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**Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States
meeting within the Council on women and equality in the field of sport**

(C/2023/1362)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

RECALLING THAT:

1. As stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, the values on which the Union is founded 'are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail', and as stated in Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), an aim of the European Union in all its activities is 'to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women', and, as stated in Article 19 of the TFEU, to 'take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation'.

2. Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union stipulates that 'any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited'. Furthermore, Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union stipulates that 'equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas'.

3. The Council conclusions on gender equality in sport ⁽¹⁾ invite the Member States, in close cooperation with the sports movement, to develop general agreements or strategies on gender equality in sport ⁽²⁾.

4. The Council resolution on the key features of a European Sport Model recognises that the organisation of sport in Europe is based on values, among others, gender equality ⁽³⁾.

5. The Council of Europe's Revised European Sports Charter ⁽⁴⁾ involves stakeholders in the defence of human rights, and promotes gender equality 'in and through sport, in particular by implementing the strategy of gender mainstreaming in sport'.

6. The recommendation by the Committee of Ministers' of the Council of Europe to the Member States on gender mainstreaming in sport (CM/Rec (2015)2) endorses the promotion of policies aimed at ensuring gender mainstreaming in all fields and at all levels of sport.

7. The Council resolution on the European Union Work Plan for Sport ⁽⁵⁾ identifies gender equality as a key topic within the priority area of protecting integrity and values in sport.

8. In 2020, the European Commission adopted its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 striving for a Union of Equality.

⁽¹⁾ Council conclusions of 21 May 2014 on gender equality in sport, OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 39.

⁽²⁾ In these conclusions, 'sport' is considered in its broadest sense, including physical activity.

⁽³⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the key features of a European Sport Model, OJ C 501, 13.12.2021, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)5 on the Revised European Sports Charter, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 2021 at the 1414th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

⁽⁵⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 January 2021-30 June 2024), OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, p. 1.

9. The Council conclusions ⁽⁶⁾ on the role of sport as a source of, and a driver for, active social inclusion recognise gender equality as one of the common priorities in need of stronger support across the European Union, including in sport, and encourage gender equality in sport, especially in relation to access to sport and representation in decision-making bodies and including active measures to combat gender stereotyping.

10. The Council conclusions on promoting the common values of the EU through sport ⁽⁷⁾ recognise that, since sport is a universal language understood by all, it can contribute to preventing intolerance and social exclusion, including gender stereotyping and misogyny, racism, xenophobia and marginalisation.

11. The Council conclusions on sport innovation ⁽⁸⁾ recognise that innovative technological and digital methods of communication and broadcasting, as well as non-formal and informal learning, can help sports organisations to raise awareness of and prevent, among others, gender stereotyping, misogyny, homophobia, harassment, abuse and violence, including sexual violence and any form of discrimination.

12. The 2022 High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport ⁽⁹⁾ has put forward an action plan and recommendations to the European Commission, Member States, national and international sports bodies and grassroots organisations to improve gender balance in sport, highlighting six key thematic areas of engagement (participation; coaching and officiating; leadership; social and economic aspects of sport; media coverage; and gender-based violence).

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:

13. Despite the progress made so far and taking into account the different situations in the Member States, women's participation in sport and physical activity is still lower than men's ⁽¹⁰⁾ due to practical, personal, sociocultural and structural barriers, thereby negatively influencing their level of presence in coaching, officiating and leadership positions.

14. Women still face obstacles in the sports labour market in terms of, for example, equal access, equal pay for equal work, representation in decision-making positions, gender stereotypes and equal appreciation and recognition of their work.

15. There are notable differences between sports and between Member States, and women's lack of equal access and involvement, participation in leadership and decision-making positions, and visibility in the field of sport tend to perpetuate discrimination and inequalities ⁽¹¹⁾.

16. Abuse, sexual harassment and violence against women and girls, including in the digital space, as well as gender stereotyping and sexism, remain major concerns in the sports sector.

17. Gender-based discrimination can lead to the exclusion, in particular of women and any persons in vulnerable and marginalised positions, from participating in sports.

18. Media coverage of sport tends to focus on men in sport with women in sport generally receiving less media or online coverage than men. Treatment of women in sport is often based on gender stereotypes or is sexualised and sexist.

⁽⁶⁾ Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion, OJ C 326, 3.12.2010, p. 5.

