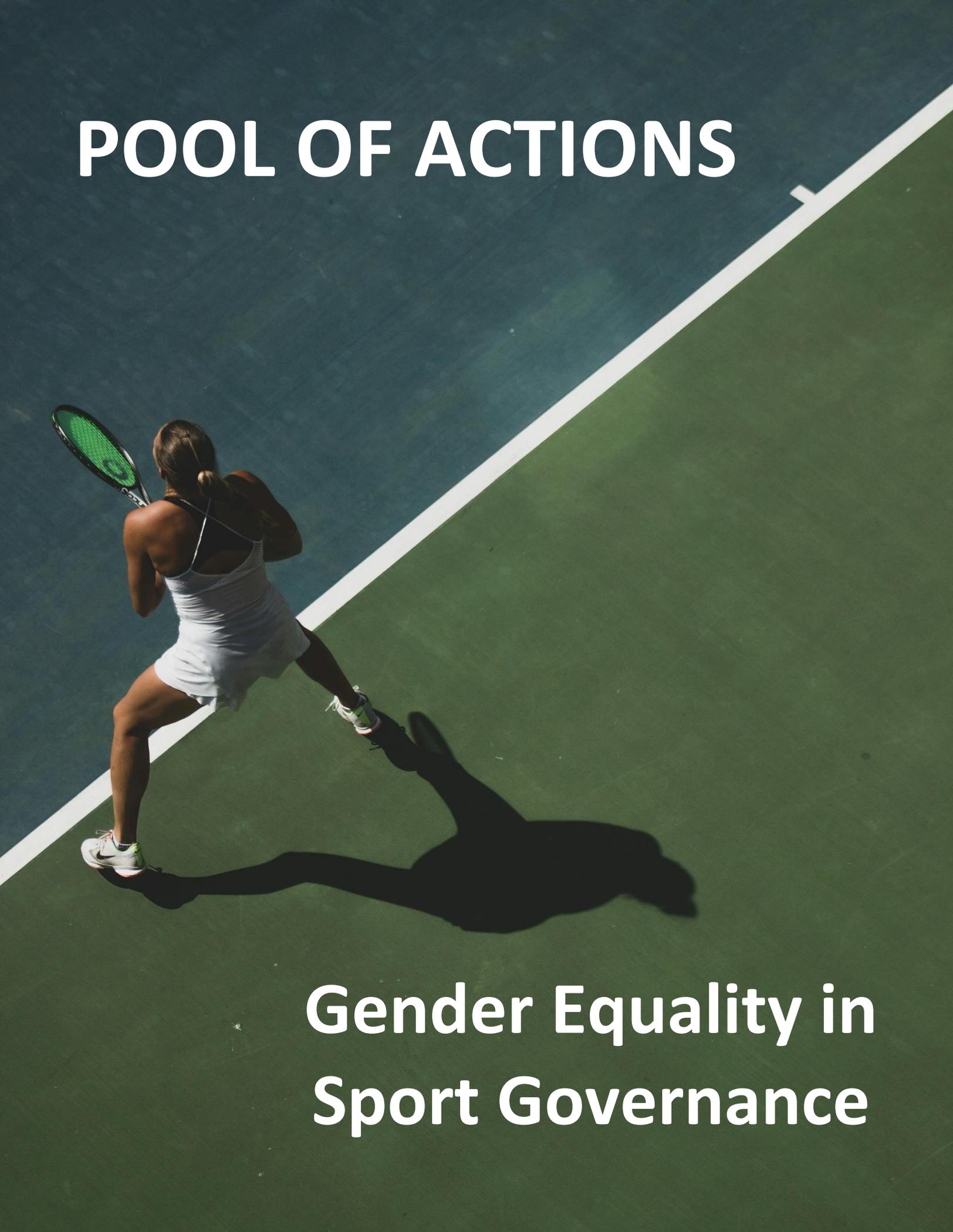


POOL OF ACTIONS

A high-angle photograph of a female tennis player in a white athletic outfit, captured from behind as she runs on a tennis court. The court is split into blue and green sections by a white diagonal line. The player is holding a tennis racket and has a long shadow cast on the green part of the court. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

**Gender Equality in
Sport Governance**

February 2024

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Project ID: 101050284



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 Sport and I TRUST Sport. Furthermore, the GAMES project is supported by the International Olympic Committee.



Contents

SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT	4
PILLAR 1 – STRUCTURAL MEASURES	6
PILLAR 2 – PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN	16
PILLAR 3 – CULTURE.....	22
TRANSVERSAL TOPICS.....	30
CONCLUSION.....	36

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.

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).

1.1 ACTIONS RELATED TO “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.

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.

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 ACTIONS RELATED TO “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

ACTION 1.2.1: 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).

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

ACTION 1.2.2: 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, introduced term limits for Executive Committee members in its [Constitution](#) (art. 18-19). Each member can serve a maximum of two terms of four years, including transitional arrangements.

1.3 ACTIONS RELATED TO “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

ACTION 1.3.1: 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.

ACTION 1.3.2: 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.

ACTION 1.3.3: 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 ACTIONS RELATED TO “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.

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”.

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.

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.

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.

2.1 ACTIONS RELATED TO “WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT AND MENTORING PROGRAMMES”

RECOMMENDATIONS

[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.

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 ACTIONS RELATED TO “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.

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.

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 entails those beliefs and practices that need to be understood within their local contexts in order to appropriately adapt gender interventions to the organizational settings and socio-political context. In this regard, culture includes informal rules and unwritten norms and practices which in turn affect the structural aspects of gender equality (Pape, 2020: 84). Accordingly, this pillar should be understood 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.

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.

[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.

3.1 ACTIONS RELATED TO “COMMUNICATION”

RECOMMENDATIONS

[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.

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).

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.

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.

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 ACTIONS RELATED TO
 “REMOVING EXISTING BARRIERS & DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER-INCLUSIVE CULTURE”**

RECOMMENDATIONS

[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).

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.

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.

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.

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 ACTIONS RELATED TO “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.

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*”.

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.

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>

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>

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>

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>

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>

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>



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.



GAMES

GUIDANCE
TO ACHIEVE
MORE EQUAL
LEADERSHIP
IN SPORT



Co-funded by
the European Union

“Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.”



EU Office



EQUAL RIGHTS IN SPORTS

