

## Headline 5.1 Gender Equality

### 1. Definition

Gender equality is essential for creating a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. While gender equality applies to all genders, women are most often the underrepresented group, making their inclusion particularly crucial. Despite women making up 50% of the global population, they represent only 23% of the labour market on average, highlighting a significant disparity that needs to be addressed. Sport, as both a reflection of society and a powerful platform, plays a key role in promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls.

Achieving gender equality in sport involves multiple dimensions, including equal participation, representation, and access to decision-making roles. It also encompasses gender-sensitive decision-making, equality in coaching and teaching, the eradication of gender-based violence in and through sport, and the elimination of stereotypes in sports and their media coverage. Women in leadership roles are particularly vital, as their diverse perspectives and experiences contribute to enhanced organisational performance. Research shows that diverse teams excel in problem-solving and decision-making, and gender-balanced boards and committees in sports organisations are linked to more effective and inclusive governance.

Despite these benefits, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions across various sectors, including sports. This underrepresentation underscores the need for policies that promote work-life balance, flexible schedules, mentorship programs, training initiatives, and efforts to combat gender discrimination. Such measures are crucial to increasing female representation in leadership and decision-making roles.

Gender inequality in sports has been extensively documented in European publications, with significant attention from the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament. The 2022 publication "Towards More Gender Equality in Sport" by the High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport highlights the deep-seated sexism that women face in the sports arena. Efforts to promote gender inclusivity have gained momentum, focusing on closing the gender gap in participation, funding, media representation, and fan engagement.

High-profile events such as the Olympic Games 2024, the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, and the Women's Rugby World Cup 2023, along with the expansion of women's professional leagues, have significantly elevated the visibility and support for female athletes. Key areas of focus include ensuring access to sports, physical education, and physical activity for women and girls from all backgrounds, securing positions of responsibility in sports governance, and providing equitable access to resources, salaries, financial incentives, and sports facilities. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on sensitising media coverage of women in sports, supporting the reintegration of female athletes into the labour market after their athletic careers (dual careers), and combating gender-based violence, including harassment and abuse.

See also topics: Human Resource Management (1.3), Career support for staff/volunteers (2.6), External Communication (3.5), Statutes (4.1), Democratic process and elections (4.2), LGBTQIA+ (5.2), Disabilities (5.3), Rules anti-racism and anti-discrimination (5.4), Safe Sport (5.5)

## 2. Ideal Scenario

There is strong backing from leadership, with active support for gender equality initiatives demonstrated at all levels of the organisation, specifically within its spheres of responsibility, direct operations, organisation of events and impact on communities. Gender equality is deeply ingrained in the organisational culture, ensuring that it permeates all aspects of decision-making and operations. Gender budgeting is employed, with dedicated funds allocated specifically for gender equality programs and initiatives. Policies are regularly monitored and updated, reflecting a commitment to ongoing improvement and adherence to best practices in gender equality. Education and awareness-raising efforts are prioritised to underscore the importance of gender equality throughout the organisation and among stakeholders. Simultaneously, mentorship programmes for women are set up. A dedicated gender equality commission/coordinator is appointed to ensure that gender equality strategies are effectively implemented and monitored. The organisation adopts a comprehensive strategy that encompasses various areas, including participation, coaching, officiating, and leadership roles, ensuring a holistic approach to gender equality. Furthermore, the organisation strives for a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in all organisation bodies, embedding gender equality as a fundamental principle in governance and management practices. This is embedded through the hiring process which refers to clear, open, appropriate, and objective eligibility criteria to include a balanced representation of genders as well as term and age limits for senior positions. A cultural shift towards greater gender equality and diversity is fostered, challenging stereotypes and biases to create a more inclusive and empowering environment for all involved. Gender mainstreaming is embraced to ensure that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of the organisation's work and communications, further reinforcing its commitment to gender equality.

## 3. Risks

- Token women without any decision-making powers in the leadership of the organization.
- Decrease of female participation in sport due to lacking role models.
- Decrease of public reputation as the organization is not representative of its direct environment.
- Lack of diverse perspectives and representation within the sport organisation, leading to decisions that may not fully consider the needs and interests of all participants.
- Discriminatory practices and policies may persist, leading to the exclusion of women and other marginalised genders from leadership positions, opportunities and participation.
- Legal challenges, including accusations of discrimination or harassment.
- Damage the organisation's reputation, resulting in a loss of trust and credibility among stakeholders, sponsors, and the public.

