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# Women and National Sport Governance: a European Approach Interviews Guide

María Luisa ESTEBAN-SALVADOR (Coordinator)

Emilia FERNANDES · Tiziana DI CIMBRINI · Gonca GÜNGÖR GÖKSU · Rachael JONES

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Women and National Sport Governance: a European Approach

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Dedicated to all the women who made this book possible and to all those whom we would have liked to include but due to limitations of time and resources, have not been able to participate.

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## Abstract

This interviews guide presents a set of 52 interviews conducted among women directors of the boards of directors of National Sport Federations of five European countries: Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. These interviews were recorded in video and carried out between March 2019 and June 2022. The interviews guide is an output of the ERASMUS+ project, entitled "Corporate governance in sports organizations: A gendered approach (GESPORT Project)", funded by the European Commission. The aim of this project's output is to increase the visibility and voice of women presidents, vice-presidents and other female members of the boards of NSFs in order to gain the most comprehensive sensibility towards the necessity of gender equality in decision-making in sports organizations and to improve corporate governance practices in this area. Therefore, with this book, the GESPORT project aims to share the different experiences, feelings and thoughts of these women about their roles on the boards, gender discrimination and equality, and policies and measures to promote gender inclusion.

In the last decade, many countries have adopted different initiatives to enact gender equality and advance toward a more egalitarian, just and democratic society. Additionally, numerous codes of good governance have been published around the world with recommendations for large organizations, especially listed companies, on good corporate governance. However, in the sports governance domain, the best gender practices regarding board composition and equality have not been afforded the deserved and necessary attention (Noppers et al., 2019). In the sports field, studies about gender equality on boards are limited, and the existing research shows the low participation of women in all spheres of decision-making (Di Cimbrini et al., 2019). As Emms (2014, p. 3) states “the under-representation of women in governance positions, in Australia and overseas, persists despite almost thirty years of legislation directed towards anti-indiscrimination and equal opportunity. This guide is the result of the ERASMUS+ Project (GESPORT+), entitled “Corporate governance in sports organizations: A gendered approach”. The project arises from my interest in advancing gender equality in the decision-making bodies of sports organizations. Although my previous research was focused on the analysis of the role of women directors on the boards of listed companies and in entities in the non profit sector, such as cooperatives, I did not address gender diversity in the corporate governance in the sports world. My concern about sport arose from news in the media where I observed constant discrimination against women athletes regarding their salary remuneration, the amounts obtained in prizes, or their secondary role in the sports world, compared to men. I was also surprised by the sometimes vexatious treatment of women in the sports press.

It also drew my attention to, that despite the recommendations of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on gender diversity in its governing bodies, the participation figures of women in the decision-making bodies of sports organizations continue to be very low compared to their male counterparts.

I was convinced that carrying out a comparative study at the international level could lead to a greater understanding of the situation of women in the upper echelons of sports entities that would help encourage measures to advance equality between men and women. Thus, I promoted a working group with researchers having the same sensitivity on the subject to share knowledge and transfer it among them, thus efficiently maximizing the human capital potential of all team members, given that all of them intend to achieve shared objectives. The ability of team members to generate uniting information from different areas of knowledge synergies to improve good governance in sport by promoting gender equality. For this, I would like to give special thanks to the people participating in the project, to the professors and the co-authors of this book: Dr Emilia Fernandes from the University of Minho in Portugal; Dr Tiziana di Cimbrini from the University of Teramo in Italy; Dr Gonca Güngör Göksu from Sakarya University in Turkey; and Dr Rachael Jones from the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. Thanks are due to Professor Dr William Green from the University of Leicester for coordinating the organization of the interviews in the UK and being present during the first three interviews there. Thanks also to Associate Professor Juan Bernardo Pineda for his work and ideas in the recording of the first Spanish interview, and the subsequent interviews in Portugal and Italy. I also thank Marta Burriel, student of the Fine Arts degree at the Teruel campus of the University of Zaragoza, for the graphic design of the book and her contribution to editing videos of the women interviewed.

I am also grateful to Irene Sáez and Laura Peiró for their collaboration in editing the videos and preparation of translation works and subtitles for the interviews, and to Leticia Sánchez and Ana Tortajada for organizing and making the interviews visible on the project's website. Also I want to thank Associate Professor Teresa Barea for her support when I have needed it.

The members of the GESPORT team appreciate the collaboration of all the women who have participated in the interviews. We are sure that their testimonies will advance gender equality and diversity in NSFs and in society in general. We all are convinced that the opinions embodied in this guide of interviews constitute a valuable and powerful tool to help implement policies to achieve a more equal world. We also thank the ERASMUS+ Sports Program of the European Union for trusting in our project, since without their funding, this guide would not have seen the light of day. Specifically, cite the agreement number 590521-EPP-1-2017-1-ES-SPO-SCP of the European Commission.

The coordinator of the GESPORT Project,  
Dr Luisa Esteban-Salvador  
University of Zaragoza, Spain.

## Introduction

The principle number 6 of the First International Conference on Women and Sport held in Brighton in the United Kingdom in 1994, and organized by the British Sports Council, supported by the International Olympic Committee, stressed the low female presence in decision-making and leadership positions of all sports-related organizations. This statement urged that individuals and institutions were responsible for developing structures to increase the number of women in positions of responsibility. The sensitivity of Viviane Reding, the vice-President of the European Commission, and the European Commissioner responsible for sports, Androulla Vassiliou<sup>1</sup>, to the role of women in sports was highlighted in 2012 on the occasion of the Olympic Games in London. “We do firmly believe that more needs to be done to achieve an acceptable representation of women in sport and sport governing bodies and to continue the fight against discrimination and sexual harassment towards women” (p. 6). Thus, this guide aims to advance knowledge about female presence in the strategic decision-making, one of the objectives of European policies to promote and support good governance in sports. Therefore, the book addresses the global aim of the Europe 2020 Strategy for innovative, sustainable and inclusive growth. The main topic of this study is to encourage social inclusion and equal opportunities in sports, especially by supporting the implementation of EU strategies, notably the EU Gender Equality and the EU Disability Strategies. The interviews also contribute to increase the sustainability of gender equality on the