⁽⁷⁾ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport, OJ C 196, 8.6.2018, p. 23.

⁽⁸⁾ Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Sport Innovation, OJ C 212, 4.6.2021, p. 2–9.

⁽⁹⁾ European Commission, Towards more gender equality in sport, Recommendations and action plan from the High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport, 2022.

⁽¹⁰⁾ According to the 5th Eurobarometer on sport and physical activity published in September 2022.

⁽¹¹⁾ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) data show that only around one in five members of the highest decision-making body of sporting organisations are women.

19. Sport's potential to advance equality through self-empowerment, awareness-raising and the combating of prevailing gender stereotypes through active participation is important.

NOTING THAT:

20. The European sense of belonging and the future prosperity of Europe depend on societies that actively prevent and combat gender-based discrimination.

21. Sport plays an important role in the lives of the EU population and sporting activities make an important social, educational, economic, cultural, and unifying contribution to society in the European Union, as well as to its strategic objectives and social values.

22. While the benefits of access to and participation in sport for individuals are well established, such as those pertaining to personal development, a sense of identity and belonging, self-efficiency, self-confidence and physical and mental well-being, for their full attainment it is imperative that participants have access to a safe, inclusive and equal playing field, free from any form of inequality, discrimination or violence.

23. Increased visibility and improved media coverage of women's sports competitions could influence the public's perception of the value of women's sport and its importance in society.

24. Public investment in sport should be fairly distributed between women and men, thereby contributing to correcting existing inequalities and supporting the development of more equal sport.

UNDERLINING THAT:

25. The scope of these Council conclusions covers all sports policy measures.

26. Gender equality is a sports policy objective at EU level, as endorsed in the Work Plan for Sport (2021-2024).

27. Measures supporting and promoting gender equality reinforce compliance with the international commitments referred to in the Annex to these conclusions.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES, WITHIN THEIR AREAS OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE ROLE AND AUTONOMY OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS, TO:

28. Aim to ensure that everyone has equal access to and can fully participate in sports at all levels and functions without gender-based discrimination.

29. Strengthen and mainstream gender equality in sports policy and promote positive role models through sport policy and other related policies.

30. Encourage the equal participation of women and men in professional sports by improving terms and conditions of employment, promoting equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and promoting measures supporting the work/life balance.

31. Encourage and incentivise the sports sector to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions as well as the number of sports staff and officials.

32. Without prejudice to freedom of expression and information, promote gender equality by inviting the media, and especially the public service media, to improve the visibility and media coverage of women's sports competitions, and by considering making use of the prerogative conferred by Article 14 of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive on events of major importance for society ⁽¹²⁾.

⁽¹²⁾ Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive), OJ L 95, 15.4.2010, p. 1.

33. Encourage and actively support the sports sector to prevent and combat harassment, sexist hate speech, sexual abuse and violence against women and girls, in particular persons in vulnerable and marginalised positions, and minors at all levels.

34. Improve the protection of witnesses, whistle-blowers and victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

35. Consider promoting research into and studies on, statistics on and analysis of gender equality in the field of sport, as well as the compilation of intersectional and disaggregated data on men and women in the field of sport, including the effects of gender stereotypes.

36. Consider making the granting of public funds subject to compliance with the fundamental rights and principles of good governance, including gender equality.

37. Take into account the aspect of gender equality and the specific needs of women and girls in the process of the construction and renovation of sports infrastructure.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, IN LINE WITH THE SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE, AND WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, TO:

38. Promote the regular exchange of good practices on measures to promote gender equality in the field of sport, e.g., through participation in the EU-CoE's joint 'All In Plus' project.

39. Foster the exchange of good practices and guidelines on how sports institutions could develop organisational structures and measures to prevent all forms of abuse, with a special focus on gender-based violence.

40. Encourage the exchange of information on all initiatives and practices that can contribute to increasing the participation of women in the sports sector in general and to combating gender-based discrimination and gender stereotypes.

41. Promote active cooperation between the relevant social partners within the framework of the social dialogue and with the sport movement within the framework of the structured dialogue, based on a multi-level, multi-actor and multi-disciplinary human rights-based and gender-responsive approach.

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

42. Consider including the sports sector in prospective gender equality strategies, while respecting the national competences of the Member States.

43. Regularly report to the Council on actions taken in relation to the promotion of gender equality that are relevant to the sport sector.