#### 4. Instruments and key elements

<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Key elements</i>
<b>Commission/Coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender Equality/Diversity Commission to draft and monitor the proper implementation of the Gender Equality strategy.</li> <li>Commission as point for reference to indicate room for improvement but also expertise and gendered lens in meetings/decision-making processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy and Action Plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy being adopted by the leadership of the organisation</li> <li>Key objectives, such as quotas across all organisation bodies embedded in the statutes of the organisation.</li> <li>Action Plan with concrete steps derived from strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Quota/Target</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit to a quota in the organisation's statute.</li> <li>40%-60 gender representation for the board, commissions, working groups, and General Assembly delegates.</li> </ul>
<b>Human Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amend recruitment practices to be inclusive and transparent, ensuring equal opportunities for all genders.</li> <li>Expand recruitment efforts to diverse platforms to attract a wider pool of candidates from underrepresented groups.</li> <li>Ensure positions are re-advertised if only one gender is shortlisted.</li> <li>Offer training for recruiters on gender-sensitive communication and unconscious bias.</li> </ul>
<b>Allies and Role Models</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment through written publications (i.e. policy, strategy, action plans).</li> <li>Male advocates support and use their privilege and influence to create opportunities for underrepresented individuals.</li> <li>Showcase female role models to normalise and promote gender diversity.</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation/Training/ Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness and provide training on gender sensitivity for everyone in the organisation.</li> <li>Mandatory leadership courses on respecting gender equality, identifying obstacles, and overcoming unconscious bias.</li> </ul>
<b>Mentorship Programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentorship programmes, and capacity-building to develop skills and mitigate the gender gap in roles and positions.</li> <li>Career transition programmes for women involved in the organisation.</li> <li>Equal gender representation among mentors and training for mentors.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication and Portrayal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender-inclusive media and communication strategies amplifying gender diversity success stories.</li> <li>Gender equality in event presentation and programming.</li> <li>Distribute marketing materials featuring female role models and quotes across various platforms, including websites, social media, brochures, and presentations.</li> </ul>

## 5. Good practice examples

### Example “Access to Leadership Roles”

**Organisation:** Guidance to Achieve More Equal leadership in Sport – GAMES Project

**Description:** The GAMES Project – Guidance to Achieve More Equal leadership in Sport – aimed to improve gender equality in key leadership and decision-making positions of National Olympic Committees. The main instruments are promoting structural changes in the governance, enhancing the understanding of existing cultural barriers and encouraging the NOCs to work with their member federations to create sustainable change. Based on a needs assessment and baseline study, the project consortium designed a Global Pool of Actions that acted as a basis for the creation of National Action Plans, tailored to the needs and readiness of its designer. The Pool of Actions is structured into 3 main pillars which cover 9 key topics to tackle gender equality in sport leadership, as well as a series of transversal topics.

**Further information:**

<https://games-project.com/>

[Pool of Actions - EOC EU Office \(eurolympic.org\)](https://eurolympic.org/)

### Example “Access to sport”

**Organisation:** Steering the Course – World Sailing

**Description:** A strategic document of World Sailing to encourage more women to participate in every aspect of the sport. It envisions how the sport will look like by 2032 and encompasses a wide range of initiatives and objectives across seven priority areas – coaches, instructors and team leaders, race officials, participation, para-inclusive sailing, events, media and governance. A set of specific targets with an associated deadline is supplied for each element of the strategy, as well as a summary of actions that will be taken to achieve these targets.

**Further information:** [Steering the Course • IWG Women & Sport Insight Hub \(iwginsighthub.org\)](https://www.iwginsighthub.org/)

### Example “Strategy and Action plan” and “Access to Leadership Roles”

**Organisation:** Fédération Internationale de Hockey (FIH)

**Description:** FIH launched the “Sustainability Strategy for Hockey,” a global plan to align hockey projects with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This strategy focuses on three major aspects of sustainability: People, Planet, and Prosperity, aiming to ensure the sport's long-term health. Gender equality is a key component, highlighted by case studies such as "Female Role Models in Leadership Positions" and "The EY Women Athletes." The strategy primarily aims to empower hockey stakeholders, such as Continental Federations (CFs) and National Associations (NAs), to lead hockey development in their regions. It also seeks to engage all FIH members and hockey stakeholders. The strategy also emphasizes a strong commitment to sustainability and reinforces hockey values like gender equality, inclusion, and diversity within the enhanced FIH Sustainability Strategy.

