Mapping
Gender Equality in European Sport
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Introduction

This study focuses on the gender proportions and relations in various areas of sport as well as in various regions and countries. The focus of this mapping is on leadership in sport organisations, sport participation, mass media, sport sciences, physical education and sport fans.

The information which we have collected is based on existing data, mostly on internet sources, but also on scientific publications and other material, such as the study “Women in the 2000, 2004 and 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games” which has a focus on the US, but includes also other countries in some of the questions.

Leadership in sport organisations

In the leadership study we explored the gender relations at the highest levels in sport-related governing bodies (sport organisations in selected countries) in international, European and national contexts.

Associations/Federations International level:

IOC

The most powerful sport organisation at the international level is the IOC. The IOC president is a man. Currently the IOC has 112 members of whom 19 are women. In addition, there are 28 honorary members (of whom 4 are women) and 1 honorary member, a man. The total number of IOC members is 141, 23, that means 16 %, of them are females.

There are 25 IOC commissions and 6 of the commissions (24 %) do not include women: Audit Committee, IOC Representatives in WADA, The Marketing Commission, Olympic Philately, Numismatic and Memorabilia Commission, The Radio and Television Commission and The TV Rights and New Media Commission.

Three (12%) of the 25 commissions are headed by a female: The Coordination Commission for Rio de Janeiro 2016, The Evaluation Commission (which evaluates the application of the cities to host the games) and The Women and Sport Commission. 21 (84 %) commissions have less than 25% female members. Only in The Women and Sport Commission women are a majority; there are 55% women and 45% men (see the list of commissions and there members at the end of the document).

Paralympics

The International Paralympics Committee (IPC) is headed by a male president. It has a governing board with 14 members (including the president) – the president is a man, 11 of the 14 members are men, that means the percentage of women in the IPC is 21%.
The IPC has established five councils which are responsible for specific areas and groups. The Athletes' Council (10 members, 50% men and 50% women), the Council of the International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSD) (8 members, 75% men and 25% women), the Regions' Council (9 members, one position vacant; 71% men and 29% women), the Sports' Council representing the various sports (32 members; 75% men and 25% women). The Sports' Council Management Committee has 4 members, 2 men and 2 women). All in all, the members of these councils are 69% men and 31% woman. All chairpersons are men.

Sport Accord – the umbrella federation of international sports federations
In 2009, the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF), decided about a reorganization of the association and about a new name. “SportAccord” has the mission “to unite, support and promote its Member international sports federations and organisations for the co-ordination and protection of their common aims and interests, communication and co-operation, while at the same time conserving and respecting their autonomy.”

Sport Accord has a male only leadership. The president is a man and the six member of the board are men as well.

International Sports Federations
We analysed 73 International Sports Federations: 33 federations of “official sports” (according to the IOC terminology on the IOC webpage), 34 of “recognized sports” and 6 of “other sports”.

In all executive boards of the Internationals Sports Federations women are more or less a small minority with two exceptions: Netball and softball which are women only sports. 9 federations of the 33 “official sports” (27%) do not have one single women on their boards (Archery, Bobsleigh, Boxing, Canoe, Cycling, Football, Handball, Modern Pentathlon and Weightlifting). Among the “recognized sports” there are 10 federations (29%) which have “men only” executive boards (Air sport, Bandy, Baseball, Billiard, Cricket, Floor ball, Lifesaving, Polo, Rugby and Tug of War). Of the 6 “other sports” 2 federations do not have women on the board (Aikido and American Football).

In total, of the 73 federations listed on the IOC webpage 21 (29%) do not have a woman on their boards. In the large majority of the federations with a “mixed gender” board, women are only tokens. In 63 of the 73 federations (86%) the percentage of females is under 25%. The average percent of women in the boards of these federations is 9,75%.

68 of the 73 international sports federations are led by a male president. Only 5 federations (small federations) have a woman as president (Curling, Equestrian, Triathlon, Bowling and Netball).

Sport federations on the European level
ENGSO (European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation) is a not for profit organization. Its 40 members are the umbrella sports organizations of the European countries (National Sports Confederations or National Olympic Committees). The current president of ENGSO is a woman. 2 of the 9 members of the executive committee (including the honorary president) are female. Thus the men-women proportion in the ENGSO executive committee is 80% : 20%.
Sport federations
At the European level we have analyzed the gender proportion in leadership positions of 52 sports federations. 20 of the 52 European sports federations, more than one third, do not have a woman on their board, (Weight lifting, Taekwondo, Sailing, Judo, Handball, Football, Equestrian, Canoe, Wushu, Tug of War, Sumo, Rugby Union, Racquet Ball, Karate, Golf, Chess, Billiard, Air Sport, Aikido and American Football). 46 of the 52 federations, 88%, have less than 25% women on their boards.

