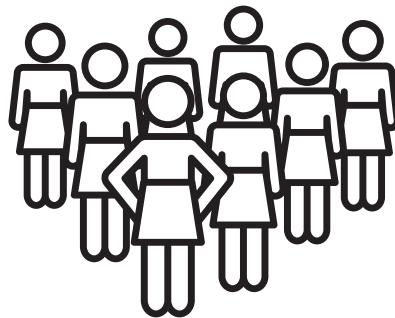




#StandUp4Equality

Sport and LGBTQI+

EQUALITY IN SPORT



LBTQI+ women in sport

Author: ENGSO Equality Within Sport
Committee, led by Anne Schomöller

November 2022



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The underrepresentation of women and their position in sport is deeply rooted in the history and institutional structures of sport: There was on the one hand the “protection of femininity” in sport and on the other hand the fact that sport was used as a space to control women’s bodies, physically and socially (1).

Kiza Magendame, keynote speaker during the European Sport Platform 2022, talked about inclusion and said that “not everyone is welcome at the tables where decisions are made.” This seems to apply for women in sport, too. LBTQI+ women represent a minority within a minority, which leads to double discrimination – both as women and as defining oneself in the LBTI spectrum. Therefore, there is the need for specific actions to break the habits, opinions, and vicious cycles and to educate, thereby highlighting where discrimination lies and to legislate to put an end to it. Recommendations, deriving from the co-written report produced by ILGA-Europe, ELC, EGLSF and partners, deliver such specific actions. They include the support of awareness-raising campaigns regarding violence and discrimination against LBTQI+ women, the provision of funding opportunities and the creation of laws that explicitly ensure that competitive sport aligns with national protection and anti-discrimination actions. Further, good practice examples from Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, and Scotland provide ideas and roadmaps for the path to promote sporting activities for LBTQI+ women, with the focus on enlarging the definition of women in sport to cover women in all their diversity(1).

Sport Scotland analysed barriers to participation for girls and women in sport and categorised these as practical, personal, and socio-cultural barriers (2). Notably, practical barriers (e.g. lack of childcare, money, access, safety) and socio-cultural barriers (e.g. male-dominated culture of sport, attitudes and prejudices about sexuality, sexual harassment and abuse, female invisibility). These underline that there is the need for action and support from a higher level, including the implementation of recommendations such as the ones stated above. Barriers for participating in competition concerns, specifically, transgender women. A scientific review about transgender women athletes and elite sport (3) distinguishes between the biomedical and sociocultural perspective of transgender women in competition and concludes that there is no clear evidence of the superiority of trans women over cis women and that the balance between fairness and inclusion should be considered when talking action (3).

Literature

(1): ILGA-Europe, a EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (EL*C), TGEU, Organisation Intersex International Europe (OII Europe), and European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF) (2021): LBTI WOMEN IN SPORT. VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION & LIVED EXPERIENCES

(2): Sport Scotland (2008): BARRIERS TO WOMEN AND GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

(3): E.Alliance (2022): TRANSGENDER WOMEN ATHLETES AND ELITE SPORT: A SCIENTIFIC REVIEW



The following data derives from two online questionnaire surveys (one for coaches, one for athletes) and from structured interviews (with athletes) that ENGSO's EWS committee conducted in July - August 2022. The questionnaire was distributed in 13 languages (Albania, English, French, Finnish, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish). 186 athletes and 42 coaches filled out the online questionnaire, respectively, and 6 interviews were conducted with athletes during the EuroGames 2022 as well as online. Sample characteristics are displayed in the appendices of this factsheet.

