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Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



# EXCHANGE REPORT



*International Triathlon Union president Marisol Casado is one of only two female presidents at International Federation level. Credit: International Triathlon Union*

*Source: Building a pipeline of female sports leaders. At The Sustainability Report*

The role of women in the executive positions of local sports entities. – Insights from the exchanges among the SWUP project community

## WHAT IS THE REPORT ABOUT?

This report is a synthesis of the issues regarding the role of women in executive sport positions that have been exchanged in the framework of SWUP project. SWUP (Sport for Women in Urban Places)<sup>1</sup> is a project funded by the Erasmus+ fund of the European Union to enhance women participation in outdoor physical activities. The project's activities are meant to shade light on why and how to design women friendly urban environments for outdoor physical activity.

Other five topics, besides the one addressed in this report, have been identified and discussed by the project's partners: the role of municipality, the desirability of only-for-women activities and infrastructures, child-friendly approach, local impact generated by outdoor sport activities, activities and infrastructures for disable women.

Information was collected through ad hoc oral exchanges that the partners had during the SWUP project and through the contributions that the project partners and other interested actors exchanged in the online forum<sup>2</sup> hosted in the project website.

This report is organized in 3 sections. The first section will present the topic. The second section will gather and analyze the contributions that the partners and other interested stakeholders exchanged on the topic during the project. Finally, the last section is an expanded biography that reports suggested readings and links on the topic.

### 1. THE TOPIC: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The first Olympic Games were only for men, until few years later the woman began the practice of tennis. Little by little women have gone into sporting practices. Nevertheless, in 2018, the practice of sport has still not reached gender parity.

Moreover, the reality shows that there is little female representation in the governing bodies of sports federations and clubs, and also a big difference in terms of both economic and material resources that are devoted to male's sport to the detriment of women's sport. Sport women receive fewer prizes, less scholarships, lower salaries and lower amounts. There is also an infrastructure discrimination: female teams have access to equipment and facilities that are not as good as boys. The pity is that it does not only happen to towns and low categories, but also in many cities and in the elite teams.

Inequalities between men and women are even bigger when we talk about competition sports and access to managerial positions. Besides, women's sport still has very little echo in the media, few references and the salaries that women who dedicate themselves to professional sports receive is well below what men earn. We

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1 <http://www.swup-project.eu/>

2 <http://www.swup-project.eu/forum-swup/>

recall the great difference in cash rewards between a male and female soccer team, as well as taking the US women's team to consider making a strike until the girls' economic prizes are equalized.

Another highlight is that 65.5% of female teams are trained by men. According to a world-wide study of the University of Technology of Sydney, 2016 (Author: Johanna Adriaanse) while women have places in the table where important economic and financial decisions are made, they have not yet achieved the best leadership positions in the sport. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FIFA, the international governing body of football, widely regarded as the most prestigious and influential sports organizations, have never been headed by a woman. Since the creation of the IOC in 1894, his president has been a man; FIFA has also been in charge since its establishment over a century ago. The latest research, based on the Global Score of Sydney's Women's Leadership in Sports Leadership, shows that women only presided over 7% of international sporting federations in 2016. As in 2012, Any positive change has been achieved in recent years. Women occupied 19% of maximum executive positions by 2016, 8% more than in 2012. Thus, men maintain 93% roles of president and 81% leadership positions. This means that the key leadership positions in governance and world sport management remain virtually vetoes for women. In addition, most federations with a woman at the head, they govern sports that have a relatively small base of participation (for example, sled races and underwater sports). In the same way, sports with a women's head are, mainly, less popular, non-Olympic sports, such as aerial sports, climbing and water skiing.

However the key finding of this study refers to the representation of women as directors of the boards of the international federation. At present, women account for 16.3% of the boards of directors of international governmental sports bodies. Despite a slight increase of 4.2% since 2012, women are still poorly represented. Gender balance in the composition of the board, generally defined between 40-60% of both sexes, is still far away.