**Further information:**

[FIH holistic sustainability approach with gender equality](#)

[FIH Empowerment and Engagement strategy](#)

**Example “Access to Leadership Roles” and “Best practices”**

**Organisation:** Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)

**Description:** The UCI has introduced scholarships to encourage women's participation in the annual UCI Sports Directors course and exam, resulting in a growing number of female Sport Directors. This diploma is compulsory for those working with UCI WorldTeams, UCI ProTeams, and UCI Women’s WorldTeams. The role of Sport Directors includes overseeing team well-being, making race decisions under pressure, and providing input into various domains like training, equipment, and anti-doping, The diploma has helped to increase professionalism and gender diversity in the sport.

The UCI Women in Cycling Best Practice Guide provides essential strategies and initiatives to promote gender equality and foster the growth of women’s participation in cycling. Key areas of focus include:

- Promotion of women’s cycling
- Growth in licence holders and overall participation
- Development of cycling for the youth
- Development and improvement of women’s elite performance
- Opportunities to develop women’s functions within the national federations and pathways to leadership roles

**Further information:**

[Women Equality strategy in the UCI Sports Directors course](#)

[UCI Women in Cycling Best Practice Guide](#)

6. Steps to the next level

To level 2 ★★ “Emerging”	To level 3 ★★★ “Developing”	To level 4 ★★★★ “Established”	To level 5 ★★★★★ “Embedded”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish gender equality as a permanent agenda item at the board level and make a clear commitment to increasing the representation of women in voluntary and senior leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulate and adopt a comprehensive gender equality policy/strategy. Ensure the policy is publicly available Identify gender gaps and challenges through a thorough gendered budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate a portion of the operational budget specifically for the development and implementation of gender equality policies, action plans, and gender-specific programs under the leadership of the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicate a specific portion of the budget to gender equality initiatives, ensuring consideration of all genders needs and demands.</li> <li>• Incorporate a gender perspective into the design, implementation,</li> </ul>

