

ITALY

AND WOMEN'S HEALTH IN SPORT ACROSS GENERATIONS

Active and Equal Project

*Building a healthier,
more equal and active future
for every woman, at every age*

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



ADOLESCENCE



REPRODUCTIVE
YEARS



PREGNANCY &
MOTHERHOOD



PERI-MENOPAUSE
& MENOPAUSE



HEALTHY AGEING

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SPORT:

A LIFE-COURSE APPROACH

The Active and Equal project promotes women's health and wellbeing in sport at every stage of life.

Different needs, one goal:
lifelong active and healthy participation.



Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Women's health in sport is not a niche issue.
It is a lifelong participation issue.

THE ITALIAN CONTEXT

SPORT IN ITALY: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Italy has strong foundations in sport and health, with a growing commitment to gender equality.

We are building on our strengths while addressing structural gaps to ensure that every woman, at every age, can be active, healthy and included in sport.



STRENGTHS



Strong sports medicine tradition

Advanced preventive care and a widespread medical network.



Growing women's sport movement

Increasing participation, visibility and professional opportunities.



Extensive community sport network

A rich landscape of clubs, associations and social sport initiatives.



Active ageing programmes

Well-established initiatives promoting health, autonomy and social inclusion.



CHALLENGES



Gender participation gap

Women are less active than men, with higher drop-out rates, especially in adolescence and in the South.



Territorial inequalities

Large differences in access to facilities, services and opportunities across regions and communities.



Lack of systemic gender-sensitive approaches

Initiatives exist but are often fragmented, local and not fully integrated.



Data gaps

Limited gender-specific data on women's health and participation across the life course.



People at the centre
Putting women's needs and rights at the heart of sport systems.



Systems in action
From good practices to coordinated, sustainable policies.



Equal opportunities
For all women, in all life stages, in every territory.



Shared commitment
Working together to create a fairer, healthier and more active Europe.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe

WOMEN AND SPORT IN ITALY: KEY FIGURES

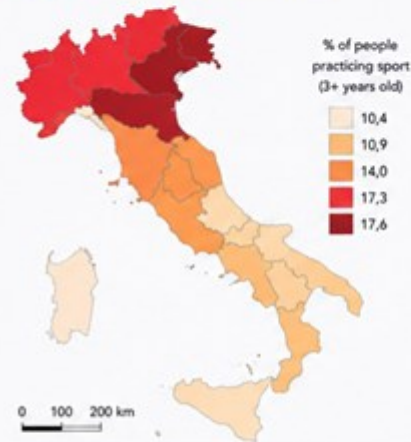
THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE CHALLENGE



Data highlight persistent **gender and territorial gaps** in sport participation in Italy.



TERRITORIAL INEQUALITIES REMAIN SIGNIFICANT



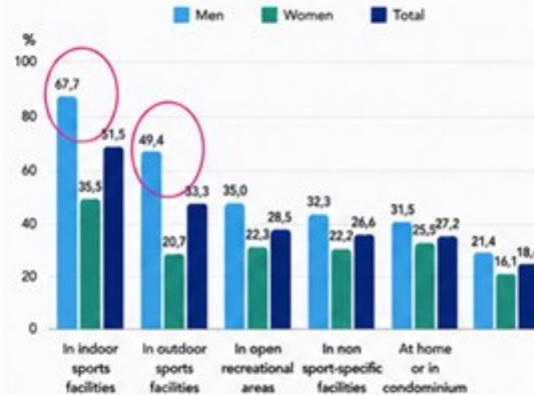
Participation opportunities vary considerably between **Northern** and **Southern** regions.

Source: ISTAT – Sport e attività fisica, 2024



WOMEN PARTICIPATE LESS THAN MEN ACROSS MOST SPORT SETTINGS

% of people aged 3+ who practice sport for leisure at least once a week



The gap is widest in **sports facilities**, both indoor and outdoor.

Source: ISTAT – Pratica sportiva in Italia, 2024 (dati per 3 anni e più)



WOMEN STILL REPRESENT A MINORITY OF REGISTERED ATHLETES

LA CARICA DELLE RAGAZZE (2024)

TESSERAMENTO SPORTIVO

27,7%
tesserate sportive sul totale dei tesserati



LA DIFFUSIONE DELLA PRATICA



131 ragazzi
ogni 100.000 abitanti



87 ragazze
ogni 100.000 abitanti



Le ragazze che praticano sport hanno più fiducia in sé stesse e nelle proprie abilità.

Source: Sport e Salute – La carica delle ragazze, 2024



PARTICIPATION GAP

Women are less likely to engage in **regular sport participation**.



TERRITORIAL DIVIDE

Access to facilities and opportunities remains uneven across regions.



REPRESENTATION CHALLENGE

Female participation in organised sport remains below its full potential.

Co-funded by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented by the Council of Europe



Stronger together



From commitment to impact



Building a legacy of equality



Sustainable change for generations

MAIN CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN ITALY

KEY BARRIERS AFFECTING WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE

Despite progress, important gaps remain that limit women's full and equal participation in sport.



PARTICIPATION GAP

- Women are less active than men.
- Higher drop-out in adolescence.
- Bigger gaps in the South and in vulnerable contexts.





LACK OF SYSTEMIC WOMEN'S HEALTH APPROACH

- No nationwide guidelines on key issues (menstrual health, RED-S, menopause).
- Limited coach education and standardised protocols.
- Initiatives exist, but are local and not coordinated.





TERRITORIAL DISPARITIES

- Strong differences between North and South.
- Unequal access to facilities, sports medicine and programmes.
- Opportunities depend on where you live.





