equality strategies/policies

The NOC of Türkiye provides financial assistance to National Federations in organising technical development courses and certificate programmes for coaches, referees, physicians, physiotherapists, nutritionists, and technical officials on the condition that either equal or a significant number of female participants in the field are taking part.

EXAMPLE: Programmes/initiatives on gender equality

In 2017-2018, the NOC of Finland implemented the “Leads Like a Woman” programme which consisted of five two-day sessions with tasks between sessions and mentoring. The education offered practical tools and techniques; hence, participants were educated on themes related to the Olympic values of equality and respect, while at the same time, the tasks and the mentoring workshops benefited trainees too. The initiative’s evaluation showed that a number of participants stood for an election to upper-level positions in their sports organisations, even during the education process, with many of them ultimately reaching noticeable promotions.

LOBBYING STRATEGIES

- Allocation of resources is vital to ensure that appropriate and lasting pathways to encourage gender equality are implemented; accordingly, organisations should allocate their own financial and personnel resources to such initiatives.
- Create and/or join the increasing number of professional women's networks operating in the realm of sport and gender equality, as well as any other relevant network to encourage women's involvement and participation in leadership and decision-making pathways/positions.
- Several stakeholders should be involved to further promote gender equality; accordingly, governmental bodies, NOCs, NFs and their members play a key role in providing the resources and/or implementing pathways to reach gender equality.





PILLAR 3:
CULTURE

Culture includes informal rules and unwritten norms and practices which in turn affect the structural aspects of gender equality (Pape, 2020: 84). In other words, culture refers to *“patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols (...); culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning influences upon further action”* (Adler, 1997:14)

Such complex systems need to be taken into consideration and understood when designing and implementing gender equality initiatives, to appropriately tailor them to the organizational settings and socio-political context. Therefore, this pillar should be considered as an overarching feature directly interrelated with the structural measures and women’s pathways.

In terms of culture, the common modus operandi appears to include (among others):

- Women’s lack of free time due to the pattern of gender roles in society.
- Patriarchal language, gendered stereotypes and person profiling persist.
- There is a prevailing masculinised sports setting and stereotypical views on gender roles.

CULTURE
3.1 Communication
3.2 Removing existing barriers and development of gender-inclusive culture
3.3 Financial elements

3.1: COMMUNICATION

[Council of Europe \(2015\)](#)

Draw the attention of the media, bearing in mind their editorial independence, to the need to adopt measures on:

- conveying a non-stereotyped image, role and visibility of women and men in sport and of women's sport, by not reproducing sexist portrayals and eliminating sexist content and language (...) and by reflecting the progress of gender equality in sport;
- raising the awareness and strengthening the capacities of sport media (...) by offering regular educational and vocational training programmes geared to the acquisition of in-depth knowledge of gender equality and its crucial role in a democratic society.

[Women in Sport \(2017\)](#)

The sports sector must work together to promote realistic female role models within a range of senior roles including Chair, Chief Executive, Performance Director and members of the Senior Leadership team. This will help to show both women and men what is possible.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

3.1.1 ACTION: Demonstration in the public sphere of the leadership's commitment to gender equality through written documents/publications of the organisation (i.e. a report on gender equality targets and progress in the organisation's Annual Report).

There is increasing evidence which suggests that more equitable and diverse workplaces in sports organisations can have a positive impact on sport organisations as a whole, particularly when the leadership is perceived to support such policies (e.g. Perez-Rivases et al., 2017). Spoor and Hoye (2013:13) argued that positive outcomes for all - among which "perceptions that top management genuinely supports gender equity, had a consistent effect on participants' psychological relationship with the organisation". Hence, it is recommended that the leadership openly commits to gender equality through written documents and concrete actions.

3.1.2 ACTION: Promote women in leadership and decision-making positions as role models whilst using content which highlights diversity and avoids the connotation of women as an “exception” in leadership and governance roles.

It is key to showcase women in leadership as role models, these can set a key example and inspire others (Adriaanse, 2016: 150). It has been shown that women’s role models support tackling gender stereotypes and enhance the notion that governance and decision-making positions can be occupied by women. Besides, this is an opportunity for women’s role models to share leadership knowledge whilst enhancing their competencies (Meier, 2015).

3.1.3 ACTION: Aligned with the [IOC Portrayal Guidelines](#), promote gender-equal portrayal practices and encourage national media to do the same. Accordingly, provide ad-hoc training for media and communication roles regarding gender-equal portrayal practices and biases in women’s media coverage, both with respect to text and images.