44. Continue supporting transnational initiatives on gender equality in the field of sport, such as awareness-raising, educational campaigns, the exchange of good practices, studies, networks and projects, such as the 'All In Plus' joint EU-CoE project ⁽¹³⁾.

45. Foster research into the role of the sports sector and industry in shaping the values, attitudes, needs and interests of women and men, analysing aspects such as equal access, visibility, and participation in the field of sport.

46. Take into account the gender equality dimension in the assessment of the conditions required to qualify sports events as being of major importance for society under Article 14 of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

⁽¹³⁾ Council of Europe, All In Plus: Promoting greater gender equality in sport, March 2023.

INVITE THE SPORTS MOVEMENT AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS TO:

47. Make gender equality a cornerstone of good governance of sports organisations, e.g., by promoting an equal and transparent funding system, equal funding opportunities and equal pay. In addition to promoting diversity at all levels, all relevant aspects should be analysed with a special focus on intersectionality and structural and institutional discrimination.
 48. Promote initiatives which encourage development, dissemination and capacity-building on tools to mainstream gender equality as a pillar of good governance in sport, such as gender budgeting, gender impact assessments, gender equality training and gender-responsive evaluation.
 49. Mainstream gender equality in all sports strategies, policies and actions, for example, by putting in place an internal strategy with a coordinator for gender equality and gender budgeting, as well as fostering gender equality in all procedures and in the training of employees and volunteers.
 50. Take the necessary steps to increase the proportion of women in leadership, coaching and officiating positions in sports organisations, institutions and clubs, especially by motivating and supporting women to take up such positions.
 51. Set gender-equal participation targets in the training of sports staff and officials, for instance by supporting a mentoring programme for young girls and women interested in coaching and refereeing.
 52. Develop and make available educational and prevention programmes on gender equality as well as on combating harassment, hate speech, all forms of abuse and gender-based violence, create communication mechanisms to listen to victims of gender violence, and provide better protection for victims, whistle-blowers and witnesses.
 53. Seek to engage women and girls from different socio-economic backgrounds to participate in sports.
 54. Collect, disseminate and highlight good practices on gender equality in sport, while promoting and facilitating exchanges of experiences.
 55. Ensure gender-balanced coverage in internal and external communications, including those on social networks and ensure non-discriminatory reporting and commentary and on coverage of sports activities.
 56. Ensure that women and girls participating in sports have access to the appropriate equipment and attire to ensure their safe participation.
 57. Ensure equal accessibility to sports infrastructure based on the needs and requirements of all individuals and create adequate and safe facilities for women and girls.
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ANNEX

RELEVANT POLICY DOCUMENTS:

- Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, OJ C 306, 17.12.2007, p. 1.
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, (2012/C 326/02).
- Council conclusions on sustainable and accessible sports infrastructure, OJ C 494, 28.12.2022, p. 1.
- Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the key features of a European Sport Model, OJ C 501, 13.12.2021, p. 1.
- Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 January 2021-30 June 2024), OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, p. 1.
- Council conclusions on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward (14938/19).
- Council conclusions on closing the gender pay gap: key policies and measures (10349/19).
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport, OJ C 196, 8.6.2018, p. 23.
- Council conclusions of 21 May 2014 on gender equality in sport, OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 39.
- Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion, OJ C 326, 3.12.2010, p. 5.
- European Commission, Towards more gender equality in sport: Recommendations and action plan from the High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport (2022).
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A Union of equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM/2020/152 final.
- Recommendation of the CoE Committee of Ministers on preventing and combating sexism (2019).
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)5 on the Revised European Sports Charter adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 2021 at the 1414th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)2 on gender mainstreaming in sport – adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 21 January 2015 at the 1217th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
- Resolution of the European Parliament on EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward, OJ C 224, 8.6.2022, p.2.
- Report of the European Institute for Gender Equality on gender equality in power and decision-making, 2015.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Moving forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, BSP-2017/WS/1, 2017.
- UNESCO, Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VI), Kazan Action Plan, 15 July 2017.
- UNESCO, MINEPS V, Declaration of Berlin, 30 May 2013.
- International Olympic Committee (IOC), Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives 2021-2024, Gender Equality & Inclusion Report 2021.
- IOC, Olympic Agenda 2020 +5: 15 Recommendations.