LACK OF GENDER-SPECIFIC DATA

- Limited systematic data on women's health in sport.
- Gaps on menstrual health, RED-S, menopause and drop-out.
- Lack of longitudinal and integrated data.





LIMITED INTEGRATION OF MENOPAUSE AND FEMALE PHYSIOLOGY

- Menopause and perimenopause are still underrepresented.
- Lack of policies, guidelines, coach training and public awareness.
- A major gap for women over 45.





These challenges are not uniquely Italian
and may be relevant across Europe.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe

ADOLESCENCE AND SPORT PARTICIPATION

PREVENTING FEMALE DROP-OUT

Adolescence is a critical moment for girls' sport participation.

Many barriers lead to early drop-out, especially during puberty.



KEY BARRIERS



High drop-out after puberty



Body image and low self-esteem



Gender stereotypes and norms



Economic and access barriers



Territorial and socioeconomic inequalities



Keeping girls in sport requires coordinated action between schools, families, health systems and sport organisations.

ITALIAN EXPERIENCES



Sport di Tutti

Inclusive community sport projects across the country.



Scuola Attiva

Integration of physical activity in schools to engage girls every day.



Joy of Moving

Promoting active lifestyles and positive sport experiences for young girls.



Community and social sport programmes

Multidisciplinary approach involving families, educators, coaches and social services.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Collaborate
across sectors
and generations



Address the real
barriers girls face



Invest in positive
female role models
and safe environments



Empower girls
to love sport
for life

GIRLS IN SPORT: PARTICIPATION AND DROP-OUT DATA

ADOLESCENCE IS A CRITICAL TURNING POINT

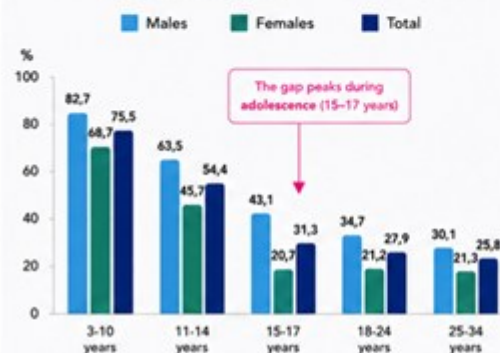


Early engagement keeps girls active. Support, inclusion and positive environments make the difference.



GENDER GAP BY AGE GROUP

% of people who practice sport at least once a week



The gap peaks during adolescence (15-17 years)



Girls' participation drops dramatically during adolescence and remains lower than boys' at all ages.

Source: ISTAT - Pratica sportiva in Italia, 2024 (dati per 3 anni e più)



MAIN REASONS FOR SPORT DROP-OUT AMONG GIRLS (11-17)

% of girls who do not practice sport



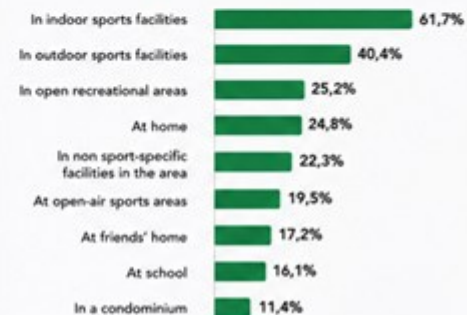
Lack of time and competing priorities are the top barriers for girls.

Source: ISTAT - Indagine Aspetti della vita quotidiana, 2023 (dati 11-17 anni)



WHERE GIRLS PRACTICE SPORT (11-17 YEARS)

% of girls who practice sport



Indoor facilities are the most used settings, while school and public spaces are underutilized.

Source: ISTAT - Pratica sportiva in Italia, 2024 (11-17 anni che praticano sport)



Adolescence is a decisive phase: girls need tailored support, motivating environments and role models to stay in sport and benefit from lifelong physical activity.



EARLY ENGAGEMENT

Start early and make sport fun and accessible.



INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Safe, welcoming and non-judgmental spaces keep girls active.



POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

Visible female role models inspire participation and build confidence.



SCHOOL + COMMUNITY

Stronger links between school, clubs and communities prevent drop-out.

Co-funded by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented by the Council of Europe



Stronger together



From commitment to impact



Building a legacy of equality



Sustainable change for generations

ITALIAN PROGRAMMES TACKLING GIRLS' DROP-OUT

EVIDENCE-BASED INITIATIVES TO KEEP GIRLS ACTIVE, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED



The right programmes
at the right age
make the difference.
Let's keep girls in sport!

SPORT
E SALUTE **SPORT**
DI TUTTI

Making sport
accessible
for everyone



WHAT IT DOES

Reduces economic and territorial barriers
to sport participation through financial support
and local networks.

KEY ACTIONS

- Vouchers for sport activities and memberships
- Support for low-income families and inner areas
- Community sport hubs and local partnerships
- Focus on inclusion and diversity



IMPACT

More girls, including from vulnerable backgrounds,
can access and stay in sport.

Kinder.
Joy of moving



Putting joy
at the heart
of movement



WHAT IT DOES

Promotes a positive, fun and inclusive sport
experience to build motivation and lifelong
movement habits.

KEY ACTIONS

- Play-based and non-competitive activities
- School and community programmes
- Training for coaches on motivation and inclusion
- Focus on well-being and enjoyment



IMPACT

Girls stay active longer when sport is fun,
welcoming and pressure-free.



Scuola
Attiva
PIÙ SPORT, PIÙ SCUOLA

Building continuity
between school
and sport



WHAT IT DOES

Integrates physical activity into school life
to prevent early school-age drop-out
from sport.