3.1.4 ACTION: Adopt gender-conscious language for internal and external communication.

Women in leadership are underrepresented in sports media at all levels (HLG, 2022). Accordingly, organisational communication should adopt the appropriate language and images, as well as ensure that the prominence, quality and quantity of coverage is gender balanced. Indeed, organisations need to adopt “gender-sensitive” portrayal and communication practices which encourage an equal representation of gender across all communication and media content - both online and offline (IOC Portrayal Guidelines). Besides, it is recommended to work with media organisations to boost women’s portrayals and coverage (HLG, 2022).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

3.1.5 ACTION: Incentive stakeholders to engage and promote gender equality through prestige (i.e. awards).

EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Public Commitment

The **European Hockey Federation** led a content campaign with the hashtag “#EquallyAmazing” complementing the unveiling of their Gender Balance Charter to increase participation and prominence. The campaign has supporters from all facets of the sport, including athletes, coaches, umpires, young panellists, and board members, who share the same ideals as the campaign in advancing gender equality and bringing about change in the sport.

EXAMPLE: Women portrayed as role models

The Czech Olympic Committee annually organises the [Věra Čáslavská Prize](#). This award is designed to recognise women role models in sport; accordingly, one woman receives the award each year not only for her results in sport but also for her ability to share the Olympic values with others. Nominees are proposed on an annual basis by the Commission of Equal Opportunities in Sport of the Czech Olympic Committee.

EXAMPLE: Adoption of the IOC Portrayal Guidelines

The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) approved the Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Action Plan 2025, which takes concrete steps to start closing gender equality, diversity and inclusion gaps within the organization. The GEDI Action Plan 2025 is aligned with the principles of the UN Guidelines for Gender-Responsive Sports Organizations, as well as with the IOC guidelines. It includes six main “Strategic Goals”, namely, to promote women’s leadership and gender equality in governance models; to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in and through sports; to close the gap in investment in women’s sports and promote equal economic opportunities for women and girls; to promote women’s equal participation and bias-free representation in sports media, including communications to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes and to promote positive role models; to support equal opportunities for girls in sports, physical activity, and physical education; to monitor and publicly report on progress on an annual basis.

EXAMPLE: Neutral Language

DOSB adopted [Gender Neutral Language Recommendations](#). The Executive Board of the DOSB decided on 31 August 2021 to extend the current regulation in the DOSB regarding gender-conscious language from 2019 and to support a uniform application in the DOSB. The regulations in this guideline are also intended to provide assistance and orientation for the member organisations.



3.2: REMOVING EXISTING BARRIERS AND DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER-INCLUSIVE CULTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS

[High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport \(2022\)](#)

Adopt rules stating that the working conditions of all female employees must be equal to those of male employees.

[Council of Europe \(2019\)](#)

Allow and value maternity, paternity and parental leave in your organisation. This includes recognising any competences acquired during a parental break. Ensure that care leave does not have any adverse effect on an individual's future prospects within the organisation.

Develop work-life-balance schemes for everyone.

Define what constitutes violence, harassment, sexism and any other inappropriate behaviour in your organisation. Adopt and implement protocols, guidelines and codes of conduct. And make them public!

Organise an internal complaints procedure for any issues related to discrimination, violence, harassment, sexism and any other inappropriate behaviours. And monitor it!

FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

3.2.1 ACTION: Develop maternity and parental leave policies, as well as opportunities for flexible work (i.e. allow home-working and flexible start and finish times, adapt meeting times and the mode of delivery – online vs. in-person meetings).

It has been shown that women can be perceived as not suitable for leadership and decision-making because “too demanding and too strenuous on a woman’s time” (Sotiriadou and De Haan, 2019:376). In this regard, the organisational culture can play a key role in supporting work-life balance in order to encourage women in leadership and decision-making positions through the implementation of a flexible working model with a set of regulations to allow employees to benefit from flexible hours, convenient locations for in-person meeting and work-from-home, among others measures (Bruening and Dixon 2007; Dixon et al. 2008; Sotiriadou and De Haan, 2019:372).

3.2.2 ACTION: Design/implement anti-harassment policies; accordingly, organise ad-hoc activities to inform staff, board members and all relevant stakeholders regarding the policy and everyone’s responsibility to adhere to it.

It is important to put in place specific measures to prevent and respond to unwelcome behaviour and/or comments based on someone’s gender. This is to ensure that all stakeholders are duly informed regarding the anti-harassment policies and; accordingly, the relevant contact points and consequences for lack of adherence to set standards ([IOC, 2021](#)). In this regard, Henry and Robinson (2010) demonstrated the relevance of these policies to be supported by the leadership whilst being embraced by all relevant stakeholders.

3.2.3 ACTION: The leadership should formally showcase its commitment to gender equality by including it amongst the organisation’s values; accordingly, the organisation’s responsibility and targets to implement real measures to promote gender equality.

