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Women and sport

European Parliament resolution on women and sport (2002/2280(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 3 and 141 of the Treaty establishing the European Community,
- having regard to Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the declaration on sport annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam,
- having regard to the declaration by the European Council in Nice of 7, 8 and 9 December 2000 on the specific characteristics of sport and its social function in Europe, of which account should be taken in implementing common policies,
- having regard to the statement by the European Council meeting in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000, aimed at making it easier to reconcile working and family life, in particular by improving child-care provision,
- having regard to United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 18 December 1979,
- having regard to the declaration and platform for action adopted by the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995 and the ‘Beijing+5’ resolution seeking to implement the declaration and platform for action, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 June 2000,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 October 1987 on women in sport¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 July 1996 on the non-participation by women from certain countries at the Olympic Games²,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 June 1997 on the role of the European Union in the field of sport³,
- having regard to the resolution of 17 December 1999 of the Council of Ministers for Youth on the non-formal education dimension of sporting activities in the European Community youth programmes⁴,

¹ OJ C 305, 16.11.1987, p. 62.

² OJ C 211, 22.7.1996, p. 36.

³ OJ C 200, 30.6.1997, p. 252.

⁴ OJ C 8, 12.1.2000, p. 5.

- having regard to its resolution of 7 September 2000 on the report from the Commission to the European Council ‘With a view to safeguarding current sports structures and maintaining the social function of sport within the Community framework – The Helsinki Report on Sport’¹,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Conference of Ministers for Sport held under the Belgian Presidency on 12 November 2001,
- having regard to the European Sports Charter and Code of Sports Ethics of the Council of Europe, as revised in 2001,
- having regard to the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 20th session on 21 November 1978 in Paris,
- having regard to the declaration adopted by the Third International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport held in Punta del Este (Uruguay) from 30 November to 3 December 1999 (MINEPS III) under the auspices of UNESCO,
- having regard to Article 2(5) of the Olympic Charter as amended in 1994,
- having regard to the IOC World Conferences on Women and Sport held in Lausanne in 1996 and Paris in 2000,
- having regard to the Brighton Declaration adopted at the First International Conference on ‘Women, Sport and the Challenge of Change’ from 5 to 8 May 1994,
- having regard to the call for action ‘Reaching out for Change’ adopted at the Second International Conference on Women and Sport held in Windhoek on 22 May 1998,
- having regard to the conferences held by the European Women and Sport network in Stockholm, Athens, Helsinki and Berlin respectively from 1996 to 2002,
- having regard to the Council of Europe resolution of March 2002 on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of women, young people and children in sport,
- having regard to the Charter of Olympus of 23 September 2001 and the Cultural Olympiad 2001-2004 launched by the Greek Ministry of Culture to mark the Olympic Games in Athens and aimed at renewing the basic Olympic ideals uniting sport and culture,
- having regard to European Parliament and Council Directive 2002/73/EC amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions²,

¹ OJ C 135, 7.5.2001, p. 274.

² OJ L 269, 5.10.2002, p. 15.

