

## **Final conference of the SUCCESS project entitled**

### **“Sport Governance and Women in Leadership”**

**13 September 2017 in Bratislava, Slovakia**

#### **Sport governance and women in leadership**

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#### **The 3 E's**

Sport organisations must continue their work on good governance and gender equality. Although participation numbers of women in sports continues to grow, there has not been a corresponding addition in the number of women in top-level administrative positions within the sports industry. Due to this trend, the lack of the female voices at the decision-making levels of sport enterprises is becoming more visible.

While women have made notable progress in leadership in business corporations, little has changed in the sport industry with still less women than men in decision-making positions in sports management. Women in sport organisations are more likely to be hired into positions with less power, less pay and less opportunities for advancement.

The sport market is an expanding industry that hosts more than 50,000 companies and employs over one million people. As such, the sports industry gives many opportunities for administrative and leadership positions. Despite

these opportunities, women remain significantly under-represented in leadership positions within sport organisations.

Administrative leaders within sport organisations and governing bodies play a major role in deciding how sport is structured and who gets to participate. Through this decision-making process, these individuals influence directly and decide on the position of women in sport.

Despite the exponential growth in women's participation in sport, women are under-represented as high-ranking decision makers in sport organisations compared to their male colleagues. One of the most prominent barriers that prevent women from advancing in sports organisations is the lack of strategic opportunities. Another barrier identified for women who pursue higher-ranking sport leadership positions is gender stereotyping that prevents them from being hired into positions of more responsibility. Barriers for gender equality is also the opinion that problems related with participation of women in sport is only the "women under-representation issue".

According to the "**Principles of good governance in sport**", shifting demographics and societal changes within Europe and beyond require sport organisations to consider whether existing inclusivity policies, diversity strategies and levels of representation across all groups remain appropriate and reflective of their participants and society in general. A particular issue in this regard is the access of women to leadership positions in sports organisations within the context of the wider debate on gender in Europe.

In most sports bodies, the board constitutes the executive organ providing a supervisory and monitoring role over the day to day activities and management of the organisation. The board represents an essential component of good governance in sport. The successful implementation and acceptance of good governance in a sporting body will influence on the better positions of women in sport.

Among the most important requirement for a board to be effective is that the board promotes equality and diversity.

At the same time, the board members must have the necessary attributes, skills and competence required to carry out the role effectively with skills being regularly assessed and performance evaluated.

According to the European Commission's „**Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015**“, in most Member States, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making processes and positions, in particular at the highest levels, despite the fact that they make up nearly half the workforce and more than half of new university graduates in the EU (more than 50% of the workforce in Croatia are women and in sport organizations that percentage is even bigger – 70%).

In the European Commission's “**Report on equality between women and men 2014**” it is stated that the equality between women and men is a fundamental right and a precondition for effective democracy and lasting economic growth. It is one of the EU's founding principles and a building block of its future. Gender equality contributes to jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change.

Although gender gaps in employment and decision-making have narrowed in recent years, women still account for less than a quarter of company board members, despite representing almost half of the employed workforce.

The Euro barometer on Sport and Physical Activity 2014 highlighted that the number of women in leadership positions in sport governing bodies in Europe is still very low, and it is, in average, 10%.

The lack of gender equality in sport could also be seen as a missed opportunity for the sport sector. Research and developments in sport have shown that better skilled and educated women could lead to interesting benefits on personal, organisational and social levels.

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union and enshrined in the Treaties. It is a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion. The huge gender gap existing in the decision making bodies of European sport, the lack of attention for gender equality and the key positions these organisations could play regarding media and sponsor contracts, crucial for the right coverage of women in sport, justify a European approach.

The structures of the sports organisations themselves and the way they are organised and operate are not very often questioned. Furthermore, job search committees, or election committees, which normally consist of men, often use subjective evaluative criteria or profiles in which men will be seen as more

qualified than women. In practice this means that men have used their male networks to help them during their job search and hiring process, or during election procedures for administrative positions. Women administrators often feel they are judged by more demanding standards than men.

The overall aim of strategic actions should be to achieve a full gender balance in the representation in decision-making positions in sport governing bodies. The objectives by 2020 which could function as targets for national and international plans of strategic actions and contribute to this overall aim are:

- A minimum of 40% of women or men (in case when they are under-represented) in executive boards and committees of national sport governing bodies and 30% in international sports organisations located in Europe.
- A minimum of 40% of women or men (in case when they are under-represented) in the management of professional sport administrations and governmental sport bodies.
- All sport governing bodies should have a gender equality policy including an action plan (In Croatia we know that despite the plan we should implement the controlling mechanisms because in general, the plans do not match the actual situation).

Education and mentoring of both women and men who are already in decision-making positions is needed to prepare them for more demanding positions. It is especially important that women are offered such training given the objective of increasing the female representation on national and international executive boards and committees. Mentoring programmes – as an informal transmission

of knowledge, including learning, dialogue, and challenge – should be established, whether on a non-formal basis or via a more formal educational approach.

All national, European and international sport governing bodies should develop and implement strategic actions regarding gender equality in decision making bodies including the development of awareness programmes and support for projects to develop and maintain education and training programmes and mentoring systems for future female leaders in formal and non-formal education.

Just as elected executive board members, professionals in sport governing bodies also have an important role to play in decisions about policies, strategies and implementation. In many organisations implementation of decisions is the responsibility of the management. As in other sectors of the labour market it is therefore important that there is a gender balance among sport professionals in decision-making positions.

Our goal from the 2012 London conference is to reach the objective of 40% women on executive boards, committees and in the management of sport administrations is an important step to gender equality.

To reach gender equality on decision making levels, education and training for both women and men in decision making bodies and staff should be promoted. Executive boards and management of national and international sport

governing bodies should promote and participate in training to raise gender awareness and commitment to gender mainstreaming.

The SUCCESS project was developed to respond to the needs identified in participating countries. Therefore, the project was focused on developing not only management skills of women in sport but also giving them tools to step up as leaders who are able to implement change, and on raising awareness of gender imbalance and inequality in decision-making in sport to change perceptions and promote the importance of equal opportunities in sport organisations.

You need to imagine how important it is for sport to get all that female energy, knowledge and experience.

Education programs are one of the possibility to get that energy for sport.

It is important to continue that work in our local communities to increase the number of women involved in management and leadership roles in sport organisations (in Croatia it is 70%). We must be dedicated to the principles of good governance and gender equality until we have reached the objectives of having at least 40% of women on executive boards and at least that many in top management positions in sport organisations.

At the end we must point out that very important thing for gender equality in sport is that before raising to decision-making positions, women should receive through education programs all the tools and knowledge to really be in the same positions and to have the same chances to finally be equal with men.

And therefore for women in leadership in future the most important are **the 3 E's**

- **E** ducation for profession
- **E** ducation for leadership
- Lifelong **E** ducation for gender equality

Thank you for your attention.