

# EUROPEAN ROUNDTABLE ON GENDER INCLUSION IN SPORT'S WORKFORCE

## REPORT



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## THE BEST INCLUSION PROJECT

The BeST Inclusion project is coordinated by EASE (European Association of Sport Employers), with the support of experts, academic partners and sport employers coming from 9 different European countries.

The main goal of BeST inclusion is to achieve an inclusive workforce within the sport sector. In order to do so, it will consider the inclusiveness and the diversity of the European sport workforce around 3 axes: gender, age and disability. The objective of the BeST Inclusion project is to strengthen their employability by supporting sport employers and giving them all the keys to hire these different categories of workers without fear. The main objectives are as follows:

- Assess the barriers to a more inclusive workforce for the sport sector in terms of gender, age, and disability
- Identify the existing best practices in terms of policy for a more inclusive workforce for the sport sector
- Address the inclusiveness of the sport workforce with policy recommendations in line with the economic reality of the sport sector
- Increase the exchange of knowledge between the economic actors of the sport sector and the stakeholders acting for a more inclusive sport
- Produce the tools to act concretely for a more inclusive workforce for the sport sector

The BeST Inclusion project allows to address the topic of good governance in sport at European level by approaching the theme of social inclusion in the sport field. It will contribute to European sport policies by enhancing exchanges between European sport actors.



# METHODOLOGY

The European Roundtable on Sport Workforce & Gender took place virtually on the 23rd of November, from 12h to 14h CET.



## THE ORGANISERS

The Gender Working Group brings together two partners who are deeply involved in the empowerment and visibility of women in the sport sector, both at national and European level.

- Alice Milliat Association : The Alice Milliat Association was created with the purpose of acting so that women have a fairer place in the world of sport, whether on the field or within the governing bodies. Through its actions the association defends gender equality in sport, promotes a better representation of sportswomen and fights against sexism, stereotypes and any form of discrimination or violence in sport.
- University of Murcia : The Faculty of Sport Sciences of the University of Murcia has developed a strong expertise about the role of women in sport through the participation in “Woman + Sport” Program developed by the Spanish Higher Sports Council. They are currently taking part in projects related to sports and women developed through Spanish Federations of Olympic Wrestling, Weightlifting, Canoeing and Rowing.



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## OBJECTIVES

The interest of this roundtable was to have a collective reflection on women's access to the sport labour market, to create a dialogue and analyze the existing barriers and good practices regarding the inclusion of women in the sport labor sector in Europe.

## PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

Through this roundtable, we wanted to represent as many profiles (experts, employees, and relevant speakers in the sport sector) and nationalities as possible in order to have a European overview of the problem. We managed to bring together 18 speakers from 9 countries (Belgium, England, France, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden).

The session started with a brief introduction of the BeST Inclusion project by AMA, followed by a presentation on the topic of discussion - Sport Workforce & Gender - provided by the University of Murcia. We then asked the panel of participants to introduce themselves and to react to the data that had just been communicated, particularly with regard to their personal and professional experience.

## KEY QUESTIONS

The group was then divided into 2 breakout sessions and asked to discuss the theme based on the following questions:

1. What are the barriers to women's access to jobs in the sports labor market ?
2. What kind of measures can be taken to address this gender gap? What kind of recommendations? Incentives or sanctions?

Below are the main results discussed by both groups aggregated by question.



# RESULTS

## LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

For things to change, change must come from the "top". All the participants shared the idea that regulation and legislation are necessary to drive change, have a concrete impact and get it down to the grassroots level.

### QUOTAS

Organisations must include parity in their membership and if it is not required by law, it will most likely not happen. One of the participants used the example of organisations such as the Council of Europe that makes recommendations on gender balance and inclusivity when they are not themselves equal and inclusive.

Another one cited the recent law that was passed in France in 2022 regarding gender representation in the sport movement : by January 1st 2024, all national federation will have to be led by leadership boards composed of 50% men and 50% women. For the clubs it will become mandatory in 2028.

### MEDIA OBLIGATIONS

Regarding media, it was pointed out that there should be obligations for media (and especially TV) to include more women sports in their broadcasting programs and ensure it was scheduled for interesting timeslots. A participant mentioned also the idea of creating a media charter to combat harassment as many women sports photographers were particularly vulnerable to sexual assault.

### PARENTAL LEAVE

Even though parental leaves policies differ from one country to another, discussions showed that the difference in length between a maternity leave and a paternity leave could lead to important biases in the recruitment process.