KEY ACTIONS

- Physical activity in schools (primary & secondary)
- Links with local sport clubs and federations
- Teacher and coach training
- Pathways for transition from school to clubs



IMPACT

Strengthens the bridge between school
and sport, especially in early adolescence.



These complementary programmes address the main barriers behind girls' drop-out:
access, motivation and continuity – creating the conditions for every girl to stay in sport.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SPORTS MEDICINE

BUILDING ON ITALY'S PREVENTIVE SPORTS MEDICINE MODEL

Italy has a strong tradition in preventive sports medicine and a widespread network of services and expertise.

We are now adapting this strength to address women's specific health needs in sport.



OUR STRENGTHS



Mandatory medical screening

A solid system of health checks for safe sport practice.



Widespread sports medicine network

Centres and professionals present across the country.



Culture of prevention

Strong focus on early detection, risk reduction and health promotion.



Sports science expertise

Leading universities and research centres advancing knowledge.

EMERGING AREAS OF FOCUS



MENSTRUAL HEALTH

Understanding the cycle and its impact on training and performance.



RED-S PREVENTION

Screening, early identification and nutritional support.



BONE HEALTH

Protecting bone density and preventing injuries across the life course.



POST-PARTUM RETURN TO SPORT

Safe and personalised pathways to support return to activity.



MENTAL HEALTH

Supporting mental wellbeing and performance resilience.



Existing structures can be adapted to become fully gender-sensitive and life-course oriented.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Strong foundation
for safer, healthier
sport for women



Evidence-based
approaches
drive better
outcomes



Bridging science,
practice and
women's real
needs



Towards equal
opportunities
and lifelong
participation

ITALIAN BEST PRACTICE

SPORTS MEDICINE AS A PREVENTION SYSTEM

A STRONG NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE



Prevention today,
healthier athletes
tomorrow.
Italy has the expertise
to lead the way.



Italy has one of Europe's most advanced sports medicine systems.



Built on a long tradition of prevention, medical expertise and athlete care.



A nationwide network of Centres of Sports Medicine ensures coverage and quality across the country.



From screening to rehabilitation, the system supports athletes at every stage of life.



1. MANDATORY MEDICAL SCREENING

- Medical certification is required for all competitive and non-competitive athletes.
- Includes clinical evaluation, ECG and risk assessment.



2. NATIONWIDE SPORTS MEDICINE NETWORK

- Over 300 Centres of Sports Medicine across all regions.
- Close collaboration with local health services and CONI.



3. CARDIOVASCULAR PREVENTION

- Cardiovascular screening has significantly reduced sudden cardiac death in young athletes.
- Italy is a European benchmark for prevention protocols.



4. GROWING FOCUS ON FEMALE PHYSIOLOGY

- Increasing research on menstrual cycle, RED-S, bone health and hormonal transitions.
- The next step: integrate gender-sensitive protocols everywhere.



Italy already has one of Europe's most developed sports medicine systems.
The next challenge is making it fully gender-sensitive and accessible for all women, at every stage of life.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

WOMEN'S HEALTH: EVIDENCE AND EMERGING ISSUES

KEY DATA ON FEMALE PHYSIOLOGY, HEALTH AND SPORT PERFORMANCE



Understanding female physiology is essential to **protect health**, **improve performance** and **reduce drop-out**.

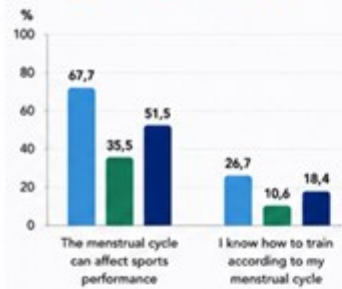


MENSTRUAL CYCLE AND SPORT

AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT OF THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE ON PERFORMANCE IS STILL LOW

% of people aged 3+ who agree

Men Women Total



Low awareness and knowledge among women and men highlight the need for education and support.

Source: ISTAT - Pratica sportiva in Italia, 2024 (dati per 3 anni e più)

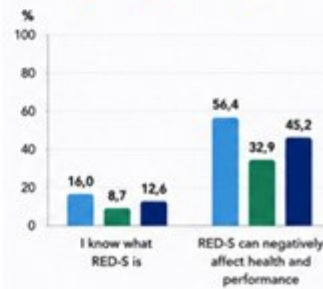


RED-S AWARENESS REMAINS LIMITED

Low Energy Availability Relative to Sport (RED-S) is still poorly known

% of people aged 3+ who agree

Men Women Total



RED-S awareness is insufficient, despite its significant impact on health and performance.

Source: ISTAT - Pratica sportiva in Italia, 2024 (dati per 3 anni e più)



HIGHER RISK OF INJURIES IN WOMEN

Women have a higher risk of certain injuries compared to men

RISK OF ANTERIOR CRUCIATE LIGAMENT (ACL) INJURY IN WOMEN VS MEN

2-6x
higher risk



RISK OF STRESS FRACTURES

2-4x
higher risk



RISK OF PATELLOFEMORAL PAIN SYNDROME

1.3-1.7x
higher risk



Injury prevention strategies must be gender-specific and evidence-based.