It has been shown that gender equality is facilitated by an organisational culture in which the leadership commitment and accountability to gender equality are clearly stated. Indeed, organisations which adopt “distancing practices” - and do not take responsibility for their role - in promoting gender equality tend to replicate gender segregation in leadership and decision-making positions within the organisation (Spaij et al., 2020; Evans and Pfister, 2021: 330). Hence, it is recommended that the leadership embraces gender equality as an organisation’s core value and acknowledges both the leadership and organisation’s responsibility to actively promote and implement measures/targets to facilitate gender equality (Adriaanse and Schofield, 2013).

3.2.4 ACTION: Involve all genders to cooperate unanimously to promote women’s rights and gender equality principles. Accordingly, appoint “gender diversity champions – ambassadors” from the organisation’s staff, athletes, and external stakeholders.



The lack of networks of stakeholders advocating for the importance of gender equality as a key barrier within the organisation to embrace gender equality remains an internal (minor) concern (Schull, Shaw, and Kihl, 2013). Besides, men are overrepresented in the leadership and decision-making of sports governance; accordingly, they have an essential role in enabling gender equity. Hence, everyone needs to be actively involved in encouraging women's representation in leadership roles whilst promoting women's interests as a whole (Sotiriadou and De Haan, 2019:376).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

3.2.5 ACTION: Generate new ideas/programmes to promote cohesion and cooperation between different genders and roles within the organisation.

3.2.6 ACTION: Avoid activities which reinforce informal networks/alliances and replicate the status quo of unequal representations of genders in the leadership and decision-making of sports organisations.

3.2.7 ACTION: Promote and implement grassroots projects which encourage equal access to sports for all genders and offer opportunities for delivering education in and through sports concerning leadership and decision-making positions in sports organisations.



EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: **Parental leave**

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) in England and the Rugby Players' Association (RPA) introduced a "Maternity, Pregnant parent & Adoption leave Policy" for contracted England Women's players. The goal of the Policy is to develop guidelines to help the athlete during pregnancy and to create a friendly atmosphere for contractual players after they have children. The Policy also offers chances for players who are going on maternity leave (26 weeks at full pay) to transition into other safe jobs within the rugby network, such as community coach, until the player goes on maternity leave. If contracts are renegotiated or extended at any time when a player is pregnant or on maternity leave, they will include the player in all conversations and have their contract extended for a minimum of 12 months. Any player who is returning to the team after maternity leave and has been chosen to participate in the programme within 12 months of giving birth or adopted and is required to travel for training camps may bring their child along with a support person to help with the care and supervision of the child.

EXAMPLE: **Anti-harassment policies**

World Triathlon has designed, implemented and disseminated to its entire community the [Safeguarding and Anti-Harassment Policy](#) in 2021. Accordingly, the anti-harassment policy was openly disseminated in 10 different languages through a statement which mentioned: *"We want to share with all the community that World Triathlon has in place a Safeguarding and Anti-harassment policy and mechanisms so that anyone, from anywhere, that is in this kind of situation can seek help (...) All information and reports will be kept absolutely confidential"*. Accordingly, the Report Form to fill in anonymously was made available in the statement with the relevant resources (i.e. Safeguarding and Anti-Harassment Policy and Guidelines for National Federation). Besides, World Triathlon has foreseen an ad hoc awareness campaign to inform staff, board members and all relevant stakeholders regarding the policy and relevant resources.



EXAMPLE: Leadership’s public commitment

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) showcased its commitment publicly through the “[I pledge campaign](#)” ahead of International Women’s Day in 2022. Notably, the ITF sent a letter to invite all Presidents of the National and Regional Associations to pledge their support and advocate for women. The “I pledge campaign” is designed to encourage, advocate and promote women’s participation in elections and decision-making roles. And yet, this is an additional tangible commitment of the ITF to gender equality which is also shown through its ITF 2024 strategic agenda, [Advantage All strategy](#) and its adherence to the [HeForShe movement](#).

EXAMPLE: Appointment Gender Equality Champions

In 2021, [IBU launched the Athlete Ambassador programme](#) involving 18 biathletes representing 15 different countries to help raise awareness, educate, and support the aims of Biathlon in three key areas of development: sustainability, gender equality and integrity. Accordingly, 6 athletes from 5 countries have been nominated as Gender Ambassadors and committed to using their voices to promote positive change in gender equality whilst playing an active part in various IBU activities, such as seminars, conferences, educational programmes and communication campaigns.

3.3: FINANCIAL ELEMENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

[Council of Europe \(2019\)](#)

Allocate a part of your budget to specific actions for women and girls.