Netball and Squash are the only federations that have more than 50% women on their boards; the board of the “woman only” sport netball consists only of women. The European Squash Federation’s leaders are mainly women: the proportion men: women is 43%: 57%. Two European sports federations (4%) have a female president (Netball and Bowling) while 50 of the federations have a male leader (96%). All in all, there are 581 men and 72 women (11%) on the boards of the 52 European sports federations.

We have selected 6 sports federations for a more in-depth exploration on the European and national levels. Among these sports are sports which were traditionally considered as men’s, as women’s and as gender neutral activities. These sports are: Football, Weightlifting, Aquatics, Tennis, Athletics and Artistic gymnastics. The data of the 6 selected sports (Football, Weight lifting, Aquatics, Tennis, Athletics and Artistic gymnastics) show a similar trend as the data of all federations, the leadership positions are to a high degree “reserved” for men. 5 out of the 6 European Federations have less than 10% women on their boards (only Athletics has 67% men and 33% women). The football as well as weight lifting federation do not have any women on their boards at all.

Sport Federations on the national level
We have analysed the leadership positions in sport organisations of 11 selected countries (selection criteria were in particular size, region, sport systems). We have chosen these countries also with the intention to include countries from different parts of Europe: UK, Germany, France, Austria as countries in the centre of Europe; Denmark and Norway as representatives of Scandinavia; Italy and Spain from Southern Europe; Hungary and Slovenia from the former East Block and The Netherlands from the Benelux.

Umbrella Federations in the selected countries
In the 11 countries we analysed 18 federations (some countries have more than one umbrella federation). The board members of the country sports federation are 201 men and 72 women (79 % and to 21 %). Only 3 of 18 federations have a female president, Norway (NIF) and UK (British Olympic Association, Princess Anne) and the Sport and Recreation Alliance (former CCPR).

6 selected sports in 11 selected countries
We have investigated the gender proportion in the leadership positions in 6 sports in the 11 selected countries (see above). As mentioned above, the sports were football, weight lifting, aquatics, tennis, athletics and artistic gymnastics. All in all, we explored the executive committees of 62 national sports federations. 3 of the 62 investigated national sports federations have a female president (4.8%) The countries and sports with a woman as president are Austria: Gymnastics, Germany: Aquatics and Netherlands: Tennis. But 12 of the 62 sport federations (19%) do not have a single woman in their boards. In particular the football federations are governed by men only committees. The national football federations of Austria, France, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and UK do not have any women on their boards.
In the 50 federations (81 %) with women in leadership positions these women are mostly a small minority. 45 of the 62 sport federations in the selected countries (73%) have less than 25% women on their executive boards. It is important to note that Norway is the only country, where all of the 6 sports federations have more than 25% women in their executive committees. There are only 3 of the 62 federations with around 50% women on their executive committees (Denmark: Gymnastics, France: Aquatics and Norway: Gymnastics).

**Conclusion**

Women are a minority in leadership positions in all sports (exception female only sports), on all levels and in all countries. The top of the sport hierarchy, the position of president, is occupied with very few exceptions by men. But not only women, but also individuals with a migrant background are marginalized in sport associations. “With respect to leadership positions, all available date document the glaring under-representation of ethnic minorities and migrants.” 5 The combination of being a woman and belonging to an ethnic minority reduces the chance to gain access to decision making boards and committees in sport associations close to zero.

**Potential explanations**

Theoretical approaches of the sociology of work, in particular on the gendered “segregation of the labour market” and the gendered “culture of organisations” can provide theoretical approaches to the gender hierarchy in sport related leadership positions. 6 Studies about the gendered labour market indicate that employment and careers depend on the interplay between demands, expectations, believes and ideals of the employers as well as on the demands, expectations, ideals, competencies and the circumstances of life of the potential employees. Women’s demands and expectations may not meet demands and expectations of employers who are interested in a full (or over) time working and flexible employee who prioritizes “his” work over his family. Life-work-integration is still a problem for many women. Thus leadership positions on the labour market and in sport organisations will be easier accessible for men than for women.

