



# REPORT

***Sport and Citizenship***  
in partnership with  
**UEFA**

## WORKSHOP

*“The mediatisation of women sport in Europe: what is at stake and how to improve the coverage?”*

**Friday 11th of May 2012**

9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m

UEFA, Route de Genève 46, CH-1260 Nyon 2 – Switzerland

### Participants:

- Mrs Ainoha AZURMANDI, Consultant, Avento Consultoria, Spain.
- Mrs Emine BOZKURT, MEP, The Netherlands.
- Mr Reynald BLION, Media & Diversity / MARS programme Manager, Council of Europe, France.
- Mr Vincent CHAUDEL, Vice President, France.
- Mrs Rosarita CUCCOLI, CEO and Founder, Stadionovo, Member of the Board of *Sport and Citizenship*, Italy.
- Mr William GAILLARD, Senior Adviser to the UEFA President, France.
- Mrs Emilia HINKKANEN, Media department, UEFA, Switzerland.
- Mr Thomas HORNY Professor of sportjournalism, Macromedia Hochschule für Medien und Kommunikation, Germany.
- Mrs Susi-Kathi JOST, Switzerland.
- Mrs Melissa PARAMASIVAN, SportandDev, Switzerland.
- Mrs Carole PONCHON, European projects leader, France.
- Mrs Emily SHAW, Women's Football Development Coordinator, UEFA, Switzerland.

### Apologies:

- Mrs Carole BRETTEVILLE, Representative of the French NOC at EWS, France.
- Mr Jacques CORTIE, Journalist and CEO, Sportiva, France.
- Mrs Karen ESPELUND, UEFA Executive Committee member, chair of UEFA's Women's Football Committee, Norway.
- Mr Jérôme FENAILLON, Responsable de la programmation, Eurosport France, France.
- Mrs Evelina GEORGIADES, Chair, European Women and Sport, Cyprus.
- Mrs Florence HARDOUIN, Deputy General Director, French Football Federation, France.
- Mrs Raija MATTILA, Co-chair, IWG on Women and Sport, Finland.
- Mrs Gertrud PFISTER, Professor, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Mrs Lucie SCHOCH, Phd, UNIL, Switzerland.
- Mrs Annie SUGIER, Chair, Ligue du Droit International des Femmes, France.
- Mrs Anita WHITE, OBE, Founder of the Anita WHITE Foundation, United Kingdom.

**With the support of:**



## **■ BACKGROUND**

*Sport and Citizenship's* "SPORT" project –supported by the European Commission within the framework of the "Europe for Citizens" programme- proposes to build and run five thematic European networks.

On Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2012, a workshop was held in Nyon, Switzerland, which aimed to explore new ideas and approaches to promote the potential of women's sports and the mediatisation as a lever to develop women's sports participation as well as involvement in top decision making positions in Europe.

This workshop gathered members of the network "Women and Sport" developed by *Sport and Citizenship* under its "SPORT" project –supported by the European Commission within the framework of the "Europe for Citizens" programme. Fairly natural taking into account that

1. the media as one of the most prominent and powerful social institution in which the dominant ideology is articulated have a strong impact in producing, reproducing and supporting a hegemonic society,
2. the growth in media attention for female athletes has not escalated at the same pace as opportunities to play.
3. media coverage of women sport proves to be inadequate and selective

we wondered how to better develop the coverage of women's sport.

This should be done while working all together towards a common goal: reaching a better balance and unlocking the potential of women's sports.

How to do so and what could be the role of each institutions, these were the questions to which the workshop, organized in partnership with UEFA -which made us the honour to support the project "SPORT"- sought to provide some.

## **■ REPORT**

### ✓ **Women, Sport and media coverage in Europe: what is at stake?**

#### ➤ *An untapped potentially immense market*

- *Low level of quantitative coverage:*

**The growth in media attention for female athletes has not escalated at the same pace as opportunities to play.**

For example, a recent English study has shown that only 2% of mainstream sports coverage is dedicated to women's sport.

Striking figures from the International Sport Press Survey 2011:

- **More than 85% of the coverage is devoted to male athletes.**
- **Only 9 per cent of all articles focused on female sport stars.**

- *Poor quality of the coverage:*

This is unfortunately true for sport journalism in general: 41% of the articles are based on just one source (while in 2005 it was 40%) and only 12% deal with three or more sources (while in 2005: 16%)<sup>1</sup>

Studies on this issue consistently confirm the **continued underrepresentation, heterosexism, trivialization and general sexist nature of media coverage** – irrespective of the country of origin (cf: Bernstein and Galily, 2008; Brooks and Herbert, 2006; Capranica et al, 2005; Delorme and Raul, 2009, Knoppers and Elling, 2005; Vincent et al., 2007...).

The phenomenon has also been highlighted by a study from the Loughborough University which pointed out the physical and cultural stereotypes used by sport journalists.

