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Gender Equality and Women's Participation in Sports in Albania: A Gender Responsive Assessment and Guidance.

In recent years, sports have emerged as a powerful tool for empowering women and girls globally . Sports contribute to holistic development and challenge gender norms, promoting a more inclusive and equitable society. Yet, women continue to face barriers to fully participate in and enjoy the benefits of sports.

This information sheet is based on the “Gender Responsive Assessment and Guidance” which explores gender dynamics in sports in Albania and provides insights and recommendations for addressing the needs of women and girls focusing on three main sports in Albania (football, volleyball and basketball).



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Sport Participation Rates

Women's participation in sports has progressed over time but remains limited, especially among women and girls with disabilities who face additional barriers. Certain traditionally male-associated sports exhibit particularly low female involvement.

In Albania, 17 out of 22 sports federations have less than 40% female membership. Gymnastics (72%) and volleyball (99%) have the highest proportion of women, while wrestling (99%) and skiing (94%) are predominantly male. The badminton federation is the closest to achieving gender balance, with 54% female and 46% male members.

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The "Football for the Nation – 2022-2025" strategic document by the Albanian Football Federation highlights that women's participation remains low in registered players and in national and regional competitions.

According to the Women's Football Strategy by the Football Federation, there were over 2,000 registered female football players in Albania in 2022, including both professional and non-professional athletes.

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During the 2021-2022 academic year, the University of Sports of Tirana enrolled 1,576 students, of which 513 were women, underscoring a notable gender disparity in sports education.

Between 2019 and 2023, data from Special Olympics indicates that women with disabilities are underrepresented in sports, with 1,311 athletes (444 females, 867 males) and 168 coaches (24 females, 144 males) with intellectual disabilities.

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Main Findings

Women are significantly under-represented in leadership positions and high management roles within sports organizations, both nationally and locally, hindering their participation and influence in decision-making processes.



All 22 Olympic Sport Federations are led by male presidents. Of the 14 vice-presidential positions within the National Olympic Sports Federation, only 2 are held by women. Women make up 29% of vice presidents in Olympic Committees and 81% in Olympic Sport Federations, but hold just 22% of overall board positions.



The Volleyball Federation is a positive exception, with women representing 50% of the Executive Committee and over 50% of the athletes and higher management.



Women are underrepresented in coaching, especially at the elite level, due to stereotypes and lack of institutional support. Albania has 25 female coaches compared to 88 male coaches. Female coaches are more common in sports with high female participation, working mainly with women, adolescents, or children. At the elite level, women typically serve as assistant coaches under male head coaches.



Men's sports dominate media coverage, and when women's sports are covered, the focus often reinforces gender stereotypes. Globally, only 4% of sports media content focuses on women's sports, with an emphasis on appearance, age, and personal lives rather than athletic achievements (UNESCO).



In 2018, 90% of sports editors and 88.5% of reporters were men; only 12% of sports news were presented by women. Over 85% of print media coverage is dedicated to male athletes.



Only 2 Albanian sport federations (football and weightlifting) have formal policies to prevent and combat gender-based violence, both adopted in 2016. Since 2015, 3 federations (football, taekwondo, volleyball) have implemented measures against gender-based violence.



Inadequate investment in women's sports, including funding and resource allocation, hampers female participation. Insufficient investment in sports facilities and equipment further exacerbates these inequalities.



Recommendations

The following recommendations are tailored for key stakeholders, outlining actions they can take to create a more inclusive and equitable environment in sports.



To Central Government Authorities:

- ▶ Adopt or review sports legislation and policies to integrate gender mainstreaming, and ensure that gender equality is included in physical education and sports curricula in schools.
- ▶ Integrate a gender perspective into sports-related budgetary processes to promote equal access to sports resources for women and girls.
- ▶ Implement and monitor policies to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sports.
- ▶ Collaborate with CSOs to promote women's participation in sports through advocacy and outreach efforts.
- ▶ Adopt gender quotas in sport decision-making as a mandatory requirement.



To Local Government Authorities:

- ▶ Invest in sports, especially in women's sports, fostering both athletic and economic opportunities for women and girls.
- ▶ Raise awareness about available sports activities and financial support for accessing these services, particularly among young students.
- ▶ Ensure accessible infrastructure and suitable sporting equipment in local sport programs, including adequate facilities for women's sports.
- ▶ Incorporate gender-responsive training programs into capacity-building plans for local staff.



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To Sports Organizations:

- ▶ Increase investment in women's sports to support their development and growth.
- ▶ Conduct extensive consultations with stakeholders to better understand gender-specific needs and respond accordingly.
- ▶ Engage male athletes, journalists, coaches, and other allies to champion women's sports and advocate for gender equality.
- ▶ Implement safeguarding and protection policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.
- ▶ Cooperate in monitoring and assessing the progress of balanced participation of girls, boys, women and men in sports based on internationally comparable data.




To Olympic Committee:

- ▶ Ensure equal number of men's and women's teams and athletes in sports, with balanced representation of both genders in competition schedules.
- ▶ Promote safe sport and protect athletes from harassment and abuse by allocating resources from the operations budget.
- ▶ Create mechanisms to boost women candidates for governance roles through targeted recruitment, leadership development, mentorship programs.



To Private Sector and Media:

- ▶ Increase support for women's professional teams and sponsorships for women athletes.
- ▶ Continue promoting positive gender equality messaging in sport-related marketing to combat stereotypes.
- ▶ Convey a non-stereotyped image of women and men in sports by eliminating sexist content and language in media coverage. Strive for balanced airtime.
- ▶ Ensure a balanced participation of women and men in sports media through the employment of female sport journalists and support for their careers among editorial personnel.

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