

**Tuesday 1 June**

## **Gender Equality, Sport and Human Rights – a mountain to climb?**

Good morning, thank you for inviting me to speak at the forum on sport and human rights. For those of you who don't yet know me, my name is Francine Hetherington Raveney and I am the Deputy Executive Secretary of EPAS.

As we've heard many times this morning the Council of Europe supports human rights, the rule of law and democracy. But underpinning every human rights action and every project carried out by the organisation, gender equality is one of the vital transversal components of the Council's Human Rights specificity.

### **What do we mean by gender equality?**

The Council of Europe has defined gender equality in its most succinct form as "equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life".

### **Now let's add sport into the equation**

Despite the positive developments in recent decades, gender inequalities still persist in many aspects of the sport world, from doing sport, to coaching and administration, and at all levels – from grassroots through to elite athletes.

We can see many examples of gender pay gaps in the sports world. We can also note a disproportionate media focus on male sports, a disproportionate share of opportunities for men and boys in sport, and an ongoing lack of equality in sport decision-making and governing bodies for women and female athletes.

When women and girls are from disadvantaged groups, including minorities or disabled athletes the sexism and discrimination is even more apparent. Inequalities in sport also sadly include: gender-based violence, including harassment and abuse. What a depressing picture!

However, sport does have the power to bring about greater gender equality. On a non-professional level participation in sports can help girls and women to have a greater sense of self-worth and help them develop team contacts. Values such as force and strength, highly prized in sport, are no longer values only associated with male sports professionals.

## **EPAS leading the way**

As protecting human rights and gender equality are cornerstones of the work of the Council of Europe, it is no surprise that EPAS, a Partial Agreement within the Council of Europe, has been leading the way in protecting and promoting gender equality in the sports sector since its inception.

To flag up some *highlights* we can mention:

**Recommendation Rec(2015)2 on gender mainstreaming in sport** which was prepared by EPAS and which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2015.

This Recommendation calls on member states to promote and encourage policies and practices aimed at introducing, implementing and ensuring gender mainstreaming in all fields and at all levels of sport. This includes:

- legislation;
- policies and programmes;
- data collection and research on women and girls in sport; and
- awareness-raising and training on gender equality issues for public authorities and actors involved in sport.

**Another highlight is the**

**ALL IN – Towards Gender Balance in Sport - Joint programme between the Council of Europe and the EU funded by Erasmus +**

This project ran from start March 2018 until end October 2019 and its overall aim was to provide support to public authorities and sport organisations when designing and implementing policies and programmes addressing gender inequalities in sport, and when adopting a gender mainstreaming strategy.

The All In project was wide-reaching and hugely impactful covering a wide range of areas: - data collection, - preparation of indicators, - educational toolkits, - publications and videos on best practice, - as well as handbooks with advice about how to bring about gender equality in sport, as well as follow-up conferences and seminars to name but a few.

You can find out more information about All In at its devoted website.

## Data collection

The “All In” project drew on extensive data collection from 18 countries, looking at the involvement of women and men in the field of sport, monitoring progress on gender equality, identifying persisting challenges and making comparisons between countries and between sports.

In each of the participating countries, two different types of data were collected:

- Data separated by gender in the involvement of women and men in sport ; and
- Data on policies, programmes and actions.

## The six strategic fields which were explored for the All In data collection project include:

- Leadership;
- Coaching;
- Participation (from grassroots to elite sport);
- Gender-based violence;
- Communication/media policies; and
- Programmes addressing gender equality.

It is beyond the remit of this short presentation to sum up the overall findings per country and I do recommend that you access the webpage I mentioned earlier.

## Data findings

However, according to the findings sport remains at pan-European level (in those countries analysed) a male-dominated environment.

A few figures for you:

In Europe, women make up only:

- 31% of the members of a sports club or federation;
- 22% of the board members of the national Olympic Committees;
- 7% of the presidents of the Olympic sports federations.

Most female presidents could be found in the areas of skating (20%), gymnastics (19%) and triathlon (12%).

The topic which had the fewest measures implemented across the selected countries was “preventing and combating gender-based violence”.

The study also revealed a major problem with representation and coverage in media and communication.

### **Positive steps to providing greater gender equality in sport**

The All In project wasn't only about confirming unedifying findings.

#### *Good practice*

In addition to those really useful indicators I've already mentioned, the project also provided 99 practical examples of good practice.

#### *Toolkit*

*The “Toolkit” – “How to make an impact on gender equality in sport” – All you need to know*, available in print and downloadable format, contains 11 practical factsheets which can be used by - decision makers from public authorities for sport and from sporting organisations, - policy officers/operational managers responsible for sport as well as trainers in gender equality/gender mainstreaming in sport to implement change.

#### *The benefits of gender equality in sport for society*

All In spells out the benefits of gender equality in sport for society. Including in the areas of: - public health and social development, - education, - inclusion, - increased quality of life. For sports organisations investing in gender equality can have a substantial positive impact within sports organisations. These include: - positive image, - economic growth, - better performing organisations and – an increase in human resources.

**Where is EPAS heading next in the area of gender equality sports and promoting and protecting human rights?**

1. Ongoing use of the indicators to inform data collection, and enhancement of these indicators in the areas of media/communication and gender-based violence in sport.
2. Ongoing collaborative work with other institutional partners, including: Unesco, the Global Observatory on Women and Sport, the EIGE, the EU and UN Women to name but a few.
3. Ongoing participation in awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing seminars.
4. Data collection every four years to expand the existing data base.
5. New initiatives that may arise from discussions with partners (governments, sports organisations and our Council of Europe colleagues).

And on that note, I am very happy to hand over to my colleague:

Daniele Cangemi, Head of the Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department to hear how we may work together more closely in the future.