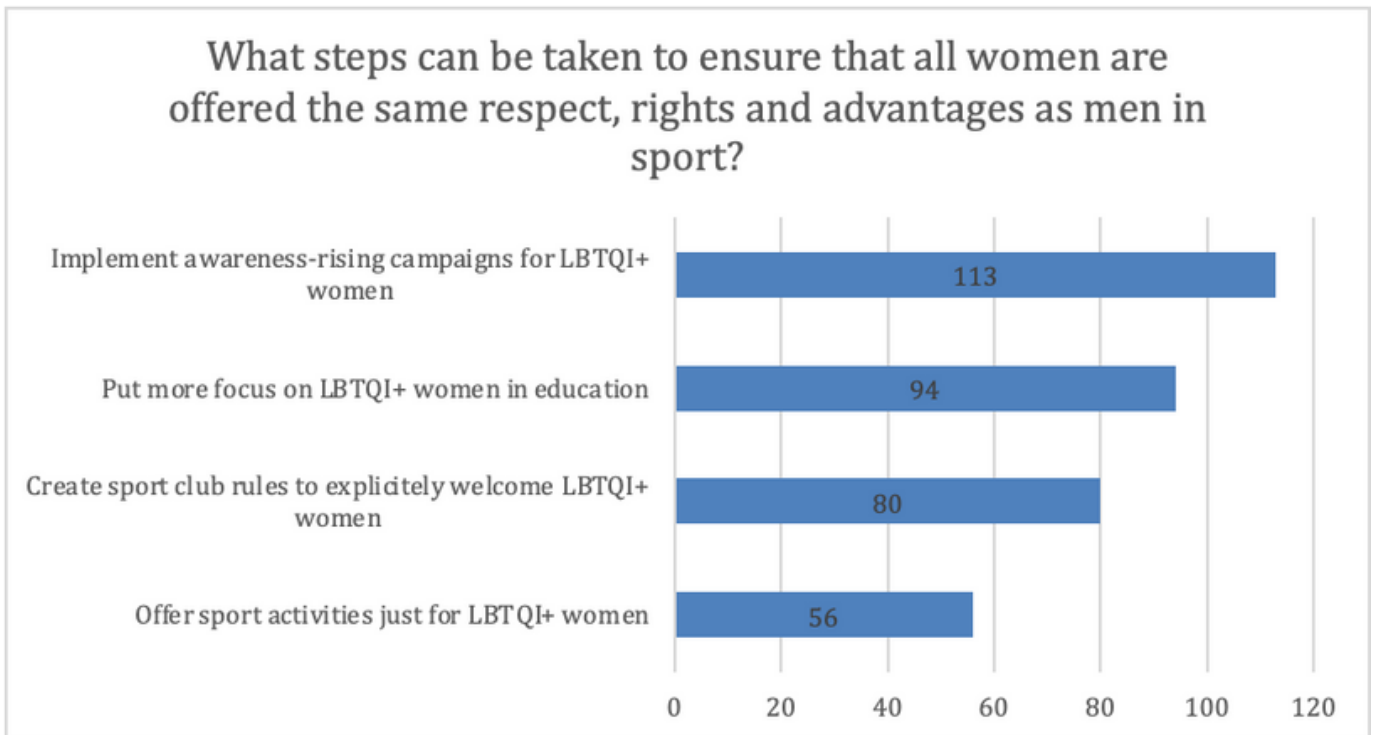


Figure 1. Answers of Athlete Questionnaire. Numbers are displayed in absolute numbers. Multiple answering was possible, and it was optional to answer in a free text field.



Table 1. Athlete answers from the optional free text field

What steps can be taken to ensure that all women are offered the same respect, rights, and advantages as men in sport?
Efficient implementation of a clear Code of conduct
I'm not sure but information and empathy always helps. And perhaps we should focus on all people and all diversity not just sexual orientation (although that should be included)
Make womens' sports and LGBTQI+ women more visible in media and all coverage
I honestly don't know. Although it seems to me that this problem stems from gender inequalities in society at large and are not particular to sport. So, I am not sure sport specific interventions get at the root of the problem
Put LGBTQI+ women in the board of a club
I believe that women's and men's sports differ only for physical reasons inherent to gender
This has to do with a structural problem in society and not specifically with women only in sport
Invest in and publicise women's sport more: the more women do sport; the stronger it will become; the more reach it will have; and consequently the more respect it will command
Respect for men, women and everything between must be lived by the coaches and responsible persons
Strict rules on equal treatment
Mixed locker rooms and mixed teams at all levels from toddlers upwards
Creating competition spaces where biological sex is not one of the parameters for defining competitions
I'm all for gender inclusion and sharing, so I'm not so much for having only women among themselves, although I think they might feel more protected among themselves without men. Education for all
Putting emphasis on adverts that all people are equal no matter of their sexuality
Please no special offers but sport for all. Otherwise, there will be social segregation. See "women's" football "women's" boxing the "women" is unnecessary
Open communication about the topic
Debates on how to deal with such situations in a neutral manner
Raising awareness also about queer athletes
Use well known/respect women to give their voice as a campaign
Critical reflection on masculinity and "male/patriarchal" values in sport
Work in schools with teenage girls to encourage them not to give up sport!
In the media, women's sports should be reported on the same level as men's sports, including photos. And here too: effective actions against hate against women on the internet
More offers



