

Strasbourg, 30 November 2018

EPAS(2018)63

Breaking the cycle of inequality in sport

By fixing gender balance in leadership and preventing violence against women

Conference organised by EPAS under the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Zagreb, Croatia

Thursday, 25 October 2018

Conclusions

Conference Venue:

Hotel Dubrovnik

Ljudevita Gaja 1

Zagreb

The conference “Breaking the cycle of inequality in sport by fixing gender balance in leadership and preventing violence against women” was organised by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport of the Council of Europe (EPAS) under the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the Central State Office for Sport and the Croatian Office for Gender Equality and in partnership with the European Union and Council of Europe’s joint project “ALL IN: Towards gender balance in sport”.

It addressed research evidence and policy responses in order to increase women’s leadership and to eliminate all forms of violence against women in sport. This conference was also an opportunity for the participants to share views on concrete actions and measures needed to secure sport as a safe place for all, so that it can fulfil its role of empowering women and girls.

The conference started during a plenary session with keynote speeches on the above-mentioned subjects and was followed by an interactive “world café” session.

This document contains the conclusions of the interactive “world café” session and of the conference itself.

Conclusions of the interactive “World café” session

Round table 1: Who are the successful women sport leaders and what can they do to stop gender based violence in sport?

Conclusions:

- The following measures/actions could be taken to advance towards gender equality in leadership in sport and to stop gender-based violence in sport:
 - Consistently carrying out education in schools and clubs
 - Drawing up protocols for dealing with all kinds of violence in sport
 - Implementing preventive programmes from the earliest age
 - Fostering open co-operation and support
- Toolkits are relevant for educational purposes. Women as leaders need to be socially efficient, with ideas, competences, authority, etc. They also have to be brave, and not be afraid to speak.
- Mixed panels, composed of both women and men, are required when talking about gender equality in sport

Round table 2: How can coaching and leadership decrease gender based violence in sport? What kind of policy measures do you recommend to maximize such an impact?

Conclusions:

- There is a huge impact of stereotypes about women and men as coaches. The culture of sport should change and be more inclusive. This is the responsibility of all those involved in the field of sport. For this purpose, having more sports communities which are gender-balanced could be an asset
- There was a strong convergence of views among the participants on the fact that more women acting as coaches would lead to less gender-based violence in sport

Round table 2: Why is football an important sport for gender equality and how can women leaders fight gender based violence in sport?

Conclusions:

- Football is so widespread and supported, that it can be a model for other sports, in particular in terms of supporting the inclusion of and access for women
- Football unfortunately remains a “male” world and many men in decision-making positions in sports clubs hold on to their own position. A way to address this shortcoming is by limiting the number of mandates one person can hold, the number of years of the mandates or by limiting by age the position-holder
- The change of culture in football can start from grassroots movements, where clubs’ members and supporters are more involved and demand accountability from the leadership, including the way women are treated and promoted. A change can also come from the authorities that fund football clubs. They can impose or request better or stricter rules in assuring gender equality when funding is allocated.
- Everyone who attended this round table believed that gender-based violence in sport is not a girls/women-only issue. However, there are clear examples of stereotypes against girls/women in football, which is a form of violence that needs to be addressed by changing the sport’s and clubs’ culture. For instance, it is very difficult for women to be coaches for men football players; but it is perfectly fine and acceptable for men to coach women’s football teams

Round table 4: What is the role of international sport organisations in combating gender based violence in sport? How can they mainstream the issue in their management?

Conclusions:

- The lack of implementation of existing legislation on violence/GE in sport was reported for all countries represented. As in other areas, sportswomen do not report the violence because they fear 1) the impact on their career; 2) the lack of responsiveness of justice systems; 3) the risk of secondary victimisation. Training for justice professionals and a general change of culture with a gender equality perspective but also, taking into account the particularities of the sporting sector, are needed.
- The importance of education and of codes of good conduct was highlighted. It was also stressed that all actors should be clear about what type of behaviour constitutes harassment and abuse: what is not defined cannot be denounced and punished. The onus should not be on survivors only, it is necessary to also educate bystanders, including parents, to recognise and denounce violence.
- The issue of coaching was also mentioned, including the question regarding the absence of certificates or criminal records for coaches in some countries. The lack of professionalism by some coaches can also lead to injuries, including for children, which as such is also a form of misconduct/abuse. There should therefore be mandatory qualification conditions & licensing for all coaches.
- Peer to peer abuse is the most prevalent form of abuse, so there also needs to be education for athletes as well as codes of good conduct; here again, there is a lack of awareness of what constitutes violence

Round table 5: How can the fight against gender-based violence in sport become a priority in national sport policy?

Conclusions:

- The discussions mainly focused on measures that could be taken at national level to fight against gender-based violence in sport:
 - Convincing sports clubs to implement concrete actions to prevent gender-based violence
 - Educating coaches, journalists and sport leaders
 - Inviting survivors to speak up and tell their story, which is very effective when raising awareness on this issue
 - Making the development and implementation of a code of conduct mandatory for all sports organisations and clubs
 - Nominating an ombudsperson/welfare officer who could be contacted with such problems

Round table 6: What is the role of national sports federations in combating gender-based violence in sport and how can they be motivated to make it a priority?