Regularly conduct a gender audit of your annual budget looking at the proportion of spending by sex of final beneficiaries.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTION

3.3.1 ACTION: Allocate resources to regularly promote programmes/activities which support the implementation of the gender equality action plan/strategy to reach the desired targets in gender equality.

It is recommended to allocate adequate resources to reach tangible changes in terms of gender equality (Evans and Pfister, 2021). Notably, organisations may develop policies and procedures to encourage gender equality whilst not allocating enough resources due to its implementation being seen as challenging, costly and timely constraining; and yet, not urgent nor a priority (Hoeber, 2007; Claringbould and Knoppers, 2008; Cunningham, 2008). And yet, as stated by the [IOC \(2010\)](#), allocating adequate resources is vital to ensure that the strategy and activities are duly implemented to bring the desired change.



EXAMPLES OF FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

EXAMPLE: Allocation of resources to implement the gender equality action/plan strategy

IBU's Gender Equality Strategy 2021 – 2024 (p.4) explicitly states that IBU understands the notion of gender equality “as a process of allocating resources, opportunities, and entitlements equitably to both females and males in order to ensure that the sport of biathlon is free of gender discrimination”. Accordingly, IBU's Gender Equality Strategy 2021 – 2024 (p. 18) recognises that for the strategy to be duly implemented “it is imperative to use all available resources to follow up this process”.



LOBBYING STRATEGIES

- **Men can play a key role as allies;** accordingly, it is vital to empower men as champions of gender equality. Men are overrepresented in positions of leadership and decision-making in sports organisations, consequently, these have the greater leverage opportunity to encourage changes in the policies and status quo to better share leadership/governance equitably as allies with women. In turn, men and women can cooperate unanimously to increasingly involve women in “men-only” discussions and create a movement for reform by mobilising a critical mass of networks of stakeholders to advocate for gender equality in leadership and decision-making in sports; hence, bringing gender equality concerns on the public arena.
- **Open-communication methods** are vital tools to create networks of stakeholders with shared interest/knowledge on a specific topic (i.e. gender equality); accordingly, communication can be used as a powerful tool to influence such networks/stakeholders and beyond. Notwithstanding, the most appropriate modes and timings of communication to be disseminated should be taken into consideration to reach a wide consensus within and outside the organisation.
- **An inclusive work culture** in which the leadership is openly committed to promoting and implementing gender equality as an organisational value is extremely beneficial for gender equality. This tends to create a culture of human relations defined by men and women cooperating in leadership positions in a cohesive, collaborative and mutually supportive environment.

TRANSVERSAL TOPICS



Aligned with the recommendations and action plan from the [High-Level Group on Gender Equality in sport \(2022\)](#), the GAMES Pool of Actions recognises the key role of the hereunder topics to holistically understand gender equality and foster appropriate reforms/policies for the implementation of gender equality strategies.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING	
Definition	Example
<p>Gender Mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, to promote equality between women and men, and combating discrimination (EIGE, 2019).</p>	<p>World Rowing is recognised by the ASOIF evaluation report and 2022 IF Gender Equality Survey as a leading international sports federation on gender equality matters. This achievement results from World Rowing embracing a gender mainstreaming approach since 2013 with the launch of a detailed survey of its member federations regarding female participation in rowing at the national and elite levels. The results showed that whilst women’s participation at the grassroots level was around 40%, this was not being reflected at the World Championship level. Using the gathered information, a gender equality action plan that was aligned with their strategic framework was developed to address this gap. Opportunities to integrate gender equality considerations within existing programmes were identified. As well, additional funding and new initiatives were identified to help achieve their goals. A system to regularly monitor progress and maintain motivation at the member federations was created. As a result of this approach, World Rowing successfully integrated gender equality throughout its organisation and the rowing ecosystem worldwide with tangible results achieved.</p>

GENDER BUDGETING	
Definition	Example
<p>Gender budgeting refers to the analysis of current resource allocation practices within the organisation and ensuring that resources are distributed in a way that equally benefits women and men (EIGE, 2019).</p>	<p>The Turkish Olympic Committee reported having clear requirements for budgetary decisions. Accordingly, any budgetary elements are expected to be accompanied by a gender equality impact assessment before proceeding with any financial approval/decision.</p>

POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION	
Definition	Example
<p>Policy monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies, along with scientific research, should be integrated into all actions. Policies must go into greater depth whilst being constantly adjusted to respond to changes in specific contexts. Accordingly, the organisations must indicate with clarity the monitoring, evaluation and data collection methods to be used throughout the organisation (High-Level Group, 2022: 11)</p>	<p>The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) have developed a special reporting system where the sports clubs need to register information about the gender of their board leaders. The clubs will have to report each time they elect a new board. NIF collects the data and presents the results every year. NIF hopes that the “Gender Survey” will highlight the imbalance and make sure that the Norwegian sports federations will be more active and work towards a better gender balance.</p>

