



Strasbourg, 4 October 2018

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# **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

25 October 2018

## **Factsheet**

### ***Background elements and practical information***

*Conference Venue:*

*Hotel Dubrovnik*

*Ljudevita Gaja 1*

*Zagreb*

## BACKGROUND ELEMENTS

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### THE CYCLE OF INEQUALITY IN SPORT

Despite positive developments in recent decades and the fact that a formal equality does exist in most European countries, gender inequalities still persist in many aspects of the sports world, from coaching to administration, from participation to media representation, from grassroots to elite sports. Progress in Europe remains slow and fragmented.

In addition, even if sports participation does empower those involved and, as such, sport can contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence in society at large, women and girls can still be at risk when in a sports environment. Violence against women and girls happens far too often, in particular when they dare to occupy a “male physical or social space”.

Violence against women is a serious violation of human rights and both a cause and a consequence of the inequality of women and men. As a cross-cutting issue, it can contribute to perpetuating inequalities in the field of sport, creating a vicious circle. To break the cycle, co-ordinated and simultaneous actions are needed, addressing violence against women and redressing inequality in sport, including in leadership.

#### ➤ **Fixing gender balance in leadership**

The gender gap is particularly visible when it comes to accessing leadership positions in the field of sport (sport leaders, decision-makers, referees / officials, etc.). Figures show that, on average, in the European Union, only 14% of top decision-making positions in sports federations are occupied by women, with only a few countries breaching the threshold of 20%. Vertical segregation is also extremely significant; women represent only the 5% of presidents (11 out of 195) and 9% of vice-presidents of continental confederations of Olympic sport<sup>1</sup>. The European Union and Council of Europe’s joint project “Balance in Sport. Tools to implement gender equality”, which ran a data collection campaign in Finland, France, Romania and Spain in 2016, has reached these same conclusions at national level.

Moreover, a larger presence of women in leadership roles can contribute to reducing the gap in all other domains, especially in coaching and in participation. Women leaders can act as role models and encourage women and young girls to take part in sports, both as a leisure activity and as a potential professional career. Better equality in decision-making positions can also play a crucial role in preventing violence and combating gender stereotypes.

#### ➤ **Preventing violence against women**

Gender-based violence affects one woman in three globally and occurs in the sport context as well, despite the ethical values that sports promote. Even if data on this topic is still scarce in Europe, there is plenty of evidence that different types of violence against women happen at various levels and in various fields of sport, not only with regard to the practice of physical activity and sport as such, but also when women act as coaches, referees/officials, decision-makers, journalists/reporters, etc. This phenomenon may include

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<sup>1</sup> Source: European Institute for Gender Equality’s reports “[Gender in Sports](#)” (2017) and “[Gender Equality in Sport](#)” (2015).

physical intimidation or violence, verbal, psychological, physical and sexual harassment and abuse, and may threaten their physical, emotional and mental health. It impacts on their performance and career which may lead to them dropping out of the sport's world completely. Violence also undermines organisations' reputations and the integrity of sport.

Recently, the #MeToo movement has attracted renewed political attention on this widespread problem of sexual assault and harassment in different fields of society; women athletes, coaches, referees and sport leaders have also started to give more testimonies in this respect. As the human rights guardian on the European continent, the Council of Europe promotes changes in legislation, policies and social norms in its 47 member states to strive towards a world that is free of violence. The [Istanbul Convention](#) is the first legally-binding instrument in Europe that obliges states to prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence.

### **ACTION FOR CHANGE**

To address the specificities of violence in the area of sport and to advance towards better gender balance in leadership, the [Council of Europe's recommendation on gender mainstreaming in sport](#) invites governments of member states to adopt, implement and monitor policies and measures, in co-operation with sports organisations, to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women and girls in sport, including against those from disadvantaged groups exposed to multiple discrimination. The recommendation also calls on member states to encourage sports organisations to develop strategies and implement special measures, where appropriate, until a balanced participation of women and men is reached at all levels, including in terms of leadership.

As a matter of common interest, the European Union and the Council of Europe have decided to join forces to tackle the above-mentioned issues through the project "[ALL IN: towards gender balance in sport](#)". This joint initiative aims at implementing a broad data collection campaign on gender equality in sport based on a set of generally agreed indicators in five strategic fields (leadership, coaching, participation, media / communication and gender-based violence), and at producing concrete tools to help public authorities and sport organisations when developing policies and strategic actions aimed at tackling gender inequalities in sport, and adopting a gender mainstreaming approach.

The Council of Europe's Agreement on Sport (EPAS) along with the Croatian authorities, are committed to continuing to raise awareness on these issues, as part of a global effort to combat gender inequalities and to prevent violence in sport, upholding and protecting the sporting values.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE AND EXPECTED RESULTS**

The conference addresses research evidence and policy responses in order to increase women's leadership and to eliminate all forms of violence against women in sport. It is also an opportunity to share views on concrete actions and measures needed to secure sport as a safe place for all, which fully fulfils its role of empowering women and girls.

The specific objectives are:

- To develop a better understanding of the causes, extent, forms and consequences of gender-based violence and inequalities in sport;
- To share good practices, identify and discuss measures to prevent violence against women in sport and to advance towards better gender balance in leadership positions;
- To propose thematic priorities for a follow-up conference in 2019.

The programme features personal stories, presentations of experts as well as two interactive workshops. The different elements of the conference are inter-related and complement each other.

## **PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

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### **ORGANISERS**

The conference is 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".

### **DATE**

Thursday, 25 October 2018, 8h30-15h30

### **VENUE**

[Hotel Dubrovnik](#)  
Ljudevita Gaja 1  
Zagreb, Croatia

### **WORKING LANGUAGES**

Croatian and English

### **PARTICIPANTS**

The conference is open to:

- Representatives of public authorities from the EPAS Governing Board and from the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission
- Representatives from the EPAS Consultative Committee
- ALL IN partner organisations
- Representatives from Croatian national, regional and local public authorities responsible for sport and sports movement (umbrella sports organisations, national federations of Olympic and non-Olympic sports), and representatives of health organisations related to sport, trainers and other sports practitioners

## TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

- Participation is free of charge.
- Travel and accommodation costs are at the participants' own expense.
- Different conditions apply for speakers and ALL IN project partners.
- A lunch will be offered by the Croatian authorities.

## REGISTRATION

Interested individuals can register by sending an email to the EPAS Secretariat (Caroline Larghi: [caroline.larghi@coe.int](mailto:caroline.larghi@coe.int)) before Thursday 18 October 2018. Please indicate upon registration which of the two workshops (parallel sessions) you wish to attend.

## AIRPORT AND TRANSFERS

There are taxi and bus services available to/ from Zagreb airport to/ from Zagreb city centre. Please check the following website for further information: <http://www.zagreb-airport.hr/en/passengers/to-from-the-airport/35>

## VISAS

- Participants are responsible for checking visa requirements and making their own visa arrangements before departure.
- The Council of Europe can prepare "notes verbales" for registered participants requiring a visa. Visa-related expenses are to be borne by the participants.

## ACCOMMODATION

Participants are free to choose their own accommodation.

## CONTACT

For any further information:

**EPAS secretariat at the Council of Europe**

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