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1 Quoted in the Report Gender Equality in Sport Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014 – 2020 Approved by the Group of Experts ‘Gender Equality in Sport’ at its meeting in Brussels on 18 February 2014. [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/events/2013/documents/gender\\_equality\\_proposal\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/events/2013/documents/gender_equality_proposal_en.pdf) accessed July 2014.



boards of the NSFs in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations, in particular the 5th SDG Gender Equality, adding to the United Nations' progress over the past twenty years. Although the primary goal is the EU Gender Equality Strategy, this objective is closely related to promoting and supporting good sports governance on diversity issues. One of the axes of corporate governance in most countries is to increase diversity in decision-making bodies, and among this diversity, gender diversity is included. Although its primary objective is Equal Opportunities, this book is directly related to the purpose of corporate governance. The White Paper on Sport of July 11, 2007, presented by the European Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, includes within its thematic structure about the organization of sport, the role of each of the actors in the governance of the sports movement. Therefore, we can say that there is a direct link between the primary objective of this book, gender equality in the governing bodies of sports, and the improvement in corporate sports governance of good practices. To promote good governance in sport within Europe, the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, on 18 January 2011, stated that the Commission and the EU countries adopt standard rules by exchanging good practices and special support for particular initiatives. Subsequently, according to the EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014<sup>2</sup>, "The board must promote equality and diversity and actively work to attract a diverse range of members, including, in particular, but not limited to, an appropriate gender balance at board level as part of an overall inclusivity programme". Therefore, we can identify a correspondence between the objectives of this book and those raised by the Expert Group Good Governance in the sport: both aim to promote gender diversity in the

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2 See Expert Group "Good Governance". Deliverable 2 Principles of Good Governance in Sport, September 2013. [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy\\_documents/dlvrbl\\_sept.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy_documents/dlvrbl_sept.pdf) accessed uly , .

decision-making of the sport governing bodies.

This introduction contextualizes the 52 interviews that were carried out among women sport directors of NSFs. Within the framework of the Erasmus+ GESPORT project, "Corporate governance in sports organizations: A gendered approach" the members of the team conducted the interviews with women involved in the corporate governance of the sports in the five countries of this project: Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the UK, and these were recorded in video. The opinions of the female board members who participated in the interviews will raise awareness regarding gender diversity and equality on sports boards. The results will assist governments in formulating gender equality policies, such as targets and quotas in the future. The interviews began to be recorded on March 29, 2019, in Santander, Spain. The first interview was with Julia Casanueva, who at that time was the President of the Royal Spanish Sailing Federation. Unfortunately, at the time of publishing the book, she no longer holds the position of President, which in figures means that of the three women presidents of Federations in Spain when we began the interviews, only two female members remain in July 2022. This interview was the pilot test, so some of the ten questions in the questionnaire were not answered. This is true of the following interviews in Portugal. The last interview was recorded in London on June 22, 2022. The interviews in Portugal were held in July 2019. Then we began recording the interviews in Italy, in January 2020 and in the first week of March of that same year in Turkey. However, we were forced to delay recording due to the appearance of SARS-CoV-2, the pandemic that paralyzed the world. During that period and until June 2022, we had to adapt to the evolution of the pandemic, once we decided that all the women would be interviewed in person following the same methodology. The scenarios in which the interviews have been recorded are diverse and have depended on the country, and the period in which they were recorded. In the case of Spain and Portugal, most interviews were recorded outdoors.

In contrast, those of Italy, Turkey and the United Kingdom were recorded indoors, such as in the own spaces of federations, hotels, and other sports spaces. The last interview was conducted in the headquarters of the British Olympic Committee in London.

All interviewees gave us their consent to record their images and voices and the permission to disseminate them on the website for general and public knowledge, given their relevance to the dissemination objective that is also part of our research project.

We selected 50 women with a seat on the boards of directors of the NSFs, ten women per country. The team decided the following priority in order to determine the women to interview:

- President;
- Vicepresidents;
- Vicepresidents in a male board;
- Vicepresidents of male sports;
- Vicepresidents of female sports;
- Female members of corporate boards.

The initial database with the positions of women on the boards to decide the order of the questions was altered because of various reasons in addition to the pandemic caused by COVID-19, such as the holding of elections in the Federations, the changes in the composition of the boards, or the availability of interviewees. Finally, we did two extra interviews in Italy.

The interviews were conducted in different periods from Portugal in July 2019; Spain in March 2019, July and August 2020 and August 2021; Turkey in March 2020 and August 2021; Italy in February 2020 and March 2022; the UK in April, May and June 2022. As mentioned, the extended period to conduct the interviews was due to the several obstacles experienced by the GESPORT team during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The content of the interviews allowed understanding of the personal and gendered experiences of the members of the sports boards and of their meanings and thoughts about gender, sport, power, equality and decision-making.

inally, the video interviews were shared on the E T roect website to bring visibility to the experiences of these women directors to the public in general and, by doing so, guarantee their recognition. We resorted to the semi-directive interview as a research method. As previously said, the aim was to perceive how women directors in countries with different laws, cultures and gender traditions, construct their realities and their positioning as sports directors.

This guide is a tool that can be useful to the sports organizations by giving them the opportunity to rethink and implement the good practices identified by the women interviewed. Also, this book is an empirical contribution to institutional agents and to a growing line of research that aims to improve gender equality in sports. Therefore, the interviews may be useful to different stakeholders. First, the information provided by the interviewees serves to identify the factors that can improve women's access to decision-making bodies, allowing sports organizations to define policies to promote good practices in sports governance. This guide sheds light on the impact of corporate governance in sports organizations and the data obtained will serve the authorities to ensure the application of the rules mentioned. Second, the guide can help European authorities in areas of sports, gender and corporate governance to take measures to increase equality. A better understanding of the situation of women in decision-making sports organizations encourages social inclusion and equal opportunities in sport, especially by supporting the implementation of EU strategies, notably the EU Gender Equality and the EU Disability Strategy. The results can be used to set policies that serve to advance women in decision-making in the field of sport. Third, the guide can help competent regional authorities in each country, specifically sections of sport and gender equality (such as women's institutes) of the Autonomous Communities or regions, to take measures to advance gender equality.