## 2. KEY ASPECTS FROM THE DEBATE

In the case of current regulations (local and national level), what could be a desire or an objective for clubs until now, in the not too distant future will be an obligation for some European sports entities and federations, once the new law of the sport and the physical activity of the some regions. Among the modifications emphasizes that the boards of directors will have to be parity. In Catalonia, the forecast is that it will be in 2020, if the deadlines are met and that in a period of between "four and five years" parity is complete in all clubs and sports entities, according to Gerard Figueras, Sport.

According to a study by the 2016 Catalan Sports Observatory, there is no equilibrium with regard to the presence of men and women in Catalonia: female gender only represents 23% of members of the Board of Directors.

Other countries are working on legislation that requires this adaptation by law. As it appears in the document Beyond 30% de women insport «a new mandatory code for Sport England and UK Sport NGBs which comes into effect in April 2017 and includes, for the first time, a mandatory 30% gender diversity requiremen

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for the board». Some institutions consider that there should be no less than 40%. In the opposite, there are people who believe there shouldn't be laws that require a quote because they would be a simple number instead of the person representing. However, it is clear that without a rules, the changes will not arrive.

In city of Granollers the figures are a bit more encouraging. According to a study that the City Council is carrying out, of a sample of 19% of local sports entities, women have a presence of 30%, all of them acting as volunteers within these entities . The functions they perform are also of interest; 23% act as bureaus of the club, 13% treasuries and 32% equals, members and secretaries. Only 36% have any type of training in the sport field, be it national trainers, monitors or graduates in Physical Education. As a date of interest, the only sports entity with more than 50% of women in the board of directors, is the volleyball club in the city, followed by two fighting clubs and one rugby, with a presence of 50% of women in their boards.

What can be done from the town councils?

If we consider that there are activities with more masculine presence and others with more feminine presence, we will have to try to make an equitable redistribution of the resources and to program the municipal actions based on a participatory balance of men and women. At the same time, positive actions should be promoted that favor women's sports practice and invalidate the existing stereotypes regarding women's sport. In the same way that the entities were subsidized to help them promote women's sport and thus to improve their sports base in this sex, perhaps it would be necessary to subsidize women's participation in the Boards of Directors, to prepare the new Sports legislation in this topic.

Know the state of sports participation in the municipality. Performing a diagnosis of the municipal sports situation through the collection of data from sports clubs and associations, educational centers and events organized by the city council itself, in order to know what are the most feminized activities, which are the most masculinised or in which the number of women and men is more relative.

Modify municipal actions that involve direct discrimination for women. Changing the sexist language in the sports documentation of the City Hall. Programming municipal sports activities in a balanced way. For example, if the women of the municipality practice more dance and men football, program a dance show for each football match. Including the gender perspective in the sports training sessions that are carried out from the Town Hall.

Balance the resources provided by the City Council. Equipping the resources for the most masculinized and feminized sporting activities, for example by facilitating a municipal gym for each football field. Assigning municipal sports awards in an equitable manner, keeping watch over the number of prizes that are similar for women's sport and men's sport and quantities are balanced. Encourage entities to make an equitable distribution of training hours. Insist on improving the quality of trainers – and their qualifications – also for female teams. Consider the participation of women in the management of the entity as another element of the club's Sports Quality Certificate and, therefore, an improvement of what this can be done. Although society

must be the one that by itself is evolving towards a world that is not “more equal” and if “equal”, from the local administrations we can put our sand and work, little things to do / help to expand women’s participation in the management of sport.

Several studies that have been carried out at the national level has been analyzed, approximately every 2 or 3 years. In addition, we have consulted the studies carried out at the level of Catalonia, which are not so frequent, but which provide us with information that brings us closer to reality.

If we analyze the number of sports licenses in Spain, the most practiced sports by women are basketball, golf, mountain and climbing, and finally volleyball. Of these only the fourth, volleyball there are more male than female licenses, which indicates that the practice of sports by women is much higher than we think because they are simply not visible. In some cases we are talking about 67 and 70% of female licenses.