COORDINATORS FOR GENDER EQUALITY	
Definition	Example
<p>Coordinators for gender equality should be appointed within the organisation to ensure that gender equality strategies/action plans, as well as related initiatives, are implemented and monitored in the most efficient and organised manner. Accordingly, coordinators for gender equality should have the appropriate skill set and technical knowledge to strategically guide the organisation on gender matters whilst coordinating the implementation of gender equality strategies/plans (High-Level Group, 2022: 13)</p>	<p>DOSB launched the Team of Experts which offers systematic guidance to its member associations through professional advice and support to help associations to implement the task whilst using coaching activities to motivate women even further, and to give them the confidence to engage in leadership and decision-making positions.</p>

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND INFORMAL SUPPORT	
Definition	Example
<p>Education, training and informal support are integral tools for the appropriate implementation of gender equality strategies/plans. These should be addressed to all strategic stakeholders and include various programmes designed with the appropriate methodologies and tools to disseminate the scientific finding, promote learning of new practices, increase knowledge on the reasoning behind gender equality policies and promote knowledge-sharing and networking opportunities among stakeholders (High-Level Group, 2022: 12).</p>	<p>In 2014 World Rowing identified a Women Leaders Programme whereby women managers/board members from member NFs are supported to experience events, training camps and IOC courses for Olympic education to foster their future involvement and inspire members to increase gender equity in boards.</p>

COMMUNICATION	
Definition	Example
<p>Communication refers to taking into account gender equality in written and spoken language which is attained when women and men and those who do not conform to the binary gender system are made visible and addressed in language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect (EIGE).</p>	<p>Aligned with the IOC's "Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives for 2021-2024", the IOC published the second edition of the "Portrayal Guidelines" in 2021. The Portrayal Guidelines are designed for the implementation of "gender-equal and fair portrayal practices in all forms of communication"; accordingly, NOCs and IFs are warmly encouraged to adopt these guidelines according to cultural contexts.</p>

MEN AS ALLIES	
Definition	Example
<p>Men as allies is the notion that recognises the relevance of actively engaging men while tackling gender equality. Men tend to have the greater leverage opportunity to encourage changes in the policies and status quo; accordingly, men as allies can be vital co-players to create a movement for reform by mobilising a critical mass of networks of stakeholders to advocate for gender equality in leadership and decision-making in sports; hence, bringing gender equality concerns on the public arena (High-Level Group, 2022: 14).</p>	<p>The United Nations launched a social movement campaign called "#HeForShe" providing a systematic approach and targeted platform through which men and boys become agents of change for the achievement of gender equality.</p>

INTERSECTIONALITY	
Definition	Example
<p>Intersectionality refers to an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to how sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics and identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination (EIGE).</p>	<p>Since 2020, the English Football Association has implemented the “Football Leadership Diversity Code” to bridge the gap between the organisation and the increasing gender and ethnic diversity seen in society at large as to embed greater diversity across senior leadership teams, team operations and coaching setups, ultimately. Accordingly, the English Football Association and its members (i.e. clubs) are committed to championing diversity across both ethnicity and gender, as well as recognising that the senior leadership and team operations diversity should match the local population’s diversity including – among other targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% of new hires will be Black, Asian or of Mixed-Heritage (or a target set by the club based on local demographics) • 30% of new hires will be female <p>Notwithstanding, it is vital to understand the notion of intersectionality within the context of the country where the organisation is based/operated. In this regard, the English Football Association provides its members (i.e. clubs) with the opportunity to tailor their targets; in other words, the clubs should reflect the local demographics.</p>



MONITORING

It is crucial to appropriately determine the measurement methods that will be implemented to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and drawbacks of the actions/strategy. Monitoring and data collection are crucial to assess whether an organisation is making progress in a desired area (*i.e. gender equality*). Indeed, the implementation of monitoring measures ultimately contributes to determining the outcomes (*or lack thereof*) of the strategy and actions implemented, as well as furthering the good governance of sports organisations (*i.e. transparency and accountability*). Accordingly, the monitoring and evaluation practices are not only crucial for attracting and maintaining stakeholders' interest, but also to comprehend the opportunities and limitations of the actions/strategy and how these could be improved/amended in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to create an effective, reliable, systematic and transferable monitoring strategy that helps to measure the ongoing changes and ensure accountability at the organisational level, whilst showcasing the demand for amendments/reviews, if the set targets are not being (effectively) reached (Bamberger, 2009).

