

# 8 Sporting opportunities



► How to offer the benefits of sport and physical activity equally to women and men, and girls and boys, in all sports without reinforcing gender stereotypes



► Sporting opportunities that are attractive to all and keep everyone active throughout their lives



Designing sporting opportunities that address the needs of women and girls as well as those of men and boys is key to helping the less represented sex as well as disadvantaged groups overcome potential barriers and take part.

## ON YOUR MARKS

### Understand gender differences in sport practices



#### Tend to be statistically more motivated by:

- Keeping fit
- Improving physical appearance
  - Controlling weight
  - Maintaining health
  - Relaxing



#### Women tend to be found:

- More in recreational or health-oriented activities
  - More in fitness centres/commercially run facilities
  - More in sports that emphasise physical expression (dance, gymnastics, ice skating, etc.)



#### Tend to be statistically more motivated by:

- Being physically active
  - A desire to excel
  - Competition
- Seeking out an adrenaline rush
- Achieving popularity (society/friends)



#### Men tend to be found:

- More in competitions
  - More in clubs
- More in close combat, team sports on large grounds, motor sports, extreme sports, etc.

These differences can be explained by the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men in different settings, including in sporting activities. They are learned and internalised by both women and men through socialisation and influence the experience of sport and of the different types of sport/physical activity, motivations, etc. (see Factsheet 3).

## Understand the needs of the under-represented group or of those women and men who do not practise any sport

■ Examine your audience. Collect sex- and age-disaggregated data. Who participates in the activities you offer? Who does not?

■ Go further: ask why do they practise sport? Get in touch with those who do not participate (for example, through non-sporting organisations).

### Possible individual barriers

- ▶ Lack of time/interest (link with women still undertaking most of the domestic and care work)
- ▶ Safety concerns (sexual harassment, violence)
- ▶ Low level of relationship with the sporting community
- ▶ Influence of families, particularly at a young age, influence of friends
- ▶ Body image issues, for example, embarrassment and shyness (particularly acute at puberty), enhanced by gender stereotypes
- ▶ Fear of being judged for transgressing gender models

## Examine your current sporting opportunities: types of activities, programming, location/infrastructure, etc.

■ How do they fit the needs of the under-represented groups?

■ What could you improve?

### Possible organisational barriers

- ▶ Activities offered: frequency, types (physical expression, team sports, motor sports, extreme sports), emphasis (performance, fun, health benefits), competition or recreational.
- ▶ Practical aspects: schedules, availability of segregated time slots.
- ▶ Access: fees, transport, logistics.
- ▶ Safety and quality of facilities and equipment.
- ▶ Rules of sports organisations: for example, outfit specifications, bans on religiously symbolic clothing.
- ▶ Representation of under-represented sex among technical and administrative staff.
- ▶ Sexist, stereotyped and/or racist attitudes.
- ▶ Lack of positive role models.

## TAKE ACTION

### Connect and stay in contact with your target audience

■ Involve residents, club members, pupils in schools and students and women and men of all ages to examine how opportunities can be tailored to their needs.

■ Go and meet in schools, in non-sporting community activities, etc.

■ Set up feedback loops on projects and activities using tools such as tests on progress made or questionnaires.

■ Engage prominent athletes as “ambassadors” or “activators” and role models for future practitioners.

■ Nurture relationships with parents; for example, organise intergenerational events.

■ Develop an empowering message that will resonate with your target audience and redress gender stereotypes (see Factsheet 7 – Communication).

■ Ensure an internet presence.

■ Follow female athletes on social media.

■ Run campaigns, such as an “open day for active women”.

### Do things differently! Develop opportunities that provides the support that your audience needs

■ Tailor sports provision to women’s/the under-represented sex’s requirements:

- ▶ offer a wider range of activities, both team and individual sports/physical activity, with an emphasis on performance, fun, health, etc.
- ▶ improve recreational sports provision while providing an opportunity for women and girls who want to compete
- ▶ ensure that all sport equipment and kit (balls, bibs, shorts, cycles, etc.) made available are adapted for both genders
- ▶ establish workable time slots for partly self-organised groups
- ▶ if there is demand, offer women-only areas and female trainers
- ▶ keep it affordable
- ▶ keep it fun!

■ Take positive measures to ensure full and effective equality between users of all backgrounds; for example, provide the same quality and availability of venues for female and male teams

■ Provide childcare or children's activities at the same time as the parents' activities

■ Back civil society organisations in supporting women's and girls' participation; for example, propose specific activities for elderly women's associations

■ Support the creation of female teams in male-dominated sports (rugby, football, etc.)

■ Organise mixed-team training sessions and competitions

■ Support women in the transition to coaching or other technical roles with specific training opportunities

■ Set up clear mechanisms (codes of conduct, protocols, guidelines) for dealing with complaints of sexism, harassment or abuse and make sure that any complaint is treated seriously.

## Take the long view! Consolidate your efforts

■ Regularly reassess public funding for sport participation to support specific sport programmes for under-represented populations

■ Ensure that public sport infrastructures are equally distributed between male and female users (access, quality)

■ Expand mixed sports at every level and work to promote mixed sports for all age groups (reaching out to players, awareness raising)

■ Provide gender equality training for all involved (coaches, administrative staff, volunteers)

■ Promote good practices and the exchange of information

### Elite sport

Offer the same opportunities to all (potential) elite athletes: all provisions and support to compete should be equally accessible to female and male athletes.

- ▶ Offer the same number and quality of programme choices to females and males, at the grass-roots and high-performance levels.
- ▶ Support quality coaching of female athletes by both women and men with attention on creating safe and inclusive spaces, free of bullying, sexism and stereotypes.
- ▶ Ensure that financial advantages, remuneration, prize money, etc. are provided fairly and equitably to women and men.

## EXAMPLES

### FIVE STEPS TOWARDS A GENDER-EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE SPORT MOVEMENT

**Organisation responsible:** The Swedish Confederation of Sport

**Country:** Sweden

Education aimed at raising awareness of how different norms (gender, hetero, white and disabled norms) in sport characterise the different environments in sports. Participants achieve more awareness of how norms come into being, as well as concrete tools to change them so that sport is gender-equal, and more people are included and feel safe.

### GUIDE TO IMPROVING PLAYER ASSOCIATIONS' SUPPORT FOR WOMEN ATHLETES

**Organisation responsible:** EU Athletes

The guide "Improving player associations' support for women's athletes" is a result of the Erasmus+ project SWAFE ([www.euathletes.org/?project=swafe](http://www.euathletes.org/?project=swafe)) co-ordinated by EU Athletes. Following research and other project activities, the guide provides practical advice for player associations on how to best support female athletes and for professional and elite-level women athletes who want to set up an association. The publication also includes recommendations for policy makers on how to address inequalities in this area.



For more information on these examples and to find out about other practices and resources, take a look at the ALL IN online library<sup>1</sup>.



**Factsheet 6** – Funding  
**Factsheet 7** – Communication  
**Factsheet 9** – Training and education  
**Factsheet 11** – Sports facilities

<sup>1</sup> <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/gender-equality-in-sport/online-library>



## Notes

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

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