fourth, the interviews can help institutions, sports organizations and Olympic committees in each country. Furthermore, educational institutions can use the guide as case studies for subjects in which sport, gender and corporate governance are studied. One of the specific priorities set out in the strategic associations of Higher Education in the modernization agenda of the ECTS is to operate the knowledge triangle. With this project, through mobility and cross-border cooperation, quality education can improve in those degrees, masters and doctoral programs focused on sport and gender equality. The guide can also serve other social and political agents involved in sport and equal opportunities for women and men to encourage improvement initiatives. As well as this, the guide is an opportunity for the scientific community. The qualitative data obtained through the interviews may stimulate new academic contributions. The researchers can use this data to go further on the knowledge produced about women's role in governing sport. Also, the guide is an opportunity for women who want to develop their careers in the management of sports organizations. The interviews can sensitize women who want to be part of the decision-making bodies of sports, giving guidelines to improve and advance their careers. These women may act as mentors for other women in sports. Women will have the tools to improve their situation through other women's experiences. Moreover, politicians can use the interviews to increase awareness of the gender issue and promote policies in favor of women's career advancement in the decision-making bodies of sports organizations. The content of interviews can also be used to mobilize the institutions of the member countries of the project in order to push them to acquire greater awareness of promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities in sport. Finally, the guide is important for society because of the transcendence of the topic in the field of justice and equity. After the introduction, the guide is divided into five parts, and the conclusions. Each part contains the interviews conducted in one country. The order of women's appearance in each country corresponds to the date on which the interviews were conducted.



# Interviews



# Portugal

Mariana Monteiro · Susana Costa Vieira · Catarina  
Carvalho · Juliana Ferreira Sousa · Helena Aires · Ana  
Paula Almeida · Maria Rosa Cristino · Ana Cristina Vital  
Melo · Maria da Graça Coelho · Teresa Cardoso



**Mariana Monteiro**  
Vicepresident  
Portuguese Hockey Federation



## What role does sport play in your life?

The role of sport in my life... It's interesting to speak about that. I'm not an active sport woman in this sport. I've never been. But sport is obviously part of my life. First of all, because I'm a member of this Board, of the Hockey Board, but also because my children are engaged in sport, and my husband is a coach, he is a member of the technical team, he is a trainer in this sport, and so sport is part of my life.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Since ever, I've had a relationship with sport. Because I always liked it. I've practised acrobatic gymnastics, swimming, even at competitive level, so sport has been a part of my life. Also because I'm concerned with having a healthy lifestyle, so sport is part of my life.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Women are gaining ground in the field of sport. Not as much as we would like, but I think that we already see women in leadership roles, as coaches, and more and more as athletes in many different sports. Of course, I think there is still quite a long way to go in order to improve the figures on the participation of women in sport.

## As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

It is a concern of the Portuguese Hockey Federation to invite, to involve, to attract female athletes to this sport. So, we do have that concern, always. However there are no...

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held you position on the board?

My responsibilities... I haven't been awarded any special responsibilities. I feel myself as a full member of the Board. I take part in all decisions; the work is shared. Of course when something comes up related to the role of women, every now and then, there is the tendency to delegate it on me, but I feel that all the work is fully shared and participated by all members of the Board.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

As far as my presence in this Board it is quite recent. We are coming close to the last year of our term. I would say that I am still a Vice-President under training. I am a member of the Board of the Portuguese Hockey Federation because I was invited. Not because... as I explained before, I did not practise this sport, so it was an invitation, well I think maybe thinking on my skills, on my capabilities in terms of communication, of being able to listen, of making assessments, of issuing opinions and statements, so I think the invitation was based on those other skills they found in me. I am a member of the Board of the Portuguese Hockey Federation because I was invited. Not because... as I explained before, I did not practise this sport, so it was an invitation, well I think maybe thinking on my skills, on my capabilities in terms of communication, of being able to listen, of making assessments, of issuing opinions and statements, so I think the invitation was based on those other skills they found in me.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think that the involvement of women in the Boards of sport organizations is a plus. We have a way of thinking, of approaching any subjects, which are different from those of men and that can add, it can be an added value to the decisions, statements and opinions we issue. I think it is beneficial and a plus if women have a more participating role and a more active role in governing boards.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?.

Not at all. The fact that I am a woman does not affect my work in the Board. I am very welcome. My opinion is always heard, often times even requested. So I feel I have been very welcome, and I think that my work is valuable and precious for the Board.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Women from this country, If you are invited, please accept with no fears. Don't think about the complications before accepting the invitation. Do like me, accept it first and think afterwards. Because, afterwards, everything can be overcome, be solved. Certainly you have someone at home that will support you. I understand that most women that are mothers or want to become a mother, immediately look at an added work as an obstacle, but everything gets solved and then you will certainly understand that your work will be rewarded, you will be valued, you will feel valued. And that participating for the benefit of others, seeing children benefit from your commitment at sport level, when you receive the results, all of that will make it worthwhile and, in the end, when you weigh it on the scale you will certainly find more positive than negative aspects. So take the chance



**Susana Costa Vieira**  
Vicepresident  
Portuguese Skating Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Well, the role of sport in my life, it is very important. It dates back to about 1994 / 1995 when I came to work as an employee at this house, at the Roller-Skating Federation of Portugal. It would be an experience just for three months. After three months the President asked me if I wanted to continue as his Secretary, and I stayed until 2000. In 1998 I took the course of speed skating judge, then later on I took the course of European Judge. Then in 2000 I left the Federation to start my professional life. Then in 2003 it was when I was called and invited to take part in the National Speed Skating Committee, where I remained until about 2016, when the Vice-President at the time, Captain Neves de Carvalho, had to leave because of age and health reasons, and invited me to take up the position of Vice-President for Speed Skating, and so I am in this position since that time.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

From the knowledge I have, it is quite small. Only few sport organizations have women on their Board. Except for a couple of Federations, in which the sport themselves are mostly practised by women, most Federations that I know have no women represented on the board.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

In my opinion, for us to evolve in the direction of having women on the management boards we need to create critical mass. We, at the Federation, have supported, as much as possible, the participation of women in all types of skating sport, and I think that this is one of the ways for us to later on have women that understand what skating is, and that have the availability and love to be here. Because in order to be on the management board of any Federation you also need to love the cause.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Well, I have been the Vice-President for Speed Skating since 2016. My responsibilities, well I have to organise, to coordinate, to make the sport grow, besides helping my colleagues on the Board in maintaining the federation and in managing financial matters, and help my colleagues in the other sport to also manage and take decisions within their fields.



## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

The participation of women, as far as I see, it is very little. I am not... The reasons I think they are much connected to educational and cultural issues. Women don't have much time for certain things. They have their role as mothers, their family, of wife, they have their jobs, and being on the managing board of the Federation would be yet another role. And for that, one needs time, and also a structure at home - and this must be said - one needs to have a support structure at home, from the husband, whatever, in order to be able to have this second life. These second or third or fourth roles.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, in my opinion there is an issue here, a very important one, and which is a cultural one, and which we cannot change in the short run. Not only do women need to understand that they can reach here, reach these levels, these positions, also men need to be educated and prepared to have the presence of women and to understand that there is a great benefit. The boards of almost all federations are quite large, so everyone can participate. It is good that there is gender difference in decision making, because it only brings benefits. But this has cultural roots and that is the main reason why we haven't been able to overcome that issue yet.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

In no way have I ever felt discriminated by my colleagues. I never felt that they would disagree with my opinion or with my decisions because of being a woman. No. I don't think so. They treat me as their companion. We are a team. We have a great relationship at personal level, at friendship level, and of great respect.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, it is difficult to give advice. Even because these types of positions are very much based on invitations. It depends very much on who is running, on whom will they invite. But basically one must show the availability, the willingness and the taste for being here. And to want to contribute towards the development of sport, because these are not the type of positions to which you send your CV to apply. So it has a very different nature from other types of positions. Of course sport is dominated by men, for the most part, and then they invite other men. So we have to show ourselves, we have to show ourselves, and we have to stress that we are here, that we are available, and that we are capable.



**Catarina Carvalho**  
Vicepresident  
Portuguese Federation of Padel

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport in my life started quite at an early stage. It was very much connected to the school I attended, namely it was a private school, and besides Physical Education classes, like you have in every school, I started attending tennis classes which were taught after the normal teaching period. This, I think, it was in about second grade, more or less, when I was about seven years old. Then after that I started to play tennis and since then I never stopped practising sport.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that just like in general society because sport reflects a bit what goes on in general society - there is a lack of participation of women both in sport organizations and maybe also in practising sport itself. It would be important to have more women practising sport so that then we could have more women holding positions in clubs, in associations and in Federations, because that's what makes the female part of sport grow.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Well, maybe not necessarily as Vice-President, but as a female member of the Board, because I'm not the only one, we are more female members, we always try for there to be greater equality in sport and in competitions, in national competitions. There is always some resistance because, well, we are always a minority and not just in the Federation but mainly also in clubs, the representativeness is predominantly male, and as all decisions taken by the Federation are always ratified by the clubs, then some measures sometimes are not passed in the General Assembly because of that reason, to a certain extent. That's why it is important that women are also connected to positions in clubs and in associations. But yes there is always an attempt to improve the female prize moneys, to have more female competitions. There was also, in the beginning of the Federation, a specialised clinical setting just for women was created, even more at competition level, in order to foster more the competitive side. Because female paddle at social level is quite strong, but then as far as competition there is always less participation. So we keep trying to occasionally do something and also fight against the tide.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have held the position of Vice-President since the Federation was established. The Federation started its activities in 1980. The first term was held, and then we were elected for the second term, which is going on right now, and I've held that position since then. My position on the Board, well let's say, the portfolios that I have are everything that have to do with national teams of all age groups, so both juniors, seniors and veterans. I'm also connected to a competition among clubs, which is the Clubs League, also making the connection with female paddle, which does not have its own portfolio but it's a kind of a cross-cutting representation in decision making.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, that's a bit complicated. Challenges, there were many, because basically we appeared with a sport that was just starting, and so we are here since almost the beginning and growth of this sport. As we grow, challenges become greater. And when we started the first competition we held - it was at this club actually - and I remember that we set up the first competition and at the time we might have had about fifty to sixty participants, and right now we have the Junior Circuit, the Senior Circuit, the Veterans Circuit, with competitions every weekend and sometimes we have more than 300 participants, so challenges come up almost on a daily basis. We already have national teams, we have representations in all European and World competitions, in some cases with some good results. So challenges are daily and they keep coming, but maybe as far as feeling proud, it is undoubtedly about following the national teams and the results we've had at international level.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Well, it's a bit like what I said before. It is important that more and more we have women in those positions, in order to be closer to where decisions are taken regarding what has to do with all different sport. The more women we have in those positions the easier it will be to create some of the conditions to have greater equality.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, eventually it would have to be in terms of national legislation. To increase or to oblige that... Well, I'm honestly not very much in favour of this thing of quotas, but often times for things to get started we need to start from there. So maybe, as it happens with other positions, maybe there should be a certain number of minimum participants in those positions. So maybe it could be something like that. Although when we started, to a certain extent, we had that concern of always having female members on the sport board. Actually in the first term we were even more than we are now, but, well, then it always has to do with availability and with those things that influence all those decisions.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

That they receive training, that they believe in themselves, that they think they can, because they really can. And that they do not think that this is only a world in which they are excluded, or to which only men dedicate themselves, that they see that ... believing in oneself, in the training that one has, training properly, they can occupy those positions in equality with the man. But it is very important that women believe in themselves, otherwise, we will never be able to take that step.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I think there's not much advice to be given. Basically it's to come forward and take that initiative and believe that they can make a difference. And one alone is difficult, but if we are many it's much easier that some decisions are taken accordingly.