Structures and processes in organisations/working places are not “self evident” but created in and through discursive processes. They depend on the “culture” of the organisation which decides not only about the organisation of the work but also about values and ideals. In many ways cultures of organisations favour men. In most organisations the “ideal leader” is a man, whose commitment is demonstrated by intensive commitment and long working hours as well as an authoritarian leadership style. In sport organisations, ideal leaders have to be one of the guys with a long involvement in sport and a large network. There are numerous other facts and processes from the way how elections take place to the informal power of in-groups which can impede the way of women to the top.

**Gendered sport participation**

*General population in various countries*

According to the Eurobarometer Sport and Physical Activity (2010), 7 34 % of the men and 43 % of the women in Europe do not take part in recreational physical activities. There are huge differences with regard to participation in sport and exercises and with regard to gender differences in the European countries, depending, among other things, on the culture and
the opportunities. In the Scandinavian countries, where an active life style is prioritized by the states and the individuals, the percentage of the active population is very high, whereas the majority of the populations in Southern European countries prefer a sedentary life style. Women in Scandinavian countries seem to be as active in sport (for all) as men, at least if one uses a broad definition of sport (including recreational activities). In many central and Northern European countries, informal physical activities such as swimming, hiking of biking are popular among women and men alike. Men are more likely to be members of sport clubs and to participate in sport competitions, whereas many women prefer activities such gymnastics and some of the new fitness trends. But physical activity depends on culture and on opportunities on education/social class

*Gender equality and sports among migrants*

Relevant data about participation rates of individuals with a migrant background are scarce. Information is available in Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Germany and Austria. All data indicate that minorities and migrants, in particular, women and girls, are underrepresented among participants in sport (for all) as well as among members of sport clubs.8

**Physical Education**

Various studies with different methods show that children, boys and girls, love to be active, 9 but that there is a considerable drop out of adolescents, in particular girls from sport and recreational physical activity.

The 2006 HBSC study conducted in 41 European countries revealed that 25% of the boys and 19% of the girls (13 years) and 19% of the boys and 12% of the girls (15 years) were at least 60 minutes vigorously active for five or more days per week (as required in health recommendations).10 There are large differences between countries: 46% of the Slovakian boys (age 15) but only 11% of the Swedish boys and 29% of the Slovakian girls but only 5% of the girls in France and Portugal met the demands of the health experts.11

The Eurobarometer Sport and Health (2010) showed as well that only 8% of young women (15-24), but 19% of the young men are regularly physically active. Surveys conducted in various countries revealed a similar picture and showed a dramatic decline in physical activities among girls starting already in the age of 13 to 15-years.12 There may be various reasons for this decline of interest in sporting activity, but available studies indicate that Physical Education in schools (PE) contributes or at least does not prevent the high drop our rate of girls from sport and exercises.13 In particular in co-educative classes, PE seems to be orientated at the demands of the boys, which means that female students may be marginalized. A considerable number of girls drop out of PE. A specific problem is the integration of girls with a migrant background because the demands and condition in PE may not meet their expectations and/or the requirements posed by religion and/or culture.14

**The World of Academia - Sport Sciences**

*Institutions of Higher Education/Universities*

Since centuries, the world of academia is a men’s domain, as the numbers and positions of men and women at the universities in Europe and worldwide clearly indicate. This is also true for sport sciences, an academic field which developed already at the turn to the 20th century,
but experienced a continuous upswing since the 1960s. Sport Sciences (sport and science understood in a broad sense) is a multi-disciplinary field with specializations, among others, in human and social sciences (from sport philosophy to sport sociology and sport management) as well as in various areas of natural sciences (from biomechanics to exercise physiology).

The discipline has different designations and is taught and researched with various foci and approaches. In some countries sport universities exist, in others sport sciences are integrated in the traditional university system. The main aims of sport science departments are education in sport related professions, among other physical education teachers, and research about various topics and in various fields. The choice of issues which are considered as important in the scientific community and the results of research set in many ways the agenda, also for women in sport. Until recently, women have been excluded from numerous sporting activities with arguments provided by sport sciences, in particular, sport medicine. Being a member of the scientific community means to influence discourses and practices. Therefore gender equality in sport sciences is of utmost importance.

Currently, there are no data available which refer to this specific academic discipline, but it can be assumed that the gender proportions in sport sciences are similar to the average proportions in academia as a whole where also various disciplines occur. Despite some positive developments in the last decades, the gender differentiated statistics show still relatively large gender gaps in academia. In 2003, 43 % of the PhD students graduating in Europe, but only 29 % of the researchers were female (EU 25). Distribution of female researcher at universities are as follows: humanities 39 %, engineering and technology 21 % (11,5 % in Germany) natural sciences 29 %.