Table 2 Coach answers from the free text field

In your opinion, what steps can be taken to ensure that all women are offered the same respect, rights and advantages as men in sport?
Awareness raising - and sensitisation work (create awareness that we have grown up with gender bias); measures for more visibility of women (impact on sponsorship, pay, role model effect, etc.)
It will not change if it is not addressed
Information discussion and a mindset that does not pit one group against another
Cannot after fifty years as a coach sign the above statement
The media has an important role to play in promoting equality in women's sport. In addition, supporters/sponsors should be more evenly distributed, so that money would move more easily in women's sport, which in turn would increase media visibility, interest, etc..
Strategy/mission/vision training for clubs and organisations would make it even clearer that sport and coaching belong to everyone! Also, the zero tolerance of harassment + anonymous reporting service would be a great addition
Intervene everytime when something happens
Equal pay; Equal athletic discipline selection/offers, consistent intervention when disadvantage is identified for women and LGBTQI+; more education, more visibility on TV with appropriate TV formats
Education, appreciative communication
Extreme penalties for the "perpetrators" and if not acted also for the coaches /responsible persons. This always comes up short and is talked down or dismissed with settlements / payments. See Canadian Hockey League and USA Gymnastics Team. Absolutely abnormal
Sensitisation of all groups
Equal pay, exemplified in top-class sport and by officials and top-class athletes
Women need to be more vocal and voice their opinions without being labelled emotional or hysterical
Promotion of women in the professions of coaches, officials, sports directors, etc.! Mixed teams at management levels act in a more neutral and balanced way, opportunities for contact become more diverse. Leadership positions in sports are strongly male dominated
Thematisation & Information, Creating role models, Openness
Training/education, building a tolerant culture, sanctioning violations thereof
There is probably no patent remedy
Education
Teach all about how hurtful harassment is - to know is to act in the right way
It is 2022 - respect, same rights, trust
Education and more equal rights in society
Education



Visible role models, Ending sexist comments (You play like a girl), Equal opportunities to coaching, sessions, facilities, Respect females as athletes and professionals in sport
Educate children from an early age in an egalitarian manner
Active gender work by federations and associations
A lot needs to be done, gender equality in the board, etc. Zero tolerance for all violations, men/boys need to learn what is ok
None. Don't see that women would be worse off
A bit far-fetched here, but there is a lot of talk about female teams performing better at championships than the corresponding male teams and yet the women earn much less because the stands are full at the male teams' competitions but not at the female teams' competition. Perhaps a good start would be to look at what the female sports audience wanted and try to resolve it so that female matches had a large female audience
Everyone is treated equally
Show women's sport more in the media. Empower women leaders. When a woman leader has been exposed, there is clear support in the associations
Use inclusive language. Identify gender differences in the association/team. Develop an action plan. Create discussion about it at all levels of the association, etc.
Equity in all aspects: leadership, coaching, world and (para-) Olympic programmes (which leads to more equality in budgets), more applied research (leading to more applicable knowledge) and education
For players, my sport is fairly inclusive for coaching and administrative roles it is not. As a combat sport we must continue to promote women's involvement and offer equal opportunities for roles
Equal representation. Luckily at our university we actually have more women than men and our women teams are more successful. Also, I found it really crap that the men handball final was marketed as "the ultimate game of the tournament" and given the last slot. That should in my opinion been the women slot. We can't keep talking about putting women ahead, but constantly having action that defies that and keeps putting men on the pedestal. Next time it needs to be women. We have this policy. We put women over men in the highest slots. They have had 1000+ years on top, they can and should take it.
Visibility in the common TV sport channels and advertising for their events, just like the women's football Euro 2022



We also asked the athletes in the interviews about sport participation for LGBTQI+.
Below are some exemplary statements (direct quotations).

Questions: Did you experience a difference in the treatment of LGBTQI+ women and LGBTQI+ men in sport?

"No. But also, I mostly play with girls."

"Maybe, but not that much. Right now, I cannot remember anything. In our club, this is not a problem. There is no difference, this is a safe space. But I do not know for other sports in our club. We want to create a good environment for everyone, also for non-LGBTQI+ people."

"I have never been in a mainstream club, where you experience passive discrimination, such as "you are playing like a gay guy". It is a general problem in society. But sport is part of that. Sport is often a place where mainstream people can go and forget about everything, but for LGBTQI, the stress and tension can start again in sport in the sports arena. Because people are not accepting still."

"Football and rugby automatically means you are a lesbian, just in gender anyway, but in LGBTQI as well. Proportionally, there are a lot of lesbian rugby and football players, compared to ballet. It is more the right way to express yourself."

"It is basic education. Letting all come and do something. It was written in old contracts, that in women professional football, they had to have long hair and wear makeup."

"Yes and the media image has a lot to do with how we see sports. We have to express that all can partake in sports. Newer sports are sometimes non-gender stereotype, in older sports there are stereotypes. Take images away from peoples heads, such as: Boys playing football, girls sitting on the side. There is this primary learning where we impose gender norms of the kids that goes on."



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