<p>roles within the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate the board on the benefits of diverse gender representation on executive boards and committees.</li> <li>• Collect data on the distribution of gender across various roles in the organisation, including operational and participant levels.</li> <li>• Incorporate a gender perspective into the organisation's communication strategies by actively considering gender-based differences in all messaging, ensuring inclusivity and representation in every policy, process, and social initiative.</li> <li>• Develop and adopt policies that support a family-friendly and flexible work environment.</li> <li>• Conduct regular training sessions for employees, coaches, officials, administrators, athletes, and</li> </ul>	<p>analysis, set objectives to address these issues, and define indicators for measuring progress, guiding budget allocations and activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a Gender Equality Commission with equal gender representation or appoint a dedicated Coordinator. This individual or group will be responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating gender equality initiatives, providing technical guidance, coordinating gender mainstreaming across all programs, and integrating gender considerations into all organisational policies and strategies.</li> <li>• Regularly publish gender statistics across the various roles in the organisation, including operational and participant levels in the organisation's annual reports to</li> </ul>	<p>Gender Equality Commission/Coordinator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a 40/60 gender representation quota in decision-making bodies at all levels, with term limits.</li> <li>• Create action plans that advance opportunities for the underrepresented gender of all ages in sports, including participation, volunteering, and leadership roles. Ensure these plans are inclusive of people in all their diversity.</li> <li>• Ensure job descriptions use gender-sensitive language and clearly state the commitment to equal gender representation. Expand recruitment efforts to diverse platforms to attract a wider pool of candidates from underrepresented groups.</li> <li>• Ensure equal contract</li> </ul>	<p>monitoring, and evaluation of all policies, regulatory measures, and spending programs to promote gender equality and combat discrimination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set a target ratio of 40%-60% for gender representation on Executive Boards, Commissions, working groups, and among General Assembly delegates. Amend statutes and by-laws to ensure these targets are met within a defined timeline.</li> <li>• Embed gender equality into organisational policies and statutes, requiring member organisations to adhere to set targets and promote gender balance in leadership and governance roles.</li> <li>• Actively support and motivate member organisations to commit to gender equality by aligning with your target ratio and strategic goals.</li> </ul>
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<p>volunteers on cultural and gender sensitivity, focusing on respectful language and understanding diversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure workshops and training sessions provide a supportive atmosphere that promotes understanding and empathy on equity, diversity, and inclusion (E.D.&amp;I.) issues.</li> <li>• Encourage gender allyship by engaging the dominant gender in decision-making positions to support the underrepresented gender, providing them access to opportunities typically unavailable to them.</li> <li>• Launch initiatives to challenge gender stereotypes and ensure fair portrayal of women athletes.</li> <li>• Train communication staff on gender and diversity issues to ensure</li> </ul>	<p>track and communicate progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement policies and programs that support a balance between work/study, family commitments, and sport participation.</li> <li>• Review and revise all communication materials to be gender-sensitive, inclusive, and free from biased language.</li> <li>• Amend recruitment practices to be inclusive and transparent, ensuring equal opportunities for all genders and incentivising the hiring of underrepresented groups at all levels, especially in leadership roles.</li> <li>• Ensure that at least 30% of executive committee/board positions and organisational bodies are filled by women, with a similar percentage in leadership roles.</li> <li>• Implement comprehensive training, mentorships, scholarships,</li> </ul>	<p>conditions, including employment, media, and sponsorship deals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require all management and leadership personnel to undergo mandatory training and workshops on gender equality, diversity, and inclusive leadership. Focus on overcoming unconscious bias and identifying obstacles faced by women in sport.</li> <li>• Encourage male advocates to actively support women and marginalized groups by amplifying their voices, advocating for their inclusion, and implementing equality-promoting policies like quotas and term limits.</li> <li>• Promote the rotation of members in leadership bodies, ensuring gender equality and preventing gender-based role segregation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement mechanisms to regularly monitor and evaluate progress towards gender equality, including tracking the implementation of gender equality strategies and identifying barriers.</li> <li>• Ensure positions are re-advertised if only one gender is shortlisted and require written justifications for recruitment and promotion decisions that do not include the underrepresented gender.</li> <li>• Regularly measure and analyse compensation and benefits across the workforce to identify and correct disparities related to gender, role, and ethnicity. Ensure structural equity in pay practices.</li> <li>• Establish processes to address all forms of economic inequality, including pay and pension gaps, sponsorship opportunities, and social benefits.</li> </ul>
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<p>they accurately and fairly represent all genders in media and public relations.</p>	<p>networking, and job-shadowing programs to empower underrepresented genders in leadership and decision-making positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create programs to support career transitions for women athletes, coaches, referees, and officials into leadership and governance roles within the organisation.</li> <li>• Develop educational programs across all sports structures to raise awareness of gender opportunities and biases and create pathways for women to take on active management roles.</li> <li>• Implement a media and communication strategy that actively showcases the success stories of women in leadership, portraying them as role models to normalise and promote gender diversity within the organisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure equal gender representation across all committees and commissions, with a balanced distribution of roles and tasks, avoiding gendered assignment of executive and non-decision-making positions.</li> <li>• Distribute marketing materials featuring female role models across multiple platforms, ensuring consistent messaging. Utilise websites, social media, brochures, and presentations to reinforce these messages and broaden their reach.</li> <li>• Include a report on gender equality targets and progress in the organisation's annual report, demonstrating leadership's public commitment to gender equality.</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure full application of women's rights under national labor laws, including parental and maternity leave.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer training for recruiters, advertisers, mentors, and coaches on gender-sensitive communication and unconscious bias in recruitment, advertisement, and training delivery.</li> <li>• Ensure gender balance among mentors and trainers in training, mentorship, and job-shadowing programs to facilitate peer-to-peer networking and knowledge sharing.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the organisation's commitment to gender equality through public reports and communications, highlighting progress and adherence to gender equality targets.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage male advocates to support gender equality by engaging in dialogues, advocating for inclusive policies, and using their platforms to raise awareness and challenge discriminatory practices.</li> </ul>		
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