- having regard to Decision No 291/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Year of Education through Sport 2004¹,
 - having regard to the Declaration of Thessaloniki and the conclusions of the Conference on ‘Women and Sports: Old and New Stereotypes’ held by the Greek Presidency of the European Union on 7 and 8 March 2003,
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0167/2003),
- A. having regard to the declaration by the European Council in Nice of December 2000 stipulating that the Community must take account of the specific characteristics and the social, educational and cultural functions of sport, and whereas sport has had a democratic role since antiquity,
 - B. whereas sport is one of the main cultural activities among Europeans; whereas in the European Union 29.5% of men, as opposed to 16% of women, and 63% of young men aged 15 to 24, as compared to 37% of young women of that age, say that they regularly take part in physical or sporting activity,
 - C. whereas access to the practice of sport is a right and whereas sport is a means of self-expression and fulfilment, as well as a force for citizenship and solidarity; whereas the regular practice of sport improves physical and mental health,
 - D. having regard to the strong disparities in access to sports activities between women and men and also between women themselves, based on social background and conditions of employment which may act as an obstacle to leisure and sports opportunities,
 - E. whereas physical activity and sport represent an ideal form of rehabilitation and, equally, a means of social integration for the physically or mentally disabled, and whereas, in particular, steps must be taken to ensure that disabled persons of both sexes can exercise to the full their right to participate in all forms of sport at their level and in keeping with their own needs,
 - F. whereas it is important to make available sporting activities which correspond to women’s needs at every stage of their lives, in particular for pregnant women and young mothers, along with the provision of advice concerning sports suited to their condition; and whereas similar advice should be given to the elderly (women and men), suggesting sporting activities which are beneficial to their mental and physical health,
 - G. whereas physical education in schools, which are a force for democratising sport, but also a forum for social reproduction, has a crucial influence on whether people take part in sporting activity in later life,

¹ OJ L 43, 18.2.2003, p. 1.

- H. whereas, in this connection, the downgrading of physical education and of the importance of coeducation in sport in the school curriculum of the countries of the enlarged Europe is a cause for concern,
- I. whereas sport provides a release for girls and women of all ages, a means of achieving success and emancipation, as well as in some cases a way of challenging social and cultural constraints; whereas, however, participation by migrant women and girls in sports is below average,
- J. whereas, although the legal prohibitions on women's access to sports have been removed, women still participate to a lesser extent than men in sports, are more prominently represented in some sports than others, and remain under-represented in sports administration and decision-taking,
- K. whereas women are under-represented among sports licence holders and in official competitions and make little use of institutionalised sports venues (clubs and associations), preferring mostly to pursue informal physical activities related to fitness and leisure,
- L. whereas sport is a forum where sexual identities are represented and sports continue to be firmly divided in line with gender-based stereotypes where dominant models of masculinity and femininity are reproduced, but may also be subverted,
- M. whereas, when they take part in sports, girls and boys must face the challenge of forging equality based on an acceptance of physical differences; whereas adolescence, with the onset of puberty, is a time when many girls give up sports activities, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds,
- N. having regard to the importance of highlighting the performances of top-level sportswomen, who should serve as a role model for young girls,
- O. whereas top-level women athletes are workers and, as such, are covered by Community employment law, in particular the abovementioned Directive 2002/73/EC,
- P. whereas top-level sportswomen do not enjoy equal treatment vis-à-vis their male counterparts with regard to income and financial resources (bursaries, subsidies, sponsors), nor as regards vocational reintegration,
- Q. whereas the status of top-level athlete gives sportsmen and sportswomen economic and social rights, while providing them with a professional environment; whereas in some European countries women still suffer from discrimination with regard to this status and the conditions for achieving it,
- R. whereas participation by women athletes in international competitions has increased, although technical and medical staff, as well as referees and officials, are still mostly men (at the Sydney Olympic Games women accounted for 38% of the athletes, 8% of technical staff and 4% of medical staff),

- S. whereas top-level sport poses a threat to the health of athletes, particularly women, who are vulnerable, for instance, to the 'female athlete triad', of eating disorders, irreversible amenorrhea and osteoporosis,
- T. whereas special attention should be paid to measures aimed at preventing and combating harassment and sexual abuse in the world of sport,
- U. having regard to the poor media coverage given to women's sport and the socially discriminating and sexually stereotyped reporting found in the media,
- V. having regard to the Brighton Declaration of 1994, the substantial work performed by the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) and the European Women and Sport network (EWS),
- W. whereas the implementation of an integrated approach to gender equality in Community policies and actions in the field of sport is not backed up by sufficient human and financial resources nor by the necessary supervisory and monitoring mechanisms,

Developing a structure for tackling the question of 'women and sport'