**Juliana Ferreira Sousa**

Vicepresident  
Handball Federation of Portugal

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport in my life was very important, because sport made me the person I am today. Besides the education I got from my father, I started practising sport thanks to my father - he was a major motivator - then also through my sisters, who were also engaged in sport, and so I ended up following their path to a certain extent. All my sisters, have five sisters, they were all engaged in sport and I was the only one not involved in sport, so my father convinced me to engage in sport and I ended up playing handball. From the window of my house there was a ring, I could watch handball. My first contact with sport was at school, with school sport. Got into playing handball, which is the sport I like and which I still practise. Sport helps us have rules, it helps us take up responsibilities, it helps us be able to make decisions, to overcome defeats, and to be stronger for our future life.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Women have an.... It is important that there are women in sport, because women are important, for other women to have role models and also for them to know that women are capable and only need to have opportunities to also be represented. Because what happens is that no one bets on women, they just need opportunities and often they don't get such opportunities. But if they do get an opportunity they are dedicated people, they are able to achieve goals and they are also good in what they do.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Yes, my Federation is developing a project known as Handball for Girls, aimed at the practise of handball by women or more involvement of women as players, athletes, referees, managers, and leaders. We want to have more women playing this sport and this project has that aim, of giving greater visibility, greater dissemination among women, as that's what we need in our country, so that women can know about this sport to be able to engage in it.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

My responsibilities in the Federation are allocated according to one's position. I'm responsible for women's handball, so I'm responsible for everything that has to do with women's handball, from the National Teams, to the Championship, as it is very important that... These are my responsibilities, but also with the help of the Board, of my team, because we all work as a team, we take decisions for things to work out in the best way possible. I'm in this position on the Board since 2012, and I am in my second term.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

It is a position with much responsibility. Because I would just play handball, I was not very much aware of what it meant to be in the management side, so through my colleagues we take the best decision possible as if we take a bad decision it can influence an entire tournament. Our board has the goal of being transparent. We get everyone to take part, from clubs to - I mean everyone taking a decision - to associations, as they are the most important people because without clubs there are no athletes, without athletes there are no clubs and there is no Federation.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

In my opinion it is important, although there are few, because women end up working as a role model for other women that are behind. If there are women in such positions, that are capable and are dedicated, it is an opportunity for other women to follow them as role models. It is an example.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

One of the measures I think is to value women. Women are not valued much. Women end up having an important role at home, but then they are overloaded when they take up the other role they have as a leader. The only problem is that they have a lot to do, so then they are not able, they are not given opportunities. It also has to do with remuneration. Men are paid more than women. Women are not given the value they deserve, the value they should have. So the only way I see for us to be able to have more women is through quotas.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

It is quite gratifying, and it is possible that other women see that they can also reach that level, that women are also capable. Normally, sport boards are mostly made up by men; it already comes from the basis. Society is much turned towards... So we have to change mentalities. And women, are people that, when they are on the Board, other women want to follow their example, and they are also leaders and they are capable of leading and of taking up leadership positions, due to their quality

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

That would say is that we have to fight for what we want, and that we are capable of taking up leadership positions. It is difficult - won't say it isn't - but with our dedication... It is very important to like it; dedication, commitment, only in that way can we get there. We can make it



**Helena Aires**  
Vicepresident  
Portuguese Federation of Basketball

What role does sport play in your life? When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent

Sport has a very important role in my life. I started as an athlete when I was 13 years old, and I played until I was 36. And now, as the Vice-President of the Portuguese Basketball Federation, I came back to sport once again about seven years ago

What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, I think there are more and more women in sport organizations. Although a few years ago, women were more engaged in family life and in their personal life, nowadays they are more available to dedicate their time and to join these organizations. Because I think it is very important, because they always carry a different type of vision and can add a lot to these organizations.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Well, until now I have not been directly involved in any. We at the Federation, we do have that concern, actually one of our Vice-Presidents, that's his professional field and he is always thinking a lot and influences us all to also think for gender equality, and then there is still a lot to do, there is a long way to go and in the Federation every day. But there is still a lot to do and we do have that concern.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

We are in our second term, so for about five to six years. I was an athlete for many years, I'm more connected to the field of communications, as that's my professional background as well, and I'm also in charge of the high-performance centre of Jamor, and also of the under -16 female National Team, which is the National Team I am responsible for.



## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, as an athlete I had no idea of all the work, of all the work that goes on at the Federation; of everything involving clubs, teams, and so on. Since I have been working at the Federation it has been very challenging, as there are many things that we as athletes don't even imagine that happen, but there is a huge amount of work that goes on in the background, done by many many people that devote all their time so that everything runs smoothly regarding athletes, competitions, and so on. And it has been a great challenge to understand this other side which for me was a bit unknown.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Well, I think the involvement of women is very important, as far as they are competent, professional and dedicated. Just like men. More important than votes people should take up positions based on their qualifications. Of course, women always have a different approach and, in my opinion, they can add a lot to the managing boards of sport Federations and can be a very good influence in decision making, for the way we look at things, for their sensitivity and for their fighting spirit.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, I'm not quite sure about what measures could work. I think that it also has a lot to do with women's availability themselves. Women also have to show that they are more available and are willing to get involved, because this work is not paid and very often people - with their personal and professional lives - don't have time available to devote to this type of cause or institutions. So, I think that in our days things have changed a bit, it is seen in a different way, even by families, but it also depends on women wanting to be a party to and wanting to join these projects that do take

some of our time and make us be away from home on weekends and on other occasions. And so it also lies, to some extent, on women to show that availability and that willingness.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Well, I think it's important that women are seen more and more in this type of position, thus proving that they are also capable and have as much skill and availability as men. There is still a long way to go, as I have already said, but I think that it's something that can be very helpful, as sport is important in our country, and so the more women we have in those positions and the greater their visibility, it will also encourage other women to join this type of project and also wanting to be a party to these types of projects.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I would advise them to come, to come and try. Because sports is something great. It's a great school for one's life. At least for me it has been, and we learn how to handle many situations that I think can help us a lot; we get to know many people, we increase our number of contacts, besides the fact sports is something healthy, it is good, it puts people in a good mood, and so everyone, all women should at least try. Both those that practiced sports and those that didn't, they should all help sports grow in our country.