**An outstanding aspect of the coverage is the “labelization” of women’s sport** (Blinde et al., 1991; Hallmark and Armstrong, 1999) **placing less value on the women’s game** (ie for men media speaks about basketball or soccer but for women it is “Women basketball” or “Women soccer”). It is noteworthy to say that this labelization does also occur within the sport movement. Indeed, the same applies for major events (cf. FIFA World Cup vs FIFA Women World Cup).

- *Yet women and women’s sport represent a booming market.*

Women are undoubtedly truly part of the sport’s landscape: 37% of European women claim to practice a sport at least once a week and **50% participate in sport and physical activity**<sup>2</sup>.

**Women’s sport is worth the investment and a growing demand can be observed!** The example of women’s football is simply obvious: a year and a half prior to the FIFA Women World Cup 2011, sponsorship package were already sold out, French national women team game (France-Wales, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012, qualification for the EURO 2013) competed with two Champion’s League quarter final games in terms of tv ratings, 5 days ahead of the 2012 Women’s Champions League Final organised in Munich, more than 40 000 tickets were already sold... And hopefully this is just the tip of the iceberg.

A German study based on the coverage of the Women’s Football Worldcup 2011 clearly highlighted that **men are interested in watching women’s sport on TV –more than the average of TV in total.**

- *Women do also represent a key target for the media and the sport movement*

Let us remind the words of Mrs Commissioner Vassiliou at the EWS conference 2011 in London: **“Sport is too important in our society fabric for women to be excluded from it”.**

The reverse could be said as well: Women are too important in our society fabric for the sport industry to forget about them!

<sup>1</sup> Source : International Sport Press Survey 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Source: EUROBAROMETER, Sport and physical Activity, March 2010

**Women are decision makers within the family** and most of them nowadays in the European society. As mother they have a huge impact in the children decision to make some sport activities.

Furthermore they do show **a great appetite for sport and are great consumers of sport content and sport activities**. For example in Germany since the UEFA EURO 2008 there have been **more women than men watching national team's games**. If demographic data shows that online sports destinations are frequented more by males (62%) than females (38%) (Loechner, 2005); however, **from 2007 to 2008, there was greater growth in sports website traffic for females (37%) than for males (21%)**<sup>3</sup>.

➤ *The impact of poor media coverage of women's sports*

The role of sport in the empowerment of girls and women at grassroots level has been successfully demonstrated by many projects. Giving women the opportunity to develop their abilities and leadership skills through peer oriented initiatives is a key to give them a chance to develop their own identity.

For studies have shown that if girls had more opportunities to see successful female **athlete role models**, perhaps a greater number of young women would stay involved with sports and live a more active lifestyle (Vescio, et al., 2005)<sup>4</sup>, it seems obvious to us that the **level of media coverage of women's sports is a crucial issue for grassroots participation**.

**This proves to be true as well for the involvement in top decisions making position.**

Through the poor level of women's sports coverage, media inhibit the participation of women, who feel illegitimate within the world of sport, whether in sports and physical activities or in taking institutional responsibilities<sup>5</sup>.

The lack of role models is clearly one of the barriers identified for girls and women to feel safe and welcomed within the world of sport. Having more role models thanks to more and better coverage would help breaking the glass ceiling while changing a bit this very typical masculine atmosphere or at least giving women the taste and the strength to fight their inhibition.

**An initiative such as women2012.co.uk aiming at raising the profile of world class sportswomen to inspire young girls shall be supported and developed outside of the UK.**

✓ **Some evidence showing that things are changing**

- *We are all media: taking advantages of social medias*

**Over the last few years, social media have been offering brand new opportunities for the sport movement and individual to become themselves the medium for their sporting achievement.** It represents a tremendous tool to get people interested in women's sports.

<sup>3</sup> Source : Sports Site Traffic, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Note: When being asked about their role models, women say: 8.4% sports role model; 41% family (mother), 21.1% peer; 18.2% entertainment (Vescio et al., 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Source : Fasting, K. & Tangen, J., 1983, Gender and Sport in Norwegian Mass Media. International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 18, 61-70

Going back once again to the example of football, it is worth noticing that **the FIFA Women World Cup 2011 was the most tweeted sport event throughout the world!**

- *An historical sport momentum*

Taking into account that **media interest is 80% competitions' oriented and that soccer is the only "world media sport", with more than 40% of the articles<sup>6</sup>, the participants identified a tremendous opportunity for women's sport to get media's interest since the three major women's football tournaments will be organised in a row in Europe:**

- 2011: FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany
- 2012: Olympic Games in London
- 2013: UEFA Euro in Finland.

**It is also interesting to notice that these mega events -if correctly used at their full potential- do also contribute to creating new role models.** Steffi Jones has become a worldwide one and is now the new UEFA ambassador for Women's Football.

- *The sport movement is realising the potential of women's sport and starting to work towards its development*

We do observe a **quickening of the debate**. Very soon the sport movement will finally realize that women are not a minority at all but a majority. One of the key issues for the next decade shall be for women's football to become natural for everybody, if the doors have been opened there is still a lot to be done and it is in the hand of the sport movement primarily to make it attractive while working on raising the profile of women's sport.