At the top of the hierarchy, among professors (senior top positions), are women a minority of 15 %; less than 10 % in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Malta and the Netherlands, above 25 % in Romania, Latvia and Turkey 6 % of the female and 18 % of the men of the academic staff are professors (EU 25). There are differences dependent on the discipline: 6 % of the professors in engineering and technology and 24 % in the humanities are women.

Setting the scientific agenda depends on the status in the scientific community, and here men are dominating. The percentage of women in scientific committees, with exception of Norway, is under 50 %, in 15 of the 20 countries included in this statistics under 30 %. There are also other indicators, e.g. with regard to the execution and administration of research programs, the evaluation of research, the funding of research projects or positions as deans or university presidents, which indicate a gender hierarchy in academia.

**Scientific Community**

An important issue is the role of women and men in the scientific communities and their influence in their fields of science which is mirrored, among other things, in positions in editorial boards or key note speeches at conferences. An excellent insight into the gendered distribution of influence and power provide the governing boards of scientific associations which mirror the gender distribution in academic positions, presented above.

European associations of sport sciences are an indicator for the number and the status of women in this field. However, one has to consider, that these associations have similar aims, to promote their field of science, but they have different strategies and structures as well as a different impact on the scientific community. Despite of these differences, there is one clear message: women are a minority in these organizations, among the members, but in particular in the decision making committees. The following examples may provide in insight in this important field. The data are taken from from the webpages of these organizations.

*ECSS – a multi-disciplinary European Association*
The largest European sport science association is the European College of Sport Sciences (ECSS), the only multi-disciplinary sport science organization in Europe. ECSS organizes a yearly congress which attracts up to 2000 participants. The president was always and is also currently a man and 1 woman and 5 men are the members of the executive board. The scientific board consists of 7 members among them 1 woman and in the scientific committee the men: women relation is 10:3. Members of outstanding merits are appointed to fellows of the organization, women and 35 men. Among the membership women are a minority of less than 30%.

**European Sport Science Organizations in various disciplines**

European Federation of Sports Medicine Associations (EFSMA): The board consists of 7 male members, the officers. 3 men and 2 women are additional elected members and two more men are co-opted. Members of EFSMA are 41 sport medicine organizations in Europe from the Albanian to the Ukrainian Sport Medicine Associations. Only 9% of these organizations have a woman as president (in three cases the names of the presidents were not mentioned).

FEPSAC, the European Federation of Sport Psychology, has a managing council of 8 persons, 6 men and two women. President and Vice president are men. Because FEPSAC’s main members are sport psychological associations, the male : female ratio among the members cannot be identified.

The board of EASM, the European Association of Sport Management, consists of 6 men and 4 women. The president is a man.

EASS, European Association of Sport Sociology, has a board with 5 male members, among them the male president. Among the extended board members are two men and two women.

EUAPA, the European Physical Education Association is headed by a female president, but all other members of the board are men: three men form the steering group. 5 men are the representatives of regions, 3 men are the forum representatives. Only two of the substitutes are women.

**Sport scientific organizations in countries**

In some countries, such as Germany, organizations exist which include all or several sport sciences. An The German Association of Sport Sciences is multi-disciplinary. Most of German sport scientists working at a university are members. Its executive board has 7 members, among them two women; one of them is the president. For the first time in the history of this organization, its president is a woman.

SVEBI, the Swedish Associations for human and social science orientated sport sciences, is headed by four men and three women.

In France, ACAPS, Association de Chercheurs en Activités Physiques et Sportives (association of researchers on physical activities and sports) has a board of 15 scholars, two of them are women.

In addition to the umbrella associations, in many countries numerous disciplinary associations have been founded reaching from the Swedish Association of Sport Psychology to the British Sport Historical Society. The above described patterns of a gender hierarchy can also be found in these organizations.

**Conclusion**

These examples clearly demonstrate that the world of science in general, and, in particular in sport sciences is a men’s world. The data presented above confirm the insights of the so called “Helsinki Group” on women and science and the statement of head of WIRDEM (Women in Research Decision-Making) (WIRDEM), Maya Widmer: “All of the data show a clear under-representation of women in leadership positions in research.”
It would need a long and in-depth research to examine how the dominance of men in this field is to be explained and how the gender hierarchy influences the topics and the type of research, but also the access of women to academic positions in universities. The publication of the EU Commission “Mapping the Maze: Getting more women to the top of research” (2008) provides an overview about the situations and potential explanations for the gender hierarchy in this field. However, specific research on sport sciences is lacking.