By implementing tailored quantitative and qualitative indicators, an organisation can assess the efficiency of the actions implemented and accordingly, review and tailor the strategy implemented (*i.e. gender equality strategy*). A qualitative methodology is usually used to address the 'micro-sociology' perspective, whereas quantitative methodology is favoured for the 'macro-sociological' perspective. (Marsh et al., 2009). Notably, it has been argued the importance of using a mixed-method approach using qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the implemented actions/strategy.

Quantitative methods of data collection involve the collection and presentation of numerical data, which can be codified and statistically tested to produce a quantitative analysis of a specific hypothesis. Indeed, its core characteristic is converting collected data into numbers with a core focus on generating quantifiable, objective, reliable and valid results (*i.e. percentages of women and men in a commission/personnel/recruitment process, male and female wage...*). Therefore, it embraces a systematic approach with the obtained results generally being accepted as valid and reliable offering the opportunity to generalise the hypothesis to a large-scale analysis. (Punch, 2005; Jupp, 2006; Marsh et al., 2009).

Qualitative methods of data collection focus on comprehending and analysing the personal experiences of those investigated by analysing the personal meaning that individuals attach to specific behaviour and how these meanings are used to interpret reality and the world. It presents a narrative of people’s experiences, behaviours, opinions, attitudes and feelings (*i.e. views on the implementation of gender quotas, speaking time during meetings, and role within an organisation...*).

Mixed methods of data collection recognise that qualitative and quantitative methods should be seen as complementary to acquire a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the implemented actions/strategy. Indeed, including complementary quantitative and qualitative indicators can “*improve an evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of another*”. It reduces the possibility of distorted findings and conclusions and enables to question of why certain patterns have emerged ([OECD](#)).

Aligned with the GAMES Pool of Action’s pillars, qualitative and quantitative methods to monitor and evaluate progress on gender equality in sports leadership, include among others

PILLAR 1 - STRUCTURAL MEASURES	
Quantitative measures	Qualitative measures
Assess the number of actions, legal texts and initiatives implemented after the publication of the organisation’s gender equality strategy that refers to gender equality strategy.	Assess the impact of role models and representation through questionnaires, focus-groups, observations, and/or one-to-one interviews.
Calculate the shares of women and men in decision-making positions/bodies (presidents, SG, Executive committees, executive boards).	Interview the recruitment team and candidates interviewed about their perception of the interviews (whether they felt discriminated against, whether they were asked questions that were irrelevant to work...).
Collect relevant data regularly and possibly share it internally.	Collect relevant data on incidents of harassment within the organisation and follow their development (e.g. increased/decreased) after the implementation of gender equality objectives.
Compare the share of women and men in decision-making positions or bodies before and after the implementation of the measures.	
Compare the number of women who apply for a position with the number of women selected for interviews and the number of women who end up being hired.	

PILLAR 2 - PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN	
Quantitative measures	Qualitative measures
<p>Collect data through anonymous surveys on the awareness and satisfaction on the available educational opportunities and pathways.</p> <p>Compare the number of women who take part in the training programmes, with the number of women who attain leadership positions afterwards.</p> <p>Compare the number of women who take part in the training programmes as mentors/mentees.</p>	<p>Assess perceived inclusion and acceptance in the organisation through one-to-one interviews and/or anonymous questionnaires while maintaining an intersectional perspective.</p>

PILLAR 3 - CULTURE	
Quantitative measures	Qualitative measures
<p>Determine the frequency at which women express their ideas during meetings.</p> <p>Determine the frequency at which an idea given by a woman is adopted.</p> <p>Compare the opportunity for all genders to contribute during meetings.</p> <p>Compare the share of men and women attendance to workshops or conferences on gender equality, job shadowing programmes, specific training programmes, and measure the impact programmes had on their career (elections, upward mobility, responsibilities evolution...).</p> <p>Calculate the share of the budget allocated to the Gender Equality commissions and to Gender Equality-related projects.</p> <p>Calculate the share of women among the 10 highest-paid workers.</p> <p>Assess the number of employees who participate in training programmes and compare the answers from men and women.</p> <p>Review web-analytics and related gender-segregated data to record the breakdown of viewers, news and social media posts (e.g. on women in leadership, women sport).</p>	<p>Gather the participants' opinions on the efficiency and impact of the workshops they have been taking part in.</p> <p>Collect data on the impact of gender-focused initiatives on personnel's well-being.</p> <p>Compare the way men and women feel about speaking during meetings (whether they feel confident, apprehensive, listened to and considered...).</p> <p>Assess the needs and interests in different topics (i.e. leadership, sustainability, gender equality, funding...) expressed by both men and women regarding training programmes.</p> <p>Review content language and visuals used in the organisation's media channels to ensure compliance with non-stereotyped and gender-neutral communication.</p>

