

Dear Francine, dear colleagues,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss the interaction between sports and gender equality. As Francine noted, this is an area with a great potential, but also one where greater attention is necessary. We welcome very much the work already carried out by EPAS, notably with the recommendation on gender mainstreaming in sports and the ALL-IN project. In both cases there have been fruitful exchanges with the sectors I am responsible, and I must say that we are happy about the quality of ongoing cooperation.

In the area of Gender Equality and Violence against women there are basically two relevant bodies. One is the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), which is the intergovernmental committee of experts in charge of gender equality matters, and the other is the independent monitoring body of the Istanbul Convention (GREVIO), which evaluate the compliance of states parties with the convention through the elaboration of country-specific monitoring reports.

The Istanbul Convention contains state-of-the art provisions on prevention of violence, protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators and coordination/integration of policies. It offers therefore to states parties a blueprint for an holistic approach, which can encourage victims to more safely denounce violence – which we understand being one of the biggest difficulties to overcome in the world of sports when it comes to violence against women.

But the Convention also pays great attention to the prevention aspects, to education and to the need to combat those gender stereotypes which are often at the basis of violence. And it even makes an explicit reference to sports. Article 14 paragraph 2 requires in fact states to take the necessary steps to promote the principles of equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity etc, not only in the formal education context but also in informal educational facilities, as well as in sports, cultural and leisure facilities and the media.

Out of the 17 published baseline GREVIO evaluation reports, only few, unfortunately, addressed this matter. In some reports, GREVIO invited the authorities to take further steps in this regard. The baseline evaluation reports on Belgium and Malta, however, feature examples of the implementation of relevant measures in the context of youth structures, including, in the case of

Malta, the involvement of football clubs and local Girl and Boy Scouts in awareness-raising campaigns on violence against women.

Sport also features rather prominently in the Committee of Ministers' recommendation on preventing and combating Sexism, for the reasons Francine outlined very well, with one section dedicated to sexism in culture and sport. Government are therefore, inter alia, invited:

- to take measures to encourage gender mainstreaming in sport policies (in accordance with the CM recommendation you mentioned) and to promote gender equality and the non-stereotypical portrayal of women and men, girls and boys.
- to ensure better and more media coverage of women's sports.
- to encourage sports federations to adopt codes of conduct to prevent sexist behaviour, including provision for disciplinary action and to foster zero tolerance towards sexism and sexist hate speech in sporting events.
- and to encourage leading sport and cultural figures to speak up against sexism and implement campaigns to denounce violence in sport and sexist hate speech.

The Gender Equality Commission will, in the years to come, embark in a follow-up of the implementation of the Sexism recommendation by member states. A first round, in 2022-2023, will look at the general provisions. A second round, in 2024-2025, will look at 3 specific sectors, and without prejudice to the decisions that the GEC will take, sport may very well feature amongst these first sectors to report on. I believe for instance that data like those produced with the ALL-IN project, should it continue, would be very useful, both in the perspective of this exercise and also to corroborate GREVIO evaluations.

So yes, we are familiar with the issue, and yes, we can look at it further in the future, in cooperation with EPAS, and we would look forward to it with great interest.