1. Declares that women's sport is an expression of the right to equality and the freedom of all women to take control of their bodies and participate in sports publicly, regardless of nationality, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion;
2. Stresses that the goal of equal opportunities is to overcome barriers between so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' sports and that the aim is to encourage all sports to be open to both sexes and enable all girls and boys to engage in the physical activity of their choice;
3. Calls on the Member States and the European Union to guarantee women and men equal access to sporting activities at all levels and at all stages of life, regardless of social background, particularly in the case of the mentally or physically disabled, who should be encouraged to take part in sport and physical activity;
4. Calls on the European Convention to provide a legal basis for sport in the future Treaty of the Union, recognising its cultural, educational and social functions and including a reference to equal access for women and men to participation in sports and related responsibilities;
5. Calls on the Commission to support the promotion of women's sports in Community programmes and actions, while also raising awareness in the sporting world and the Member States and disseminating best practice;
6. Proposes that participation in sport by girls and women be included as an operational objective in the future Community framework strategy on gender equality for 2006-2010;
7. Calls on the Member States, NGOs and other organisations to submit 'women and sport' projects in the context of the forthcoming call for submissions under the Community framework strategy on gender equality for 2001-2005, which will focus on the elimination of sexist stereotypes, particularly in sport;

8. Calls on the Commission to incorporate rules to combat discrimination in sport in the new gender discrimination outside the scope of the Work Directive, based on Article 13 of the Treaty;
9. Calls on the Commission to undertake a wide-ranging study into the position of women in sport, as suggested at the Conference of Sports Ministers held on 12 November 2001, and in the process to submit, inter alia, statistics on the general position of women in sport and information on gender budgeting;
10. Calls on the European Union to provide support for the functioning of the European Women and Sport (EWS) network;
11. Calls on the European Union to examine the health issue, social concerns and educational challenges relating to women's participation in sport, notably in the context of its sixth framework research programme;
12. Hopes that the European Year of Education through Sport will provide an opportunity to examine the importance of sports coeducation in schools and calls on the Commission and the Member States to give clear priority to projects encouraging women to participate in sport;
13. Calls on Eurostat to devise indicators and produce European statistics on male and female participation in sport at all levels;
14. Calls on government authorities to systematically take account of gender equality in their sports policies, particularly in the granting of subsidies;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to include the issue of 'women and sport' in bilateral and cooperation agreements with third countries; calls on Parliament to include the issue of 'women and sport' in interparliamentary discussions and Euro-Mediterranean meetings;
16. Is considering sending a delegation from its Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities to the EWS European Conference on 23-25 April 2004 in Paris and the IGW International Conference on 11-14 May 2006 in Kumamoto;

Developing sport in schools and sport for leisure

17. Calls on the Member States to restore the important role of physical and sporting education in the school curriculum and to use it as an educational performance indicator;
18. Calls on the Member States to carry out a study of the quantitative and qualitative participation of girls and boys in sports within and outside schools and to provide the necessary resources to increase the participation of girls in sports and physical activities;
19. Calls on the Member States and competent authorities to provide physical education teachers with training on the issues of coeducation and gender by including these aspects in their curriculum, and to make parents aware of the blinkered attitudes produced by stereotypes;

20. Stresses the importance of the possibility of sports coeducation for children from nursery and primary school onwards; calls on schools, clubs, associations and regional authorities to develop pilot projects in this area;
21. Calls on the Member States to develop policies for the social integration of young people through sport, including girls among their target group, and to use Objective 3 of the Structural Funds for this purpose;
22. Calls on government and regional authorities to promote and to provide girls and boys with a broad range of school and extracurricular sporting activities;
23. Emphasises that every possible effort must be made to enable women to practise sport and physical activity and to give them better access to sports facilities by providing special courses and timetables, childcare facilities and decent transport services for sports centres;
24. Calls on sports associations to include in their statutes the principle of equal access to sport for women and men, to implement an action plan to promote women in their discipline, to carry out gender mainstreaming training and to earmark a budget heading for women's amateur sport, proposing mixed participation or introducing women's sections;
25. Calls on the Member States and competent authorities to ensure that sports coaches at all levels are properly trained and qualified and to include the gender dimension in their training courses;
26. Calls on government authorities, businesses and the two sides of industry to encourage sport activities at the workplace, in particular through collective agreements, and, more specifically, to develop measures designed to facilitate access to sport for women in precarious employment and women in difficulty, given the complexity of reconciling work, family life and leisure;