Source: Sports Medicine Australia (2020); Brito et al., Br J Sports Med (2022)



BONE HEALTH: A CRITICAL ISSUE

Women are more at risk of low bone mineral density and osteoporosis

PREVALENCE OF OSTEOPOROSIS (% OF POPULATION)

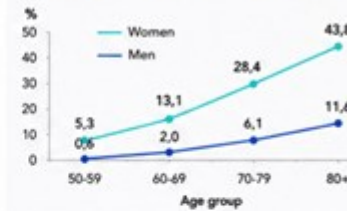
23,1%
Women



5,7%
Men



OSTEOPOROSIS AND LOW BONE MASS AFFECT WOMEN MORE OFTEN WITH AGE



Source: Istat, Indagine Aspetti della vita quotidiana, 2023



Female physiology matters. Evidence-based knowledge, awareness and tailored interventions are essential along all life stages to **protect health**, **enhance performance** and **keep women active in sport**.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD AND RETURN TO SPORT

SUPPORTING WOMEN THROUGH MOTHERHOOD

Italy is committed to ensuring that motherhood is compatible with a sporting career.

Our goal: to protect, support and empower women at every stage of their motherhood journey.



Motherhood should never mark the end of a sporting career.

ITALIAN MEASURES AND SUPPORTS



MATERNITY FUND FOR ATHLETES

Economic support for athletes during pregnancy and the post-partum period.



PROTECTION AND RIGHTS

Safeguarding health, employment and social security for pregnant and postpartum athletes.



CONTINUITY IN SPORT

Supporting the continuation of sporting activity without discrimination.



RETURN TO SPORT

Guidance and programmes for a safe and personalised return to training and competition.

OUR APPROACH: A 360° SUPPORT SYSTEM



MEDICAL CARE

Specialised care before, during and after pregnancy.



FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS

Adapted training plans and timelines according to individual needs.



MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

Coaches, doctors, physiotherapists, nutritionists and psychologists working together.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Supporting mental wellbeing and confidence during transition phases.



CAREER SUSTAINABILITY

Enabling women to pursue their sporting and professional goals.



Investing in motherhood support means investing in equality, health and talent.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Protect women's
rights and health



Promote retention
and career continuity



Value talent
and experience



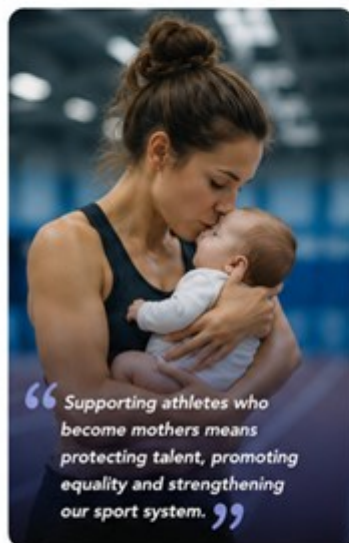
Build a more inclusive
and sustainable
sport system

ITALIAN BEST PRACTICE: SUPPORTING ATHLETE MOTHERS

FROM PREGNANCY TO RETURN TO SPORT: A RIGHT, NOT A BARRIER



Maternity is not the end of an athletic career. Italy is pioneering concrete support to ensure **continuity, equality and choice.**



“Supporting athletes who become mothers means protecting talent, promoting equality and strengthening our sport system.”

A CONTINUOUS PATH OF SUPPORT



PREGNANCY

Personalized medical monitoring and training adaptation to protect mother and baby.



MATERNITY SUPPORT

Economic contribution through the Athlete Maternity Fund to support mothers during leave.



RETURN TO SPORT

Gradual, safe and scientifically guided return-to-sport pathways and dedicated support.



CAREER CONTINUITY

Protection of contracts, ranking, selections and career opportunities after maternity.



The **Italian Maternity Fund for Athletes** (introduced in 2022) is a dedicated measure that provides economic support to female athletes affiliated with sports federations who become mothers, helping them continue their sporting career.

ITALY'S APPROACH: RECOGNISING AND REMOVING BARRIERS



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Ensuring that motherhood does not mean giving up on a sporting career.



WELFARE & PROTECTION

Economic and social protection for athletes and their families.



RETENTION OF TALENT

Supporting athletes to stay in sport and return stronger.



CULTURE OF CHANGE

Promoting a sport culture that values motherhood and gender equality.

MEASURABLE IMPACT



ECONOMIC SUPPORT

€ 3.000

contribution for each athlete mother (from the Maternity Fund)



BENEFICIARIES (2022-2024)

200+

athlete mothers supported by the Maternity Fund



RETURN & RETENTION

~80%

of supported athletes returned to competitive sport



CAREER PROTECTION

100%

of rights, ranking and selections protected during maternity leave



Italy is showing that supporting athlete mothers is not only **fair**, it is **smart**.
When we support mothers in sport, we support **families, equality** and the **future of sport**.

Co-funded
by the European Union



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND FEMALE PHYSIOLOGY

BREAKING TABOOS, BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

Women's physiological cycles are a natural part of sport.

It is time to normalise the conversation and integrate this knowledge into training, coaching and policies.



GAPS THAT STILL EXIST



LIMITED AWARENESS

Menstrual health is still rarely discussed in sport environments.



LACK OF COACH EDUCATION

Few coaches receive training on menstrual cycles and their impact on performance.



LIMITED POLICY INTEGRATION

There is a lack of national guidelines and standardised protocols.



STIGMA AND TABOOS

Menses remain a sensitive topic, leading to silence and exclusion.



IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE AND RETENTION

Lack of knowledge can affect performance, wellbeing and long-term participation.

EMERGING ITALIAN EXPERIENCES AND INITIATIVES



ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Universities and research centres investigating the menstrual cycle, RED-S and bone health in women athletes.



MY PERIOD MY SPORT

Pioneering Italian project promoting menstrual health education and empowerment in sport.



COACH EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

New training modules on female physiology and cycle-informed training.



PRACTICAL TOOLS

Monitoring tools and resources to support athletes and coaches.



AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Raising visibility and promoting open dialogue in sport communities and media.



Women's physiology should be recognised as a **normal** component of sport planning and **performance optimisation**.



Know the cycle,
train smarter



Improve wellbeing
and performance



Protect health,
prevent injuries
and RED-S



Empower women
to stay in sport
for life

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe

WOMEN, AGEING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: KEY FIGURES

ACTIVE AGEING IS HEALTHY AGEING: THE POWER OF MOVEMENT AT EVERY STAGE OF LIFE



Regular physical activity improves **health, independence and quality of life** for women as they age.



LIFE EXPECTANCY IN ITALY (2023)

Women live longer than men.

83,4

Women



79,7

Men

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT AGE 65

Additional years of life

Women 21,7 years

Men 18,0 years



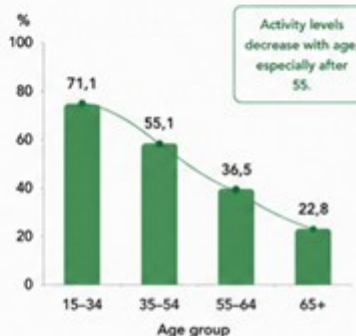
Women not only live longer, but spend more years in good health when active.

Source: ISTAT - Speranza di vita, 2023



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS BY AGE GROUP (WOMEN)

% of women who practice sport or physical activity at least once a week



The decline in activity after 55 is a key challenge for women's health and independence.

Source: ISTAT - Pratica sportiva in Italia, 2024 (dati per 3 anni e più)



HEALTH BENEFITS OF REGULAR ACTIVITY FOR WOMEN 55+



-30%
lower risk of cardiovascular disease



-40%
lower risk of osteoporosis and fractures



-30%
lower risk of cognitive decline



+20-30%
better functional capacity and mobility



+30%
better mental well-being and quality of life



Movement is medicine: it protects body, mind and quality of life.

Source: OMS, WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour, 2020



MOST PRACTICED ACTIVITIES BY WOMEN 55+ (ITALY, 2024)

% of women 55+ who practice at least once a week



Walking 55,6%



Swimming 18,2%



Gym / Fitness 13,5%



Cycling 9,8%



Dance / Group activities 7,9%



Other activities 6,7%



Walking is by far the most popular activity among women over 55.

Source: ISTAT - Pratica sportiva in Italia, 2024 (dati per 3 anni e più)



Staying active at every age helps women live longer, healthier and more independent lives.
Investing in physical activity for women 55+ is investing in healthier societies.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

PROFESSIONALISATION AND PROTECTION OF FEMALE ATHLETES

THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Italy was the first European country to introduce professional status for women's football in Serie A from 1 July 2022.

A structural reform that has improved rights, visibility and health protection for female athletes.

KEY PILLARS OF THE REFORM



PROFESSIONAL STATUS

Recognition of the professional nature of women footballers' work.



LABOUR RIGHTS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Contracts, social security, insurance and fair working conditions.



MATERNITY AND HEALTH PROTECTION

Stronger safeguards for pregnancy, maternity and injury protection.



IMPROVED HEALTH CARE

Greater access to medical support, prevention and sports medicine services.



VISIBILITY AND GROWTH

More visibility, investment and opportunities for young girls and future generations.



A GAME CHANGER
for equality
in sport

POSITIVE IMPACT ON ATHLETES AND THE SYSTEM



BETTER WORK CONDITIONS

Access to professional contracts and decent working standards.



ENHANCED HEALTH PROTECTION

Stronger medical and injury protection for safer careers.



GREATER RETENTION OF PLAYERS

More stability and opportunities to continue playing.



INSPIRATION AND ROLE MODELS

More visibility for girls and young female athletes.



STRONGER AND MORE COMPETITIVE GAME

Improved quality, professionalism and international standing.



Structural reforms can improve both **equality** and **health** outcomes in sport.

Co-funded
by the European Union



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Equal rights
on and off
the pitch



Protecting
athletes' health
and wellbeing



Empowering
women in
football



Building a more
inclusive and fair
sport system

ITALY'S ELITE ATHLETE PROTECTION MODEL: STATE SPORT GROUPS

A unique Italian model that supports talent, protects careers and promotes equality



In Italy, many high-level athletes are employed by military and law-enforcement sport groups.

This ensures employment stability, social protection and career continuity.

A DISTINCTIVE ITALIAN MODEL

The Italian State has developed a unique system in Europe. Elite athletes can be recruited into Military and Law-Enforcement Sport Groups, combining sporting excellence with a **recognised employment status and strong social protections**.



MILANO-CORTINA 2026 WINTER OLYMPICS THE CONTRIBUTION OF MILITARY SPORT GROUPS



196

Italian athletes
in Team Italy

The most numerous
Italian Winter Olympic
team in history



60+

athletes from
Military Sport Groups

A significant share
of the Italian delegation



11

medals won by
Military Sport Group
athletes

6 **1** **4**
GOLD SILVER BRONZE



WHAT THIS MODEL PROVIDES



EMPLOYMENT STABILITY

Athletes have a recognised employment status within the State.



SOCIAL PROTECTION

Access to social security, healthcare and welfare benefits.



MATERNITY & FAMILY SUPPORT

Dedicated protections and compatibility between sport and family life.



CAREER CONTINUITY

Support during and after the sporting career, including dual career pathways.



TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Access to education, training, facilities and high-level technical support.

A STRUCTURED AND INTEGRATED SYSTEM



8 STATE SPORT GROUPS

4 of the Armed Forces
and 4 of the Law-Enforcement
Corps.



