



DIRECTORS-GENERAL DISCUSSION: GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle, enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 7), and enshrined in the main international and constitutional texts. In fact, Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women *and girls*.

Numerous texts of an international nature enshrine this inviolable right. At the level of the European Union, it is its Charter of Fundamental Rights that elevates it to the maximum configuration in its articles 1 and 23. In this sense, the European Union elevates gender equality to a policy and guiding principle of the first order, addressing it from all sectoral perspectives and competences, among which is sport. It also creates a specific body for gender equality, the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union already stated that the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men.

Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides that in all its activities the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women.

It is also relevant that the European Union has developed in recent years an important work in sports policy, since the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, acquiring competence as a result of it, consolidating itself in Article 6 e) of the TFEU. Article 165, for its part, specifies that Union action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension of sport, promoting fairness and openness in sports competitions and cooperation between bodies responsible for sport, and protecting the physical and moral integrity of athletes, especially the youngest.

Gender equality and sport have permeated European action, with the work of institutions and States in the common goal of equality in sport and through sport, becoming increasingly profuse. Thus, we can highlight the Council conclusions of 21 May 2014 on gender equality in sport; the Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025; the Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of sport as a source and vector of active social integration, addressing sport as a driver of change and social integration, providing role models for society; the Council conclusions on promoting common EU values through sport (2018); the recommendations and action plan of the

High Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport (2022), as well as the Recommendations on Gender Equality in Sport of the European Commission (2016).

These publications shows the increasing public and social attention to issues of equality between women and men in sport and through sport, highlighting the two fundamental dimensions of this matter:

On the one hand, the achievement of effective equality between women and men in the field of sport, from childhood and grassroots sport to high-level sport and retirement.

On the other hand, sport is configured as a privileged tool for the removal of barriers and obstacles to equality in society, and as a vehicle for sensitization, awareness and visibility of models and references in the field of equality.

The aforementioned documents emphasize a series of aspects that should inspire the action of the public authorities in this area:

In the first place, equality in access to sport, from childhood and grassroots sport, either as a recreational or competitive activity. In this sense, training and equal opportunities for boys and girls is fundamental. On the other hand, there has also been a significant abandonment of federated sport by young women in adolescence, in a much higher proportion than adolescent men. This generates a responsibility on the part of the public authorities and sports institutions when it comes to identifying the causes and putting a stop to this massive abandonment. In the same way, emphasis should be placed on the removal of existing obstacles in high competition and on the search for job opportunities for women after sporting life.

Secondly, training is important, which allows increasing the number of women who decide to dedicate their professional lives in the sports field, and which allows increasing the number, currently reduced, of women referees, technicians, judges, coaches and professionals with a field of sports performance.

The third aspect that acquires prominence today is awareness and visibility. It is one of the most important initiatives and policies, which allows women to be impregnated with the value of real equality and opportunities.

Another aspect that deserves attention from public and sports institutions is the leadership of women in sport: both nationally and internationally. The difficulty of women in reaching positions of managerial responsibility has been highlighted.

Finally, the prevention and treatment of violence and abuse in sport takes on special importance. While prevention and violence in the field of sport must be predicated on all people, in the case of women, gender-based violence has characteristics that must be tackled, in sport as in other areas of life. But in this aspect, in addition, in the case of sport and gender violence we find an important tool of maximum benefit and utility. It is about the empowerment of sports practice as a therapeutic tool in the recovery of victims of gender violence.

Therefore we propose the following questions for our debate:

- What are the areas of gender equality and sport in which you work primarily in your country, and what strategies can be presented as a model of success?
- What are the actions in which sport is used as an engine of social change in your country, and specifically as a model of gender equality?
- What actions and strategies could the member states of the European Union jointly implement that represent a step towards achieving real and effective equality in sport and through sport?