It must also be said that the most practiced sport on the part of men is naturally soccer. In contrast and as a curiosity, the most balanced sport between both sexes is diving.

The number of coaches and trainers in the Federal area predominates men with a percentage above 70%. The difference is remarkable, but it is not far from other situations outside of the sports field. Currently, there is still news when a woman trains a male team, but it is no longer strange to find women who usually train. So far, many women were trained by men. If we enter the level of entertainers, we observe that the difference between one and the other exists, but that at the highest level of coaches, there are fewer women.

In Catalonia, the difference of the role of women in club management teams is very high taking into account the responsibility in the position. Very few women are there as presidents. In the case of secretarial and treasury, the percentage of women who occupy these places increase slightly, just over 30%, but we do not know how to explain the reason. Maybe, it could be for a personal organization.

The management team of one of the big clubs worldwide in 2019, FC Barcelona, there are only 2 women over a total of 19 people. And this happens in all sports organizations. Since 1898, the International Olympic Committee has only had male presidents. The same goes for the International Soccer Federation. Only small international federations or those that do not participate in the Olympic program have women in the presidency, and there are not many cases either. Unfortunately, this situation is not exclusive to the sports field, and it also happens in the private company.

By years of duration in the position of president of sports entities, we have observed that small club is many years in office. Perhaps, this information condition the presence of women in the board of directors.

Other thing is how to manage, the internal organization, have people. However, nothing can be done or it always falls to one or two people. When internally they are organized, they are worried to work well, professionalize as much as possible: the technicians, the management, etc.

Sports entities are not over money and therefore, having volunteers to do things is very important. It lowers the economic cost and allows sociability of the entity.

Covered the needs that the organizations consider basic, of subsistence, after other subjects are raised and the low rank of position.

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Sport is the living image of our society: Maslow pyramid effect. The woman in management positions in the private company. At the base, 60% of university graduates are women. When we move to the top of the strategic managers positions, only 11% are occupied by women. The presence in board committee is reduced to 6%, and only 1 each 12 executives is a woman.

Sport is the raw reality of life itself. It's no exception. In the street, in the company, in the culture the balance between woman and man still does not exist.

World Conference on Women and Sports in Montreal goes on to say that even if he wants it, women suffer a tradition that does not allow them to occupy those places that she has not occupied before.

Can women in executive positions act as role models in their communities to encourage other women to do sports?

This new look takes normality. It makes normal and viable to understand that women occupy spaces for when it is also well-repared.

According ALDA. The hugely successful This Girl Can Campaign by Sport England identified that accessible role models were key. Nonetheless, historical and sociocultural associations between sport and masculinity still determine the predominance of male 'sporting role models' (SRMs) in many parts of the world.

Women in executive positions can have a great impact to address this situation. Their personal engagement can be inspiring for those women that are unconsciously reticent to practice sport in a male-dominated environment. Being aware of the power of persuasion deriving from being a woman in executive positions in the sport sector is crucial to release the potentialities of the position, that goes beyond the sport sector but empowers and give visibility to women skills in every sector.

Equally important, women in executive positions can redirect the priorities and resources of the sport institutions in the gender issues. For example, they can invite women to free trials for usually dominated male sports, they can make sure that equipment has the same quality for male and female dominated sports, they can organize championship, awards and events that attract attention and resources on female sport practitioners. They can promote instructions and signals that are gender neutral. For example, the instructions and exercises for sport machines should be on the base of physical characteristics such as weight, height and resistance rather than on gender. Baby changing tables and the relative signals should be both on women and men toilets.

Finally, they can share their experience and information with girls that are talented and willing to pursue job positions in the sport sector. For this reason, formal and informal mentor opportunities can be organized in order to "help them transition when taking on bigger responsibilities such as managing a team or as a way of providing guidance on how to work through problems or deal with difficult situations".