ESERCITO



MARINA
MILITARE



AERONAUTICA
MILITARE



CARABINIERI



POLIZIA
DI STATO



GUARDIA DI
FINANZA



VIGILI
DEL FUOCO



CORPO DELLA
POLIZIA PENITENZIARIA

4 MILITARY SPORT GROUPS

4 LAW-ENFORCEMENT SPORT GROUPS

A LARGE ANNUAL COMMITMENT



75

athletes recruited
every year
in the 4 Military
Sport Groups



800

athletes and staff
approximately,
in the Military
Sport Groups

KEY MESSAGE



This model provides valuable protection for many elite athletes, including women, offering stability, rights and opportunities.

However, it mainly concerns high-level athletes:
broader safeguards are still needed for all women in sport,
from grassroots to amateur and non-professional levels.



SOURCES



- Ministry of Defence – Undersecretary Isabella Rauti
“Ai Giochi Olimpici importante affermazione degli atleti militari” (2026)
- Brescia Giovani – “Gruppi Sportivi Militari: atleti in divisa” (2024)

WOMEN IN SPORT LEADERSHIP

MORE WOMEN LEADING SPORT, BETTER SPORT FOR EVERYONE



When women lead,
sport becomes more
inclusive, innovative
and impactful.



THE SITUATION IN ITALY (LATEST AVAILABLE DATA)

Women are underrepresented in
decision-making and leadership roles.



SPORT FEDERATION PRESIDENTS

13% are women



FEDERATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

27% are women



REGISTERED COACHES

24% are women



TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

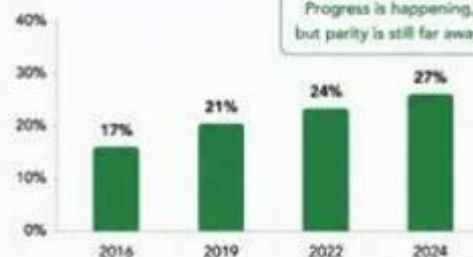
18% are women

Source: CONI - Donne e Sport Report, 2023-2024



A POSITIVE TREND, BUT STILL NOT ENOUGH

Percentage of women in leadership roles
in Italian sport federations



Our goal: equal representation
at all levels of sport governance.



WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MATTERS



Brings diverse perspectives
and better decision-making.



Drives innovation and programs
that meet the needs of all.



Creates role models and inspires
more girls to stay in sport.



Strengthens integrity, ethics
and good governance.



Supports a culture of inclusion,
respect and equality.



OUR COMMITMENT: BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING LEADERS



TRAIN & EMPOWER
Invest in leadership
education, mentorship
and pathways for
women in sport.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
Ensure transparent
selections, fair access
to positions and
leadership roles.



STRONGER NETWORKS
Build communities
and networks to
support, connect and
promote women leaders.



VISIBILITY & ROLE MODELS
Celebrate women leaders
and make their stories
visible to inspire the
next generation.



More women in leadership is not just about fairness.
It is about building a stronger, healthier and more successful sport for all.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations



ITALIAN BEST PRACTICE

FormaMENTE

FROM GRASSROOTS TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN SPORT

Building skills, confidence and opportunities for women in sport governance

“

While women are increasingly present in sport as practitioners, the leadership gap remains significant, especially at grassroots level and in decision-making roles.

FormaMENTE aims to change this.



ASSOCIAZIONE
OLIMPICI
AZZURRI
D'ITALIA



1 WHY IT MATTERS



Women continue to be **underrepresented** in sport governance and leadership roles, particularly in grassroots associations, local committees and sport federations.

This project addresses the need to **empower more women** to take on strategic and decision-making positions in the sport system.

2 WHAT IT DOES



FormaMENTE offers a structured pathway of training, webinars and multidisciplinary meetings to develop competences and practical skills for managing and leading sport organisations.



Training courses and webinars



Multidisciplinary meetings



Practical tools and real cases

3 SKILLS DEVELOPED



Event organisation



Logistics



Facilities management



Membership management



Communication



Institutional relations



Administrative management



Financial education

4 TARGET AND REACH



Ex-athletes, parents, sport enthusiasts



Women already active in sport associations



Open to all women interested in contributing to sport organisations

- ✓ Duration: at least **12 months**
- ✓ Multiregional development through the Associazione Olimpici Azzurri d'Italia network
- ✓ At least **4 pilot areas** involved

IMPLEMENTED BY



Associazione
Olimpici Azzurri
d'Italia

In collaboration with sport organisations, institutions, experts and local stakeholders to build a **stronger, more inclusive and equal sport system**.



FormaMENTE shows that women's leadership in sport starts at grassroots level: by giving women the skills, confidence and networks needed to move from participation to decision-making.



*More women in leadership.
Stronger sport for everyone.*

ITALIAN ECOSYSTEM FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH IN SPORT

A COLLABORATIVE NETWORK FOR AN ACTIVE AND EQUAL FUTURE



Working together across sectors to support every woman at every stage of life through sport.

OUR COMMON GOAL



To create an integrated, inclusive and sustainable ecosystem that promotes health, participation and well-being for all women in sport.