As stated by many participants, including representatives of the sport movement, clubs should stop seeing women's sport as a burden. In the specific case of football, the crucial role of clubs to develop an adequate offer to provide to all the opportunity to play and to dream was highlighted.

- *Structural and economical change*

Having a look on the students in sports journalism, there seems to be a real trend that will probably lead to a major structural change: while nowadays, women represent only 8% of sport journalists, there are more and more female students attending sport journalism courses.

Furthermore, many editors are looking for female journalists in order to give a new impulse to their editorial line. The economical crisis and the fierce competition in the sector forced the media to rethink their positioning. Not surprisingly, print media are the ones which seem to be the most engaged in the phenomenon for they do suffer from live online coverage of competitions. In late March 2012, l'Equipe, the main French sports newspaper even recognised that regarding the societal dimension of sport they were lagging behind the think tank *Sport and Citizenship*.

**The success of the MARS (Media Against Racism in Sport) programme** (a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission) is also a **tangible proof that media across Europe are highly interested in engaging into a reflection on how to increase the quality of their coverage while including diversity.**

<sup>6</sup> Source : International Sport Press Survey 2011.

✓ **Few keys to unlock the potential of women's sports**

- *Keep in mind that media industry is driving by economical interest such as any other industry*

**Mutual understandings shall be encouraged**, civil society and the sport movement shall find out the relevant buttons to encourage media to develop a new approach. One of them is of course to raise the level of game in order to **offer a good quality entertainment**.

- *Raise awareness regarding the potential of women's sports*

Based on facts and figures as well as outcomes of already published survey, an awareness and lobbying campaign has to be launched in order to fully convince the media industry that it should invest in women's sports coverage for its own sake and in its own interest.

- *Keep advocating for a better recognition of women's sport and fight against sexism*

Things will not change in a day. There is still a lot to be done and civil society will have to keep on being the warning bell and calling for changes. It is also by **granting training to media and develop good and balanced education schemes that we will manage to raise the profile of sport's coverage**.

**To be seen: The Fair Game Campaign for Women in Sport** launched by Stylist magazine with the aim of changing attitudes towards female athletes.

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✓ **Commitments and next steps**

The participants agreed to commit to work together towards:

- A concrete follow up to this first meeting while gathering again together in the coming months. This could be on the occasion of an event to be organised in Brussels at the European Parliament headquarters.
- A common publication that will allow the network to move forward into these issues.
- Use the opportunity offered by the MARS programme to exchange with the media.
- Advocate for a statement on Women and sport.

✓ **Recommendations**

- To the institutions (especially European but also national and local ones):
  - **Support the development of educational and training programme**, as they did with the MARS programme.
  - Think of a **European coordinated action aiming at developing the coverage of women's sport**. The "Television Without Frontiers" which had impact on sport broadcasting might be a track to follow and the idea shall be further studied in order to assess if it might be possible to list some women's sport events as of major interest but also if this would be desirable.
  - **Support awareness campaign including a survey on the potential of women's sport for the media industry**. It is indeed of crucial importance

to have relevant figures to influence the editorial shift towards more and better coverage of women's sports.

- **Include diversity and women's sport development criteria in their subsidies allocation rules.**

- To the sport movement

- **Accompany the sportswomen** in their communication.
- **Develop innovative pro-active strategy for promoting their sport** while focusing on the development of the beauty of the game, the technical ability developed... raising the profile of women's sports.
- **Change the rule of the games to:**
  - **Allow more women to take responsibilities** (cf fight against invisible barriers and sexist remarks) which in return will help raising the profile of sports and not only women's sports.
  - **Dignify the status of women's sports** while giving men and women the same status at the top level: creating a professional status for women's sports.

- To sport journalism schools

- Work on **their programmes to include diversity and gender issues**. This may be done while involving more representatives of women's sports to talk and work with the students.

- To the media industry

- **Stop hiding behind the argument of "what readers want"** without relying on surveys and data but on their own vision.
- **Search for balance and equity in terms of coverage and airtime**. This will be done in their own interest.
- **Work on the content:** if on the one hand women's sports should be covered, it is also necessary to reflect and change their treatment to avoid falling into trivialization and sexism. The media industry should for its own sake fight against the "ghettoisation" of sport journalism while working towards achieving a balance and grabbing the whole picture.
- **Include the principle of diversity (of expertise, subjects, sources...) in their code of ethics.**

**Recommendations that deserve a fast reaction**

**We do believe that some of the recommendations made earlier in the document could be addressed to all the actors and shall not wait for the implementation of the future EU sport programme:**

- Support and engage into the development of adequate qualitative educational and training programmes.
- Think of a European coordinated action aiming to develop the coverage of women's sport.
- Develop innovative pro-active strategies to promote women's sport, including new rules (access to Board positions, public funding ...).

*Special thanks to all participants!*



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From left to right:  
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