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Gender equality / gender mainstreaming in sport – what is it about?

This factsheet first presents key definitions of sex and gender, a basis for achieving a deeper understanding and some explanations of the inequalities and differences between women and men in the sports world. It is followed by a description of mutually supportive policy approaches for achieving gender equality, including gender mainstreaming.



SEX VS GENDER

SEX

Chromosomes, hormones, anatomy

BIOLOGY

Identifies the biological differences between women and men.¹

In sport, for instance, men usually run faster than women; this is due to their biological characteristics.

SEX IS WHAT YOU'RE BORN WITH,
GENDER IS WHAT YOU'RE GIVEN



GENDER

Behaviour, looks, attitudes, roles

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men²

Learned and internalised by both women and men through socialisation

Not constant:
it varies within and across cultures and over time

Carries a hierarchy that disadvantages mostly women

Gender is a power system with an unequal power structure between women and men (in the distribution of resources, wealth, paid and unpaid work, time, decision making, political power, enjoyment of rights and entitlements within the family and in all aspects of social and public life)

Girls are keener on practising dancing than playing rugby. This can be explained by the social construction of gender. Society usually considers dancing as a more "appropriate" activity for women than rugby.

¹ While these sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both, they tend to differentiate humans as males and females (World Health Organisation).

² Article 3C of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

How can gender inequalities and differences in sport be explained?

- ▶ Constructed gender roles affect the situation and opportunities of women and men in all aspects of life, including sport. Sport was traditionally, and still is in many respects, a male domain.
- ▶ Sport was created by men for men. Women's participation in sport has been marked by a long history of exclusion (exclusion from some sports clubs and competitions; only since the 2012 Summer Olympics have women been allowed to compete in boxing, etc.), division (competitions separated by sex) and discrimination (the Wimbledon tennis championships only implemented a pay equality policy for women and men players in 2007, for example).
- ▶ The development of sports activities has been built upon a heavy emphasis on performance and merit ("the best" wins) while also promoting physical force, a trait usually attributed to men.
- ▶ Stereotypes and beliefs about women's role in society – for example, by imposing household work and care responsibilities on them – create constraints for women's involvement in society and in sport, as participants, athletes, coaches or leaders, in management or in other decision-making positions from the local to the international level.
- ▶ Gender stereotypes and traditional models of masculinity and femininity in society, and in sport in particular, arbitrarily assign characteristics and roles to females and males in this area.

For instance, some sports such as boxing or baseball, or ways of practising them like striving for physical performance or spirit of competition are perceived as "masculine". Conversely, dancing, figure skating, fitness, sports practised to improve physical appearance or to control weight, or positions in sports clubs like secretary or being responsible for children and young athletes are perceived as "feminine".

Gender stereotypes and traditional models affect:

- ▶ Access to and participation in many levels and fields of sport.
- ▶ The organisational culture of sports organisations in terms of the norms and values conveyed and in terms of the power dynamics, processes and practices that underlie the way such organisations function in their role as an employer (as regards recruitment and promotion) and in in-service delivery. Gender stereotypes regarding the value of women's sport can also lead to inequality in financial resources, such as prize money and other financial incentives.
- ▶ Media coverage of sport, which also often contributes to perpetuating or challenging gender stereotypes across Europe.

Gender stereotypes in sport prevent both women and men from fully enjoying their rights and they limit women's and men's opportunities, potential and well-being.

HOW TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT

What is gender equality?

Gender equality entails equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, as well as the same visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation, in all spheres of public and private life. It also implies equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men.¹

¹ Council of Europe gender equality strategy 2018-2023, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy>.

To achieve gender equality, **three mutually supportive policy** approaches can be implemented

EQUAL TREATMENT POLICIES: ensures women and men enjoy the same rights

Equal treatment policies are best represented by legislative frameworks aimed at the elimination of sex-based discrimination.

Example

A female coach cannot be paid less than her male colleague.

POSITIVE ACTIONS: counterbalance inequalities

Positive actions are measures adopted to accelerate the improvement of the position of the under-represented sex (or of disadvantaged groups) to achieve equality, and to correct past and current forms and effects of discrimination.

Example

Preferential fees for girls to become members of a previously all-male football club.



GENDER MAINSTREAMING: integrates women's and men's perspectives in all policies

Gender mainstreaming consists of integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects.

Women and men have different needs and living conditions and circumstances. The aim of gender mainstreaming is to take into account these differences when designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and projects, so that they benefit both women and men and do not increase inequality but enhance gender equality.

In a nutshell, gender mainstreaming means:

- Grounding policies on the situation and needs of both women and men
- Better informed policy making
- Challenging the gender neutrality of policies

Example

Designing a football programme for girls, which addresses the physical and social barriers that may prevent girls from taking part.

STANDARDS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender mainstreaming in sport¹

This Recommendation aims to achieve de facto equality between women and men in and through sport and puts forward a comprehensive set of measures to the governments of member states, sport organisations, media and regional and international institutions. The main topics addressed by the text are:

- ▶ Achieve gender-balanced decision making
- ▶ Ensure equal access and participation for women and men at all levels and in all fields of sport
- ▶ Implement programmes and policies to combat gender-based violence
- ▶ Use gender equality as a criterion for budgets
- ▶ Include the interests of women and men exposed to multiple discrimination
- ▶ Ensure that facilities are safe, affordable and accessible for all
- ▶ Ensure gender equality in pay, grants and money
- ▶ Combat gender stereotypes and use non-sexist language
- ▶ Awareness raising and training
- ▶ Support data collection and research
- ▶ Monitoring and reporting

¹ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805c4721

European Commission's Proposal for Strategic Actions in Gender Equality in Sport (2014-2020)¹

This proposal identifies the current challenges for gender equality in sport and sets some objectives to be reached by 2020, both at the national and international level. It also provides some examples of actions and measures that can be implemented to reach the 2020 objectives. It touches on several different areas, including:

- ▶ decision making
- ▶ coaching
- ▶ gender-based violence
- ▶ the role of the media

International Olympic Committee Gender Equality Review Project (2018)²

This details 25 recommendations that aim to encourage those within the Olympic Movement (athletes, officials, commissions, federations and executives) to take concrete steps and to enact effective change to achieve better gender equality in five specific areas:

- ▶ Sport
- ▶ Portrayal
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Human resources, monitoring and governance



COUNTRY CONTEXT

(To be completed according to country-specific context)

- ▶ Main legislation in the country on gender equality, and on gender equality in sport
- ▶ Current policies and programmes
- ▶ Guidelines and standards from sports organisations



For more definitions on gender equality, see the Gender equality glossary of the Council of Europe³



See Factsheet 1 – Facts and figures on gender (in)equalities and differences

1 http://www.ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/events/2013/documents/20131203-gender/final-proposal-1802_en.pdf

2 <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/News/2018/03/IOC-Gender-Equality-Report-March-2018.pdf>

3 <https://edoc.coe.int/en/gender-equality/6947-gender-equality-glossary.html>

ALL IN: Towards gender balance in sport (Erasmus +)

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