- ✓ Evidence-based policies
- ✓ Gender-sensitive approach
- ✓ Lifelong support and inclusion
- ✓ Safe and respectful environments
- ✓ Equal opportunities and leadership



TOGETHER WE:



Promote women's health and well-being at every life stage



Increase participation and reduce drop-out



Ensure protection, rights and dignity in sport



Develop skills, leadership and career opportunities



Build a culture of equality, respect and inclusion



An ecosystem. A shared responsibility. A stronger future for women in sport.
Institutional collaboration is the key to real and lasting change.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

ITALIAN TERRITORIAL LEADERSHIP: PUGLIA AND THE ACES WOMEN & ALLIES GLOBAL SUMMIT 2026

From regional sport policy to global dialogue on women, health and equality



REGIONE
PUGLIA



ACES Women & Allies Global Summit is the first global platform dedicated to advancing gender equality, inclusion and leadership in sport.



THE CONTEXT

Sport is a powerful driver of equality, health and social inclusion.

The Summit brings together leaders, experts, athletes and institutions to share solutions, build alliances and accelerate change for women and girls in sport.



Local commitment,
global impact.

ACES WOMEN & ALLIES GLOBAL SUMMIT 2026



5 JUNE 2026

Politecnico di Bari
BARI, PUGLIA – ITALY



~70
participants
from the global
ACES network



INTERNATIONAL
activists, athletes,
sport leaders,
researchers and
institutions



LAUNCH OF THE
GLOBAL PLATFORM
a biennial and
itinerant initiative



FOCUS: women's sport as a driver of gender equality, health, safety and empowerment for women and girls.



One-day
international
summit



Round table
on women's
sport



International
networking and
knowledge sharing



Policy dialogue
and future
commitments

KEY THEMES



Women's health
and well-being



Safety and
inclusion in sport



Leadership and
empowerment



Equality and
human rights



Sport participation
and physical activity



Research, innovation
and good practices

PROMOTED BY



ACES Europe
Federation of European Capitals
and Cities of Sport



Regione Puglia
Puglia European Region of Sport 2026

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

- Politecnico di Bari
- Universities and research centres
- National and international sport organisations
- Institutions, municipalities and civil society
- European and global networks for equality

WHY IT MATTERS



Hosting the ACES Women & Allies Global Summit 2026 confirms Puglia's role as a hub for innovation, cooperation and inclusive sport policies — **connecting local action with global change.**



Together, we can make sport a place where every woman and girl can be **active, visible and empowered** — **on the field and in leadership.**



Bari, Puglia (Italy)
A regional commitment
with a global vision.

Follow the Summit:



#ACESWomenAllies2026

POLICIES FOR AN ACTIVE AND EQUAL FUTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITALY

Italy has the knowledge, the experience and the talent to be a leader in gender equality in sport.

Now is the time to turn commitment into coordinated action.



Equality in sport is not just a goal. It is a choice we make today for a better tomorrow.

OUR CALL TO ACTION



STRONGER COORDINATION

Build a national inter-ministerial strategy for gender equality in sport.



SUSTAINED INVESTMENT

Increase and dedicate funding to women's sport and health initiatives.



DATA AND MONITORING

Collect and use gender-disaggregated data to guide policies and measure progress.



INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Ensure safe, welcoming and respectful spaces for girls and women in sport.



VOICE AND VISIBILITY

Amplify the voices of women and girls at all levels of decision-making.

RECOMMENDATIONS



POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Adopt a national strategy with clear targets, shared responsibilities and adequate resources.



EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Integrate gender equality and health education in schools and coach training programmes.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Expand access to women-centred sport medicine and mental health services.



SPORT SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Promote equal leadership, professional opportunities and visibility for women in all sport sectors.



PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY

Strengthen collaboration with communities, families, media and the private sector.



By working together, we can build a sport system that is active, inclusive and equal for everyone.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Equality
is a right



Health and
wellbeing
for all



Together
we can make
a difference



Invest today
for a stronger,
fairer future



Empower girls
and women
through sport

EQUALITY IN SPORT: A SHARED COMMITMENT, A STRONGER FUTURE

When women thrive in sport, everyone benefits.



Equality is not just
the right thing to do.
It is the **smart** thing
to do for **all**.



Investing in women's health and participation in sport is not only a matter of equality.
It is an investment in **healthier people, stronger organisations** and **more resilient societies**.

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

CALL TO ACTION: LET'S MAKE EQUALITY THE STANDARD

EVERY ACTION COUNTS, EVERY VOICE MATTERS

Change is possible, but it requires commitment, courage and collaboration.

Each of us has a role to play in building a sport that is active, inclusive and equal.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



BE INFORMED

Learn about gender equality issues in sport and stay up to date.



RAISE YOUR VOICE

Speak up, challenge stereotypes and promote respectful dialogue.



SUPPORT AND INCLUDE

Encourage the participation of girls and women at all levels of sport.



PROMOTE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Advocate for fair policies, resources and recognition.



BE A ROLE MODEL

Lead by example and inspire others to embrace equality.



We all have the power to create change. Together, we can build a better future through sport.

TOGETHER, WE CAN



CHANGE MINDSETS

Break down barriers and stereotypes to create a culture of respect and equality.



OPEN DOORS

Create more opportunities for women and girls to participate, lead and succeed.



BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES

Foster inclusive environments where everyone feels welcome and valued.



DRIVE LASTING CHANGE

Work together today for a sport system that is fair, inclusive and sustainable.



LEAVE A LEGACY

Inspire future generations to dream big and know that equality is the standard.



Let's move from words to action.

Let's make gender equality in sport a reality, for everyone, everywhere.



Take action today



Support equality



Involve others



Champion change



Build a better future through sport

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe

NEXT STEPS: TURNING COMMITMENT INTO ACTION

TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD AN ACTIVE AND EQUAL FUTURE

We have the knowledge, the tools and the will. Now it is time to act.

Let's work together to create a sport system where everyone can thrive.



The future is equal, active and inclusive. Let's make it happen, together.