CONCLUSION

The GAMES Pool of Actions has provided a manual of specific actions to promote gender equality in leadership positions among European NOCs. Accordingly, it provided strategies to guide NOCs, EFs and NFs as well as sports organisations at the grassroots level to identify and implement the required actions for strengthening gender equality in leadership positions whilst taking into account the organisation's current stage of readiness and the political and socio-cultural barriers existing. Notwithstanding, the proposed actions in the GAMES Pool of Actions should be understood as being complementary. The implementation of actions to promote structural changes (i.e. among boards and decision-making positions of sports organisations) appears to be only the first stage to advancing gender equality in governance. Indeed, these actions need to be implemented in conjunction with other initiatives to move towards an effective equal representation of gender on board-decision making – one of the most significant actions being the adoption of gender equality as a culture and an organisational principle by the leadership, as well as the creation of pathways for women to attain decision-making and leadership positions (Adriaanse and Schofield 2014; Adriaanse, 2016:158). Hence, a holistic understanding is required to implement the recommended actions and to promote reforms to reach gender equality in sports governance.



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ANNEX 1: GLOSSARY

Gender	Socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men (UN Women, 2021).
Gender bias	Prejudiced actions or thoughts that affect a person or a group of people based on their perceived gender. (EIGE, 2022)
Gender blindness	Failure to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of women/girls and men/boys are ascribed to, or imposed upon, them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. (EIGE, 2022)
Gender budgeting	The analysis of current resource allocation practices within the organisation and ensuring that resources are distributed in a way that equally benefits women and men. (EIGE, 2022)
Gender equality	Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all genders are taken into consideration. (EIGE, 2022)
Gender-neutral language	Instances when the language being used is not gender specific, meaning with no specific reference to a particular sex or social gender but rather considering people in general (EIGE, 2022)
Gender mainstreaming	A strategy towards realising gender equality that involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes to promote equality between women and men and combating discrimination. (EIGE, 2022)
Gender roles	Socially/community-constructed learned behaviours which reflect activities, tasks and responsibilities perceived as male or female. Gender roles are influenced by age, class, race, ethnicity, religion, as well as the geo-political and economic environment (European Commission, 2014).
Gender stereotypes	Preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender (EIGE, 2022).
Sex	Biological characteristics that define a person as female, male or intersex and that are assigned at birth (World Health Organization, 2022).
The labyrinth	<i>“A series of complexities, detours, dead ends, and unusual paths”</i> (Martin, 2007:90) that may impact a woman’s career progression and trajectory (Hancock, Darvin and Walker, 2018).
Unconscious gender bias	Unintentional and automatic mental associations based on gender, stemming from traditions, norms, values, culture and/or experience. (ILO, 2017).

ANNEX 2: ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

...EXAMPLES FROM NOCS	
NOC Belgium	<p>It adopted a framework to define roles and responsibilities within the NOC staff. This includes a gender component as it provides a framework for objective and gender-neutral decisions on human resources - one of the advantages of the system. The tool enabled the NOC of Belgium to (<i>among others</i>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write objectively and neutrally the functions at the level of skills, specific requirements, and expectations of the position; • Be transparent to the employees as each role is defined; • Have a basis to screen candidates objectively and neutrally; • Develop training programmes ad-hoc for the development of all employees.
NOC Croatia	<p>As stipulated in the Statute of the NOC, the NOC of Croatia put into practice the requirement of 40% representation in its governing body. Article 59 of the Statute of NOC Croatia amended in 2023 states that “Following the Olympic Charter, there should be at least 40% of women in the total panel of the Council members”. This motion follows the EOC’s advice on promoting gender equality in sporting organizations. Additionally, Article 2 of the Statute of the NOC states that the Croatian Olympic Committee undertakes, according to its tasks and role at the national level, to participate in activities promoting peace and women in sport.</p>
NOC Finland	<p>The NOC of Finland aim to be a role model for its members (i.e. federations) in terms of gender equality; accordingly, its goal is to lead the change and be the change by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a gender quota of 30% for the NOC Board and keeping track of the gender balance in various groups within the NOC and its operations. • Implementing an Equality and Non-discrimination plan which includes concrete actions; accordingly, an Equality and Non-discrimination survey provides an overview of the gender-sensitive culture every second year • Organising leadership training for its member organisations namely “Leadership Compass” • Presenting the progress/data on gender equality in the NOC’s Annual Report.
NOC Greece	<p>The Hellenic Olympic Committee has introduced age limits, as well as term limits for all members of its Executive Board, including the President.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age limits: A HOC Member (whether holding an executive position or not) may hold office until 31st December of the year in which he reaches the age of 75. The calculation of the age of the above provision shall be in force from the term 2025-2028, excluding any retroactive effect. • Term limits: the HOC President has the right to serve as President for 3 terms only, while the Executive Board Members who complete 3 consecutive terms, similarly do not have the right for a 4th term. The calculation of the term of office for the President and the Executive Committee’s members will be valid from the term 2021-2024, excluding any retroactive effect. <p>Age limits’ calculation shall be in force from the upcoming term of 2025-2028, while term limits are already valid from the current term of 2021-2024. This initiative’s impact is projected to guarantee a constant refresh of all executive members of the HOC and</p>