**Ana Paula Almeida**  
Vicepresident  
Federation of Gymnastics of Portugal

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport has always been a part of my life, since ever. Since when I was four years old when I started practising gymnastics, then at about nine or ten years of age I started to practise Competitive Gymnastics, until I was eighteen years old, and then in my adult life I have always engaged in practising sport. Now I go to a gym, I train almost every day, and when I go on holidays with my children I also practise sport with them, so it's part of my life; it is a full part of my life.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Sport started when I was very little. And it is still part of it. So, initially I started practising gymnastics because my parents enrolled me in gymnastics, then because I loved it, because it was part of my life. I couldn't let any day go by without training. It was unthinkable to miss a training session to go out with friends. It was an integral part of my life. Then I became a coach, which was yet another great passion. But then I got married to an athlete, and I had to move to another city and had to move away from training. Later on I joined the Board of the Portuguese Gymnastics Federation, and we are going to complete eight years on this date

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Women are more and more an actual party to sport in our days. I can recall many many names like Rosa Mota, like now these athletes that won the Universiades; we have a gymnast, her name is Filipa Martins whom for some time now, she is one of the best European gymnasts. So women in sport is very important. Of course that we haven't yet been able to be at the level, or at least we don't have the same level of dissemination as for men. I can remember for instance the last Portugal Cup in women's football, in which there was a lot of advertising, so the national football stadium was full, or almost full, but it was not even close to what was the men's national cup. So we have to do something about it.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been in the Portuguese Gymnastics Federation for three terms. In the first and second terms I didn't hold this position. Only in the third term, so for three years now, did I become the Vice-President. And I am responsible for clubs. So the relationship with clubs. That's my responsibility.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, since the last three years I have been more connected to clubs, so I've had some challenges to solve, some issues. I'm working on a project for the development of gymnastics in clubs that don't have gymnastics. And basically that's it. We have a Board that is very much... under which we are always on top of every subject, we offer opinions in all fields, and we meet almost twice a month, so there is a certain comprehensiveness by the Board in all subjects.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I am only aware of the Portuguese Gymnastics Federation. And because it's mostly a female public, I think it is very similar to the male public, I think. Besides, in our Board we have eight members, and six of them are men, but I think there are no differences or discrimination in that.

In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Actually the female way of thinking can bring advantages to governing boards, as we are also dealing with women, with female gymnasts with female athletes, so it is important that we have that division and that balance between genders.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Yes, I think it is important that there are women in top positions, as we actually have a different way of thinking. It's not that we are better or worse, as that doesn't exist between genders, but maybe we have a different way of thinking, so it would be interesting that all governing boards and Federations include women.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I think that when we do something that we like, that we identify with, and that we love above all, I think we should invest in that. I know that women have the children, have the house, have many things, that are... and although there is this equality, but they are still more of a female's than a male's responsibility. But they should accept those challenges as it is very gratifying for women as such.



**Maria Rosa Cristino**

Vicepresident  
Portuguese Sport Fishing Federation



## What role does sport play in your life? When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

So, I am a sport woman, an athlete, and I am a board member. I have belonged to the board since 1978. That's the first time I joined the board, as a member of the Portuguese Sport Fishing Federation, and I have been an athlete since 1978, so I'm much more of an athlete than a Board member. Then I always took part in the Federation. At a certain point I interrupted because we could only have two terms. Then I interrupted and I joined the Sport Fishing Association of the Centre. I was also there for two terms, then I came back to the Federation. And I've been here ever since as a Board Member, as Vice-President, as an administrative employee, I've always been here.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that presently we notice that women are more much involved. Both in events, in the organization of events, and because I think we always need the female touch in the organization, and as athletes I also think that right now the presence of women is going up, as we usually say.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

We had an event in 2006, the World Fishing Games, in which we had several countries participating, but not specifically on this topic we are talking about. We had 56 countries present here, 5,000 athletes, it could be compared to the inter-olympics. It was really good.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

In this Board, I've been a member since 2017. I'm the Vice-President for the financial division. My role here is connected to payments, to everything that has to do with the financial side of the federation.

What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, that question is a complicated one. Well, this Federation is mostly made up by men. I think that I'm the only woman on this Board, and the only woman since ever, in the Federation's life. I am always only one against six or seven from here from the Federation, but I'm able to guide them to the right path.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think that right now, in our present times, there are many more women involved in the activities of the various Federations. Namely in the Sport ConFederation of Portugal, I think that there are two women on the governing board. Which is something you wouldn't see before. So presently women are much more involved in the lives of sport Federations.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

I don't know. Because right now it's not... Well I think we need to encourage women to be part of the lives of sport federations. Namely in Spain, it's a bit complicated because our sport is always on weekends, and we women we always have many things to do: the children, the house, so there's not much time available to be part of a Federation. Well, I'm able because I don't have children and my husband is the President. So we've always been connected as leaders in both the association and in the Federation, we've always been side by side with each other. So it's not very complicated for me. But for most women it is complicated because of family life and the life of a leader, which takes a lot of time. We waste a lot of time with this.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I think that nowadays women have a place in any organization, either in a political one or in sport, in general, just as men. So I think that it's not an issue any more, like "You're a woman so you can't take up such and such position". I think that presently we don't see that. Women can take up any position. They are competent to take up any position.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

First of all to like it and to have time available for it. But mainly to like it and... To like what we do... I think it's mainly that, to like it and to have a vocation for it... If we don't have vocation and patience we can't do anything.



# Ana Cristina Vital Melo

President  
Portuguese Kickboxing and  
Muaythai Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

It is very important. It is part of my day-to-day. Always present, from morning to the evening, 365 days a year. It is impossible for it to not be a part of it.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I confess that I can't even remember, because both my father and my mother are connected to sport, so it has been since ever. Since I can remember, I've always been connected to sport. I've practised countless sport, countless different sport, but we always practised sport.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think there are more and more women practising sport. We have more and more women in competition sport, in sport organised under Federations. In my case, in particular, regarding kick boxing and MuayThai, we actually have more and more women. It was even difficult to combine weight ranges before, in our case, but nowadays we don't have that problem. So, we have many many women in the same weight ranges. I wouldn't say 50% in the same weight ranges, but maybe 60% to 40%. And in the international competition level, in world competitions, we also see that. Then what we see is a drop at the age of 20 something. I don't know if it's for family reasons or for professional reasons, then I notice that there it starts to go down again.