Ensuring equal rights in top-level sport

27. Calls on the Member States and the sports movement to abolish the distinction between male and female disciplines in top-level sports recognition procedures;
28. Calls on national federations and their supervisory authorities to give women and men equal access to the status of top-level athlete, ensuring that they enjoy the same rights as regards income, training and supervision, medical back-up, access to competitions, social welfare, vocational training and active social reintegration at the end of their sports careers;
29. Calls on government and sports authorities to ensure the elimination of direct and indirect discrimination suffered by female athletes in their work;
30. Calls on businesses to step up their efforts to sponsor top-level sportswomen, seeking to enhance their image and promote women's sport as a whole;

31. Calls on the media to provide balanced coverage of male and female sport and to represent women in sport in a non-discriminatory manner;
32. Proposes that, when Directive 89/552/EEC¹ on 'Television without Frontiers' is amended, and in particular Article 3(a) concerning the broadcasting of major sports events, Member States include the gender dimension in the broadcasting of such events;
33. Urges sportswomen to organise themselves in order to defend their sporting, economic and social rights and to bring cases of discrimination and harassment to the competent authorities or before the courts;
34. Calls for the forthcoming Olympic Games in Athens to be exemplary and calls on the IOC to ensure mixed representation in all national teams;

Protecting the health of female athletes

35. Urges sports federations and trainers to show the utmost vigilance as regards guidelines and conditions for the practice of sport and to inform top-level sportswomen, particularly young women, of the effects of intensive training, use of doping substances or neglect of dietary rules on their physical, physiological, sexual and reproductive health;
36. Stresses that, in order to protect the health of female athletes, special training is needed for medical and paramedical staff, together with the inclusion of more women in medical and paramedical teams;
37. Emphasises the need to carry out special gender-specific studies on the impact of sport on the health of athletes;
38. Considers it important for female athletes to be given psychological support to enable them to come to terms with the changes in their physical appearance or to deal with questions regarding their femininity; believes that account of these aspects must be taken in training for coaches;
39. Stresses that sportswomen enjoy inalienable rights as regards sexuality and reproduction and calls for any breach of these freedoms to be penalised;
40. Urges Member States and sports federations to adopt measures for the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment and abuse in sport by enforcing the legislation on sexual harassment at work, to inform athletes and their parents of the risks of abuse and the means of legal action available to them, to provide sports organisations' staff with specific training and to ensure that criminal and disciplinary provisions are applied;

Greater participation by women in decision-making

41. Notes that the participation of women in decision-making in sport faces the same barriers as in the political and economic sphere and that affirmative action is needed;

¹ OJ L 298., 17.10.1989, p. 23.

42. Calls on Member States and regulatory authorities to make the recognition and subsidising of sports associations and authorities conditional upon the adoption of statutory provisions ensuring equal representation of women and men at all levels and for all decision-making posts;
43. Calls on sports organisations and authorities to promote women's participation in refereeing and adjudication and to establish mixed representation on medical committees and selection committees;
44. Calls on sports organisations to introduce training and counselling programmes for women athletes to help them find employment, in particular as coaches, technical staff and managers;
45. Calls on the sports movement to comply with the IOC target for women's participation in decision-making (20% of women in management structures by 31 December 2005) and to increase it to 30% over the next 10 years;

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46. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the parliaments of the Member States.