Sergio Gonçalves and Paula Nogueira from Guimaraes. They can, if they are good models and good examples. At times, it tends to consider an "active woman" the woman who exercises directing functions, who has some decision making power, executive or even political. But if this is an exemplary and inspiring

model, it is important that this “active woman” is also a model of inspiration for sedentary women. If you are a woman who practices regular physical activity or some sport then you will perfectly combine this ability to encourage your peers. Reality shows us that this is not as linear as it would be desirable.

From IRS to Bologna. Sport represents a sector through which women and men can improve negotiation skills and leadership, that are vital particularly for women’s empowerment. Resources thus deal with barriers preventing gender equality in in sport organisations. Stressing the importance of having the presence of women on , of having influential board roles by women and commitment to equality in governance as equal participation by both men and women. You can find useful information and data on available datasets on the participation of women on sports governing bodies at European and some Member State levels: Analysing gender dynamics in sport governance: A new regimes-based approach.

Women in executive position act as a strong role-model in their communities, showing a positive female image. At same time the media can plays an influential role in creating images of both women and men. Sports coverage in the media is in many ways dominated by the coverage of men’s rather than women’s participation, which can be mirrored in the traditional public perception that men are active, athletic and cover relevant positions, and women, by exclusion, not. To name just one example for the importance of this matter, studies have shown that girls frequently drop out of organised sports as teenagers and this has, at least to some extent, been explained by the absence of women as role models in the sports media and sport field in general. If this is the case, the girls are missing out on a wide variety of positive benefits associated with sports participation, such as higher self esteem, more positive body image, higher grades and lower levels of anxiety and depression.

What is their role in bringing more awareness for women-friendly urban planning?

According to ALDA women in executive positions can encourage the practice of outdoor activities, that allow women to take ownership of parks and public spaces. Walks where women are encouraged to identify the gender barriers to their use of the public spaces are key to accompany the process of ownership. Once the women feel entitled to use the public space and are aware of the barriers to optimally use it, the quest for more women-friendly public spaces will raise automatically by the women themselves. Inviting male’s members of participants’ families and network is also useful in order for men to become aware of the male-dominated environment and support the quest for women-friendly planning. As the “Beyond 30%” report states, “it is about creating environments that are diverse. Full stop. That will naturally draw women in.”

Sergio Gonçalves and Paula Nogueira from Guimaraes

If the woman has executive functions or has decision-making power, she can approach urban planning issues from another perspective, taking into account the concerns and needs that are posed by women in her community. This being a concern intrinsic to the role of those who govern or direct, it is not acceptable that it be thought only by the lens of the gender issue. Gender equity must always prevail in the approach, but those that are identified by women (barriers) must be overcome, and the good decision of an executive woman can help.

Other opinions were that possibility to create participation budget with initiatives about for spending money new park or equipment



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The increase of women in the clubs could also increase the figure of women in technical teams such as trainers and physical trainers? Do you think there is resistance in clubs to achieve a technical parity?

As the female dominated board in the female-dominated volleyball sport in Guimaraes shows, increasing the women in the clubs increase the possibilities of having women in the technical or managerial positions. Nonetheless, in an environment that has been dominated by patriarchal paradigm for centuries, an increase in the number of women practicing a sport is not enough alone to increase the number of women in power. The long-established pattern of choosing technical positions among men, the stereotypes on women's skills and the lack of self-esteem that characterizes many women in male-dominated environment are just few of the many factors that hinders gender technical parity.

It seems obvious, although reality shows that when a woman is promoted to a managerial position (in a club, association or sporting institution) this does not have repercussions on a more feminine directive cast. There will be a greater approximation and facilitation of access to the leadership and technical positions of other women, as a result of the network.