As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

For the very first time, I am part of a committee, the Committee for Women in Sport, which was the idea of this President of the Olympic Committee of Portugal - so he is to be congratulated. This is the second term of this committee. It's my first time as a member of the committee, but now it's the second term, so it's the Olympic Committee of Portugal that has had that concern.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Well, the first time became the resident was in 2008. Then in the meantime there was a gap, a complicated period, with court cases. Because when I arrived in the Federation I discovered many things that were wrong. There were no rules, everything was illegal, there were no Articles of Association, the accounts were a mess. So, to go against installed structures; to go against a Federation made up only of men who would fully dominate it and make of it their way of life, and so to get there and to impose rules, and make it abide by the law, well, it was the worst that ever happened to me. So there was a gap that hurt the Federation very much, judicially. But then in 2015 everything ended with an agreement. They left. Well, things started to become calm after 2013, but then in 2015 there was an actual agreement. And finally now things have come to a good stand. Now in a Federation like mine, is one the President? Well one has to do everything. To take care of the administrative matters, to take care of sport matters, to take care of the competitions, everything... The smallest thing you can think of, like going to the supermarket to buy water for the referees, to the institutional matters with the government, everything has to go through us. I have a Board, presently, made up of people with a lot of experience, with former coaches, former sportmen, former references from this sport that are finally giving me a great help, so I can breathe a little. In terms of training and education, in sport matters. But for a Federation with many athletes, with more and more athletes, with two different sports, and with no funding and ultimately with no human resources, it is very complicated. It is very complicated. It takes full dedication, on a daily basis, and fully. It's really very complicated. Because ultimately, I'm not a professional. It is an amateur sport, but then everything that goes on has to be done during working hours. So meetings have to be held in working hours, my presence at the Federation has to be during working hours. It is very complicated. It is very stressful and is very complicated. You have to really like it very, very much to give up our hours, our life....



## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

I became the President in 2006 until the beginning of 2008. Then there was a gap, a judicial gap, a very complex one, for some years, because it were the old folks that were there, that didn't want to follow rules, they didn't want to submit accounts, and I didn't want to be a party to that. I even considered leaving. But I thought it was hurting very much the Federation, to leave it like that. I usually say that if we want good to prevail we can't let evil people stay, just because we don't want to be bothered. It was really a hater. I went through a tough time with all of that. But in 2015 there was an agreement, as they started to lose the court cases and they started to see that things were looking really bad for them, and then in 2013 we got the support of the Secretary of State of those times who saw that we were right. So in about two years' time we were able to settle that dispute that had lasted for so long. Now it is very complicated as the President because I have to do practically everything. Because it's a federation that has very few resources, and has two different sports. It means two national tournaments, two European tournaments, two World tournaments, two junior tournaments, and why? Because it's Kick Boxing and Muay Thai. So our resources are very very few, and it's difficult that say that I'm the President and I just sign papers. No, it's impossible. From the administrative level we all help each other, to the institutional level, I have to do everything. Presently, I have a Board with former managers and former sportmen that have a large experience in this sport and that helps me a lot, that supports me a lot, and that, to a certain extent, relieves me very much. Because in coach training courses, in choosing the national teams, in matters that have to do with more technical aspects of the sport, that are under their portfolios - and despite I still have many little things that it's quite different now. Because despite the fact that there is a lot of work, as we have more and more work, because there are more and more athletes and more and more clubs, but it's good to have in that part people that know and understand the sport. So I'm happy, I'm happy.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

It is very complicated, because of a cultural issue, in my opinion. And after a certain age, women have their professional life, their family life, which are very demanding, and to reconcile all of that with the sport side, which really takes a lot of work, and it's many hours, and it takes a lot of dedication, so it's very complicated. And the fact is that there are not many women in leadership positions. And although we do have more and more women in companies, in political positions, there is a great force being made for greater equality, actually in the European Parliament we now have the case of having a woman. But in terms of sport, it is very complicated because we have many weekends away, many competitions away, and so socially women are still very much penalised because of having to leave their home to go to a sport competition; to leave their home to go to an international competition, so it is very painful at social and at family level. I have no doubts about that.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

We would need to have more support. We would need and do need to change mentalities. I do think we are on the right path, that our society is on the right path, but there is still a lot to be done.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Well, I, just by myself, I don't see myself as a role model, because it actually requires a lot of dedication, it is a lot of work. I take many hours from myself because I'm not a professional at the Federation, so I have my day-to-day job, and then I have the Federation. So one really has to love it very very much; have a great love for the Federation and have a mission, a public cause. And this is truly a public cause. All of us that work in the Board of the Federation, the referees, all of us we work for love of the game, it is all pro bono. But now, I ask myself, what drives me? What drives me is that we have more and more athletes, we have more and more women; we go abroad and Portugal is more and more acknowledged; we bring more international medals. So when we go to an international competition, and bring medals, and hear our anthem it's an emotion you cannot describe. In our national competitions, we have more and more people. This makes us feel so very proud of our work, and that's what moves us and makes us be there, and do things - it's the pride we feel. But now, there are many unpleasant things, because having to deal with institutions it's horrible, and dealing with people that occupy positions, leaders, and people that are in the government, and except for some very rare cases, they have no clue. We are speaking in totally different languages. So it is very complicated for us to try to go against the wall. It's basically about going against a wall. The laws when they are passed they are for all sport Federations, but the realities are totally different. The reality of the football federation is totally different from the reality of a federation like ours. And generally they just look at football and at large Federations, and so then it is almost impossible, it is impossible, to comply with the legislation that all of a sudden enters into force. And us, however we may want to be heard, we always have a barrier there, a barrier that cannot be overcome because we are very small and we live with many difficulties. But still, it's not because of that that we don't have sport, it's not because of that that we don't bring medals. Because, for instance, we do a huge work with schools, with school sport. We have one person just dedicated to sport for people with disabilities, we have a person just for school sport, that goes to many institutions and then

many kids come because they see a role model, so all of this... specially for underprivileged neighbourhoods to have sport, it is absolutely essential. To bring these people, these children close to us, to bring these kids to practise sport it is almost like a snowball. They practise sport, then they become better students, they take responsibilities, they have discipline, not smoking, well, instead of being at the cafe they are practising sport. All of this is so good. And then these kids, when they take part in national competitions they become a reference for others, and that is really very good for our society. And I think that in general all sport is very good for everyone, but especially for the younger ones. And that makes us believe that we will have better people. But it is very difficult to do all of this with so many obstacles, with such lack of support that there is from the State that just looks at two or three Federations.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

What could I say as advice? That they should think that if they go to a poor Federation - well if they go to a rich Federation they won't lack anything, they will have all the support and all the logistics - but if they come to a poor Federation, and there are many, with lack of resources and with so many obstacles that are there, they will have to ask for everything from many people, they will have to knock at many many doors. They will have to understand that at a personal level that it's about many many hours that they will have to spend for the sport's cause, for this cause, but I honestly think it is worthwhile.