OUR ROADMAP



1

COMMIT

Reaffirm our commitment to gender equality in sport at all levels.



2

INTEGRATE

Integrate gender equality into policies, programmes and everyday practice.



3

INVEST

Invest in education, research, data and resources to drive meaningful change.



4

ACT TOGETHER

Strengthen collaboration across sectors and empower women and girls in sport.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE



REVIEW AND ASSESS

Assess current policies and practices to identify gaps and opportunities.



SET CLEAR TARGETS

Define measurable goals and timelines for gender equality in sport.



ENGAGE AND COLLABORATE

Engage stakeholders and build partnerships for greater impact.



RAISE AWARENESS

Promote awareness and visibility of women and girls in sport.



MONITOR AND EVALUATE

Track progress, share results and celebrate achievements.



The journey continues.

Every step forward brings us closer to a sport that is truly active and equal.



Our commitment today



Our actions tomorrow



A better future for all



Through sport, we build a more equal world

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe

BUILDING A LEGACY: TOGETHER FOR GENERATIONS

OUR COMMITMENT TODAY, THEIR OPPORTUNITIES TOMORROW

The changes we make today in sport will shape a better future for girls and women everywhere.

Let's leave a legacy of equality, inclusion and empowerment.

OUR LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Every girl and woman has the chance to participate, lead and succeed in sport.



EMPOWERED GENERATIONS

Inspiring confidence, skills and leadership in girls and women of all ages.



STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Building inclusive, respectful and connected communities through sport.



SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Embedding equality and inclusion in policies, systems and everyday practice.



A BETTER WORLD

Using the power of sport to promote peace, respect, health and human rights for all.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Active and Equal Project
Italian Contribution



What we do today in sport will inspire tomorrow's leaders and create lasting change for future generations.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE



ACTIVE LIVES FOR ALL

More people, especially girls and women, enjoying the physical, mental and social benefits of sport.



MORE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

A sport system where women lead at every level, in every role and decision-making space.



INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE

A culture where everyone feels welcome, respected and valued for who they are.



FAIR AND EQUITABLE

Equal access to resources, recognition and opportunities for all.



A LASTING IMPACT

A legacy of equality that continues to inspire and empower generations to come.



Equality
is our legacy



Empowered
generations



Stronger
communities



Sustainable
change



A better future
for all

Together, we can create a legacy of equality in sport.
For today. For tomorrow. For generations.

LOGO CONCEPT PROPOSALS

THREE VISIONS, ONE MISSION: AN ACTIVE AND EQUAL FUTURE FOR ALL WOMEN



Three design directions
inspired by empowerment,
health and inclusion.
One shared vision.

CONCEPT 1

EMPOWERMENT



ACTIVE & EQUAL

— Be Yourself. Be Free. —



Sport as a tool for
empowerment throughout life.

KEY VALUES



CONCEPT 2

LIFE COURSE



ACTIVE & EQUAL

— Every Age. Every Woman.
Every Opportunity. —



Women's health
across generations.

KEY VALUES



CONCEPT 3

HEALTH & PARTICIPATION



ACTIVE & EQUAL

— Woman. Healthy. Active. —



Health and participation
for life.

KEY VALUES



Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

LOGO CONCEPT PROPOSALS

THREE VISIONS, ONE MISSION: AN ACTIVE AND EQUAL FUTURE FOR ALL WOMEN



Three creative directions
for one shared vision:
**equality, health
and empowerment.**

CONCEPT 1

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE



ACTIVE & EQUAL

Be Yourself. Be Free.



Sport and physical activity
throughout every stage of life.
**Empowering every woman.
Every day.**

KEY VALUES



CONCEPT 2

THE ACTIVE EQUAL SIGN



ACTIVE & EQUAL

Every Age. Every Woman.
Every Opportunity.



Equality in sport creates equal opportunities
at every age and in every place.
Participation. Progress. Possibilities.

KEY VALUES



CONCEPT 3

THE TREE OF GENERATIONS



ACTIVE & EQUAL

Woman. Healthy. Active.



Strong roots. Healthy lives.
Active communities.
A legacy that grows.

KEY VALUES



Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Stronger
together



From commitment
to impact



Building a legacy
of equality



Sustainable change
for generations

CLAIM PROPOSALS

FIVE OPTIONS, ONE MISSION: AN ACTIVE AND EQUAL FUTURE FOR ALL WOMEN



A strong claim
inspires. A shared vision
empowers. A better
future **begins with us.**

Each claim reflects our values and inspires action.

Together, we promote health, equality and participation through sport.

1



**Every Woman.
Every Age.
Every Opportunity.**



**EQUALITY
OF OPPORTUNITIES**

Highlights our commitment to
inclusion and equal access to
sport at every stage of life.

2



**Active for Life.
Equal by Choice.**



**CHOICE.
EQUALITY.
EMPOWERMENT.**

Links physical activity with
equality as a conscious and
collective choice.

3



**Strong at
Every Stage.**



**STRENGTH.
CONFIDENCE.
RESILIENCE.**

Celebrates women's strength
and wellbeing throughout
every phase of life.

4



**Health.
Freedom.
Participation.**



**VALUES.
RIGHTS.
PARTICIPATION.**

Reflects our core values and
the right of every woman to
take part and thrive.

5



**Move
Through Life.**



**MOVEMENT.
WELLBEING.
CONTINUITY.**

A positive vision of movement
and wellbeing that accompanies
women across their lives.



One mission. Many voices. A future where every woman is active and equal.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe



Promoting
active lives



Supporting
equality



Empowering
women



Building a better
future through
sport