In Guimarães the overwhelming majority of managerial positions in clubs and sports associations are played by men, but there are some women in managerial roles, that is, as members of the teams. The same applies to technical teams. It is above all in the areas of nursing and physiotherapy (even in football) that more and more women are operating. Another function that is very often attributed to female leaders is the training classes, interaction with parents, logistics management, communication and events. It is also in the field of accounting that more and more women are emerging. This dynamic, accompanied by the emergence of highly feminine modalities (futsal, gymnastics, kickboxing) is a clear sign that the resistance (that exists) will sooner or later fall and the opening will necessarily be towards equity.

In what way from the public administration, federations or private entities can contribute to increase the percentage of women in the boards? (Do you know any specific action? ...)

According to ALDA, Federations have a crucial role to play in increasing the percentage of women in the boards. In fact they have major control many of the factors identified in the "Beyond 30%" report as the checklist for change:

1. Develop an effective recruitment and retention strategy which focuses on attracting diverse talent and nurtures it;
2. Promote a wide range of flexible working practices with the primary goal of attracting and retaining more women in the organisation, but which will benefit everyone;
3. Involve both women and men in achieving the shared goal of gender equality;
4. Challenge gender stereotypes;
5. Modernise organisational structures and practices to enable more women to rise up through the organisation. This includes reconsidering rigid elections by membership bodies.

Public administrations also have an important role to play. They can ensure that gender issue is in the agenda of all the territorial actors, first among all sport, loisir and vocational organizations. How? By giving support and incentives to organizations that adopt gender-friendly measures and activities, by organizing transversal



campaign and activities on gender issue, by inviting schools and all the entities working on career advice to include sport career in the range of careers opportunities presented to girls.

In Portugal there is a quota law that requires the participation of women in lists of candidates for local and national power. This philosophy is not applied to institutions or civil entities, such as clubs or cultural associations. Thus, the number of women in the clubs' directions is, indeed, very residual. The management of family, professional and free time is a difficulty for women struggling with lack of time and mastery of prejudices related to social roles. In doubt, the woman does not commit herself to the community because she first puts the family. However, women who, even in the face of difficulties, advance to managerial positions or roles in clubs tend to be recognized by their peers as extremely dynamic, responsible, committed and valuable people in the overall context of the organization. Since the idea of implementing the quota law is not peaceful, extending it to other aspects of public life, it would seem more positive a change in attitudes and behavior, in which gender equity was assumed as natural (in society and between couples) so that these issues were not even a theme. In Guimarães there are clubs with a strong female participation in its governing bodies. This is the case of GTEAM (women's futsal) and the Skating Academy (which is chaired by a woman and who is simultaneously chairman and coach).

Regarding the situation in and especially in Romania, the legislation in the last period of time supports the equality and the access of women in executive positions at local level. Moreover, in Ramnicu Sarat in the last 3 years, once with an increased awareness regarding the benefits of the mass sports, many women starting with the age of 13-14 years started to practice a sport. For that, cycling, running are very popular among youngsters, even if the city doesn't support with a specific infrastructure their needs. On the other hand, regarding women, for the moment indoor and outdoor activities as Pilates, Zumba, Kangoo Jumps, Aerobics, have become very popular, together with working with specialized trainers in order, on the one hand to practice in a correct way a sport and on the other hand to follow a healthy lifestyle. Regarding the specificity of the sport entities, in Ramnicu Sarat we have 2 such as structures: Local Sport Club, which involves aprox. 100 girls in sports as: handball, volleyball, table tennis, athletics, karate. The most important structure is still Onix Athletic Club, the only women club playing in the second romanian league, with important chances to promote in the first league, one which already generates motivation and desire among girls and women from the city. The already became models for the feminine part of the community. In the same time, men are following their activity and in the same time promoting their work and results. Still, regarding the coordination, even if we don't have any barriers of restriction, there are not women working in coordination. On the other hand, in Ramnicu Sarat exists 5 gyms where, each of the have specialized women trainers. They are working with women, being recognized at local level as models, exemples of motivation.

According Paula, it's important concerning leading positions because there are the leaders and they decide.

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