	therefore to permit more and more women to compete for high-level and leadership positions very soon.
NOC Switzerland	<p>The NOC of Switzerland produced two documents regarding the prevention of harassment and abuse in sports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info sheet listing 8 measures to take to ensure that prevention of harassment and abuse is central to sport clubs; • Ethics guidelines that include points on prevention of harassment and abuse in sports.
NOC Türkiye	The NOC applies a transparent and gender-sensitive recruitment process through its Department of Human Resources – which also receives assistance from an external expert consultancy company. Hence, the recruitment process is based on merit and capability; however, in cases of equal qualifications, positive discrimination against women applies.
NOC USA	The NOC of the USA conducts a diversity survey and publishes the outcomes (diversity scorecards) on its website annually.
...EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDERS	
Council of Europe and the EU Joint Project "ALL IN: Towards gender balance in sport"	This project was designed to support women to increase their self-confidence, develop their leadership skills, clarify their personal goals and ultimately pursue their goals. Notably, networking with other participants from different sports, mentors, role models and experts was mentioned as one of the top results of the process.
Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels	The Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels (FIFPRO) designed and implemented a Player Pregnancy & Parental Management Policy Guide to guide players, Player Associations and Player Representatives, Clubs, Football Associations (FA's), Confederations and FIFA on the support that must be proposed to professional football players who are pregnant or have young children, and the contractual options and obligations. The first section details the mandatory requirements for a Parental Policy , with fundamental, and thus compulsory elements about appropriate pregnancy, maternity leave, parental leave, and return to play. The second section contains some key recommendations that FIFPRO believes are extremely important to ensure the protection and promotion of the players' rights and their well-being, relating to parental management and travel.
International Ski and Snowboard Federation	The International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS) Council has approved a proposal from the Gender Equity Working Group, the Sub-Committees for Women's Cross-Country and Alpine Skiing, and the Athletes Commission to change all instances where the term "Ladies" or "Women" is used in official FIS documents, titles, web content, technical materials, communications, and FIS publications to gender-neutral terminology. Along with 22 sub-sections of the website, each of which contains numerous papers, over 550 documents in the FIS document library were scanned, modified, and updated in total. In addition to "ladies," terms like "he," "his," "himself," or "Chairman" that solely refer to the male gender were also found and replaced with inclusive alternatives.
Panionios & DIOTIMA	In 2022 Panionios (sports clubs in Greece) and DIOTIMA (Center for Gender Rights and Equality) have developed a synergy to create a new culture in the field of sports, free from sexism and gender discrimination. The initiative is centred on workshops aiming

	at the awareness of the public regarding gender inequalities as it targets mainly athletes, their parents, coaches and the administrative staff of sports clubs. Ultimately, the initiative seems to have contributed steadily to the promotion of awareness of gender equality within sports organisations and civil society, at large.
SHARE European PROJECT	The “SHARE” project aims at promoting a balance between work and private family life while ensuring gender equality within the working environment. Accordingly, it recognises the support offered by SMEs in Greece to counter gender stereotypes and existing barriers by awarding remarkable SMEs with “Equality Label for Businesses” for their efforts to support women’s engagement and combat stereotypes generating gender discrimination. Hence, this is foreseen to be projected to encourage more organisations to adopt a more inclusive and respectful agenda for their female workforce.
UK Sport	UK Sport launched an updated version of their “International Leadership Mentoring Programme” to provide current and future sports leaders with mentoring support to bring a diversity of leadership to national and international sports bodies, especially to address the barriers that are faced by women working in international sport. Each mentor assists their mentee in defining and pursuing their own leadership goals as well as developing a strong professional network with other leaders at different international sports federations. Each program participant is to be matched with a mentee who can best help her with the unique problems she is encountering on her leadership journey via the specialized mentoring app “Wowment”.



GAMES
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IN SPORT**



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