**Media coverage**

Studies about the media coverage of male and female athletes in numerous countries had very similar results. The percentage of time, space or articles in the sports pages or TV programs referring to female athletes is less than 10 %.

This situation changes in the case of mega events, such as the Olympic Games where nearly as many female as male athletes participate and women are presented in the media, at least when they are winning medals. However, despite the interest of the media in female Olympians, a gender gap remains: Women are underrepresented in the Olympic coverage, a fact, which cannot be explained by the gender proportion among the participants or the success rates of male and female athletes. This can be illustrated by the research findings of a group of 14 scholars who conducted newspaper analyses of the Olympic coverage in 2004 in their respective countries. This is the largest collection of quantitative content analyses focused on a single event and using the same methodology.

The following tables referring to newspaper reports during the Olympic Games provide a condensation of the findings of this research project. Table 1 shows that only 5 % of the articles which covered non-Olympic sport events during this period covered women’s sport, 88 % dealt with men’s events. 25 % of the articles related to the Olympics reported about women, 40% about men, the rest of the articles did not refer to athletes. The results presented in Table 2 show that there are differences in the media presentations of men and women in different countries whereby the Scandinavian newspapers seem to have been more interested in women’s sport than the papers in England or Turkey.

**Gendered Sports Coverage during the 2004 Olympics**

*Table 1: Average percentages for the overall project by type of coverage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Coverage</th>
<th>Female articles Average %</th>
<th>Male articles Average %</th>
<th>Female photos Average %</th>
<th>Male photos Average %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Olympic</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympic</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Total Coverage by Gender – European countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Female articles (%)</th>
<th>Male articles (%)</th>
<th>Female photos (%)</th>
<th>Male photos (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (n)</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England (n)</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary (n)</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway (n)</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (n)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (n)</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey (n)</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (all 14 countries)</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female fans in a men’s world

Research about fan cultures is mostly “gender neutral”, using insights into men’s roles and rituals for general statements about fans. Very few studies focus on female fans who are a minority among football audiences. A representative survey of the German population revealed that around 5 % of the female and 21 % of the male population had watched at least one football game in the stadium in the last 12 months. 34 % of the women and 27 % of the men were slightly, 15 % of the women and 55 % of the men intensively interested in football. Studies in other countries indicate similar or even larger gender differences. (How do female fans deal with the male fan culture? Do women play specific roles and act differently in fan groups than men? Several studies indicate that there are various groups of female fans and diverse motivations to engage in football: There are women who come with their husbands or friends, the “groupies” who admire a player or the “serious fans” who love of the game. According to Fritzsche (2010), football does not only convey traditional gender ideals and practices but provides also the opportunity to make fun or even reverse the gender order. Observations and studies reveal that there are numerous occurrences of sexism and homophobia in football stadiums. Female fans are often marginalized, ridiculed or even attacked. However, there are also examples which show that female fans are moving in the stadiums and claim their place.

Conclusion

This mapping of gender equality issues in Europe cannot provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of all levels and all areas of sport (for all) in all European countries. Its aim was to compile information which can underpin the statements and recommendations of the chart on gender equality in European sport. However, it would be very useful to continue this work and focus on the roles of men and women in areas which are not covered in this report, such as elite sport or the governments’ sport bodies and agencies. It is one thing to detect gender differences as it has been done in this report. However, it would be very important to focus much more as it could be done here on backgrounds and
explanations. Future work in this area has to include theoretical approaches to gender (in)equality which can support insights and understandings. In many areas, no information is available that means research is necessary as well as an evaluation of interventions. Despite its restricted scope, the mapping report makes it very clear that gender hierarchies exist in many sport related areas and that decisive measures are necessary to reach equality.
We checked all 73 sports named at the IOC webpage, but not all of these are organized in an European federation.

We are missing data from France: Weight lifting, Netherlands: Athletics, Slovenia: Weight lifting, UK: Weight lifting


Pfister, G. (2010). Are the women or the organisations to blame? Gender hierarchies in Danish sports organizations. In: International Journal of Sport Policy 2, 1, 1 – 23

European Commission: Special Eurobarometer 334. Sport and Physical Activity. Brussels 2010


Since the last survey in 2002, the percentage of active children has decreased. The HBSC data provide information about trends, but have to be interpreted with caution. Country-specific conditions may not have been satisfactorily taken into consideration.


European Commission: Women and Science Statistics and Indicators