Conclusions:

- As a starting point, the participants who mainly came from Croatian sports federations pointed out that fighting against gender-based violence is not a priority for their respective organisations. Some of them face difficulties putting this issue on the table of their executive committees that are mainly composed of men. There is usually no one to discuss this issue with. According to the participants, having better gender balance in leadership positions in sport and looking into the matter of gender-based violence at a political level are closely linked.
- Having the support of public authorities responsible for sport at national level is therefore compulsory in order to change the situation. Most of the participants in the round table expressed the following expectations and needs:
 - A public policy on preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport
 - Further resources and educational tools (in particular, detailing which behaviour is acceptable and which is not)
 - An awareness-raising campaign at national level

All these actions should involve not only coaches and sports leaders, but also parents and athletes.

Conclusion of the conference by Stanislas Frossard, Executive Secretary of EPAS
--

With the conference at an end, I would like to sum up, from an EPAS perspective, the follow-up that will be given to the topics that were discussed here today.

Among all the topics that were addressed by EPAS as part of its activities on diversity in and through sport, the “Gender Equality” theme which we first addressed in 2011 is the one that triggered the richest output and had the highest impact. It will definitively remain a priority on our agenda.

The main challenge we are taking up with the ALL-IN project is the collection of data on the fulfilment of gender equality in sport. Gender equality in sport has been on the agenda for 25 years, and we all agree that it gave rise to many talks and declarations, but little results. Measuring progress on the implementation of the “Recommendation of the Committee of

Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in sport” is essential, as it will help to steer policies and to offer targeted activities and tools.

Among the various dimensions of gender mainstreaming, the fight against gender-based violence was so far certainly the most difficult to measure and to address. However, there is a growing awareness, throughout both the sport movement and the countries, that sport is also affected, as too numerous tawdry scandals have highlighted recently. The #metoo movement, that is freeing speech on sexual abuse, is also impacting sport. More and more countries and sports organisations are engaging in preventing and tackling gender-based violence and EPAS would like to facilitate exchange and support them in this process. With this objective in mind, the 2019 EPAS “Diversity” conference will be organised on this topic.

Today’s discussions have allowed us to identify six focal areas that can be further explored before and during the 2019 conference:

1. The prevalence of gender-based violence is extremely difficult to measure. The frequency of any illicit behaviour is difficult to measure; and questions related to sexuality are still sensitive. Another obstacle to measuring these issues is the definitions that are used, and which subsequently lead to different facts being measured. Sport alone may not be able to overcome these challenges and we will consult our Council of Europe colleagues in charge of gender equality and violence against women to consider which strategy would be the best to produce an international estimation of the magnitude of the issues.
2. Since a growing number of countries are ready to address the issue, tools will be needed to support governments and sports organisations which are interested in developing procedures, strategies and policies. In order to train athletes, parents, coaches and other members belonging to the athletes’ entourage, training modules are needed. Last but not least, communication tools may be useful for campaigning activities, targeting the public at large. EPAS could consider how to complement the IOC training kit and invest in tools while taking into account its “Start to Talk” experience on safeguarding children. One suggestion could be why not within the framework of a joint project with the EU?

In conjunction with the training and activities to empower women, there is a need to change structures and processes. As part of its work on the good governance of sports organisations, EPAS should pay attention to promoting measures aimed at ensuring a fair representation of membership in the decision-making processes. It should also make sure that the mechanisms aimed at the protection of whistle-blowers are appropriate to counter gender-based violence.

3. Today’s discussions highlighted that sexism and gender stereotypes are shaping a culture of discrimination and inequality. Unfortunately, the area of sport is often stereotype-intensive, and I will suggest that EPAS discusses and promotes the future Recommendation on Preventing and Combating Sexism, which is being prepared by the Gender Equality Committee of the Council of Europe.
4. A number of countries and sports organisations are introducing a screening requirement to make sure that those working with athletes have no criminal record for abuse or misconduct. The establishment of such a requirement raises a number of issues and sharing experience on this would help. I suggest that launching a survey to those countries

and organisations which have set up such a screening would provide useful information to address this topic in the conference in 2019.

5. Last but not least, EPAS is starting a review of the European Sport Charter, which sets basic standards for sports policies in Europe. This review should consider safeguarding policies and codes of conduct as key requirements for sports organisations. Governmental authorities from Council of Europe member states should be challenged to urge sports organisations and specialised authorities to make sure that the well-being of those taking part in sports activities is secured.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Croatian authorities for having hosted this conference. The regular interest from the CM presidency on the question of gender equality in sport shows the relevance of this topic. Here in Zagreb, we very much enjoyed your warm welcome, your ability to mobilise various stakeholders, and your involvement in the topic. I hope that Croatia will continue to play a leading role on gender equality in sport.

I would like to thank you all for your active participation in the conference. We had the privilege to listen to some very interesting presentations from various stakeholders and to experience rich discussions. I wish you a safe journey back home and I hope to see you all at the conference next year!