One of the participants also explained that for referees, if a woman took a maternity leave she had to start reffing again at a lower level and climb up again. Whereas if the period of leave was treated the same way a serious injury is treated, the person could just continue reffing at the same level they were before the injury.



## SANCTIONS

Finally, the discussions highlighted that it was important to remind that gender discrimination and sexism are forbidden and punishable by law. Additionally, several participants said that the financing of sports clubs and sport organisations by public institutions should be conditioned by gender equality (allocating the same amount of money to a girls team within the club than to a boys team for example, having gender balance in the leadership,..etc)

## **NORMS AND CULTURE**

It is necessary to change the culture at an organisational level: the training, the recruitment process, the way of communicating.

The world of sport itself is guided by 'male' norms and values. Sport has been built by and for men. Organisations must therefore evolve and be more creative in order to make more room for women, but also to make them feel good and want to join.

One of the barriers is in job recruitment -in Sport masculine language typically dominates in job description-see here for a practical example[1].

Women also hold more part-time jobs. One of the problems of working in the sports sector, especially coaching, is that it is very time consuming. You have to be available at weekends, in the evening, and invest a lot of time. It is therefore difficult to combine family life and work, and women are particularly constrained by this problem.

Beyond the organisations in the world of sport, society itself must evolve and the more "local" institutions with it. One of the participants told us that when she went to register her activity, a counsellor told her that it was ridiculous as a woman to be involved in the world of sport.

## **EDUCATION**

### RAISING AWARENESS

All participants strongly believed that education was the key to change.

- Schools and clubs have a role to play because this change of culture has to go through the youngest. It is necessary to raise awareness from a very young age and to tell, especially boys, that it is possible and normal for them to have female coaches.
- The guidance system (guidance counselors, student fairs, teachers) must provide young people with more information on the opportunities available in the sports sector and the diversity of possible jobs.



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## TRAINING

There is a need to improve women's access to training in the sports sector and to develop more inclusive training : Create development programmes, coaching programmes to reach the highest positions.

On the one hand it was mentioned that we had to stop saying that women have to change, that they have to dare, because there are a lot of motivated women who have the skills but not enough places for them. On another hand several participants mentioned mentoring programs as necessary in order to support women in their leadership roles in sport.

## TRANSPARENCY

### RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Recruitment systems lack transparency and elections too as sport is often a small world with and closed networks. It can therefore leave little room for women. Having also gender mixed teams of persons in charge of the recruitment process was mentioned as a way to avoid gender bias from the employers.

## DATA

The lack of data in the field of sport employment and specifically regarding sporting officials is an issue. Only by conducting analyses and gathering more data will it be possible to change the situation.

Data is necessary in order to monitor the effect of policies and have a better understanding on its impacts.

A participant mentioned that there should be a visibility gap published for public broadcasters to report on M/F sport portrayal and exposure. For example, in Ireland, Regulations require organisations with over 250 employees to report on their gender pay gap in 2022 and then publish the report on the same date in December 2022[2].





## VISIBILITY

### ROLE MODELS

Women lack role models. Women do not occupy enough positions of responsibility where they have a leadership position. They are more present in "administrative" positions. In France 55% women in administrative positions and few women in coaching positions (35% women)

It is important to bear in mind that the figures change rapidly from year to year and that one should not generalise to all sports. One participant pointed out that she the only female president of a club within her federation. The French hockey federation was cited as a good example as there are 44 women on its board and 50% of the players are women. Nevertheless, hockey is a sport that receives very little media attention. It is therefore necessary to give more visibility to sports, federations and organisations that are leading the way and implementing good practices.

Women in leadership positions also lack visibility.

### MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

It is necessary to improve the position of women in the media. Seeing more women doing sport or coaching on TV is essential to create vocations from an early age and to say that there are job opportunities for women in the sport sector. It was also outlined that there is a very minor representation of women in the field of sports journalists.

Positive narratives should be more shared in order to inspire and convince sport employers to have a more gender balanced representation. An investigation on the biggest listed companies in Sweden showed for example that those with gender equality in leading positions are more profitable. Apart from profit, it also means that more experiences and profiles can be taken into account so it logically increase the ability to respond to more problematics and be more creative.



# CONCLUSIONS

The discussions and exchange of experience and expertise from the participants showed that it is only by tackling all the barriers mentioned altogether that will it be possible to achieve gender inclusion in sport workforce. A transversal approach is therefore needed.

Other topics such as the involvement of volunteers and the importance of their work as well as the impact of crisis on women's employment in the sport sector were also discussed and but would have to be further explored through other projects.