**Maria da Graça Coelho**

Expresident  
Portuguese Archery Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Well, I have practised sport since I was a little girl and professionally I also chose sport, so for 60 years now I've been dedicated to sport.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Well, I started when I was about 7 years old. I started swimming - as in Portugal we have lots of water - so then they thought I should start swimming. Then, at the same time, I also started with gymnastics and dance. Then I stopped swimming, when I was about to start competing but I had some issues with my throat and so on, so I decided to choose gymnastics - which at the time was called Sport Gymnastics, with the Olympic beam, the parallel bars, and so on - and dance, classical dance. And I stayed with Gymnastics for forty years, engaged as a sportswoman, as a coach, as a leader, I was involved in that. Then at about the age of thirty I started engaging in target archery, and I remained in target archery until the present date.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, what I have noticed, and it's not just something recent - because as I said, I have been involved with sport for many years - when I attend meetings with representatives from the various national sport Federations - which are not that many, they're about sixty already - there are just about three or four women. So, I feel like a bit misplaced in the midst of so many men, and we can see, it is obvious that the male side predominates in national sport, I mean as leaders, as sport managers. That is also visible in the Portuguese Sport and Youth Institute, the IPDJ, in which most of the technical staff and top managers are men. Right now, there are two women, but they are a kind of a rare case. In the Olympic Committee it's the same thing. Very few women work there, and presently, fewer and fewer women work in the Olympic Committee.

## As Expresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

The Portuguese Sport and Youth Institute, the IPDJ, has had some policies aimed at implementing gender equality, and to a certain extent it obliges sport Federations to have gender equality programmes. It is not easy. But we have tried, in these two years I have been ahead of the Federation, even because I am also a woman, so we have tried to have greater participation by women practising target archery. It is not easy. So, first of all we tried to identify why there were fewer women, why don't women engage so much in target archery, and also regarding the younger age groups, the little ones, why do they often also give up easily? Then, while trying to understand the why's, then try to find a way, or several ways, of being able to improve those stats. But it's not easy.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

So, I started two years ago. I was elected as the President of the Target Archery Federation, two years ago, and my responsibilities were those of managing, of coordinating in a general way, although I also had many initiatives in education. As I am a teacher, an educator, I always had a lot of influence in the field of training and education because it is critical. Without education one cannot expand the sport. If there are no coaches that know how to teach target archery, we cannot open more clubs, more centres, and so on, so training and education is critical, and thus it has been the apple of my eye, very critical for developing this sport in our country.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Mostly, lack of funds. National sport get very little funding. The State doesn't give much money to sport. As you know, we went through an economic crisis at national level, so the first to get cuts is sport. Because they think it is not necessary. Of course, eating is a greater priority for the survival of the species. But well, so budgets were cut, and especially the small Federations feel those cuts very strongly, because, as they are small, it is more difficult for them to get sponsorships. If there are no customers in large numbers, it is more difficult to get sponsorships, although I was able to get a small sponsorship, for instance, for the uniforms of the national team, and not much more than that. So, if the State does not invest, at an initial stage, in the development of sport with smaller Federations, until they are able to become big, it never goes anywhere. So, the greatest difficulty is undoubtedly the lack of funds to hire national coaches, to hire a whole range of people, of professionals that are required to develop sport to the highest level, and also to develop sport for everyone.



## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Obviously, this it is important, although I think that this issue of gender equality, it shouldn't be that just because she's a woman she has to be. She has to be competent for, and I do think that there are many women who do have the skills, but then they are not able to enter the field of sport management because there is pressure, there are lobbies, male lobbies - let's call it like that - that end up making women become upset and leave. So, we need to have a lot of strength, a lot of, you know what I mean, in order to be able to overcome all those pressures. As in Portugal the great majority of Federations are on a voluntary basis, all management bodies are on a voluntary basis, people don't feel like being disturbed. So, they say "ok if you want the job, then take it. I have more interesting things do to in life". Isn't it? If people start to get paid, to have a salary, and not all Federations have that economic power to be able to pay their presidents in order to have a professional type of management, of leadership. Although, quite often, we do have professional managers like in my case. I have a Master's in sport economics and managements, so I know very well what needs to be done, but there is a whole range of barriers, like the economic ones, obviously.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, lately there has been some pressure made on government bodies, as I said, but it is not because of having such pressure that things happen. Is it? It is not by passing a law that things will happen. Things have to gradually evolve, there has to be education, a social transformation, social education in that direction, so that men accept women on an equal basis, and that women also feel they are also on an equal footing as men. There are no male or female managers, there are managers full stop. Either they understand about management or don't understand about management, but they are managers, both of them. It is not because they are men, that they look at things from the top down. No, it should be on an equal basis, although me personally, in my last stage at the Federation, in the last days, weeks, there was a need to replace two managers, and two ladies applied to replace the two men, and I heard from one of the male managers who was still in office saying, "Well, now we'll have women giving orders to men. This is a 70-year old man, so, you know, it wasn't very well received. I thought he was a bit more open, but no. There are five on the board so now we'll have three women giving orders to men." He was not very happy with the idea.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Yes, while being a woman. Well, I think it can contribute, because we are very few. As presidents of national Federations, we are only two, and we were treated almost like a rare species. I remember once hearing the President of the Olympic Committee saying "This is just one more lady, so please take nice care of her, to see that she doesn't escape." So, to foster gender equality. But yes, I think that it's an example for others to come forward without being afraid, you know. they can do it - "they" means the two of us - we can also make it. And, of course, that men accept it.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Please come, with no fears, thinking on equality. Please don't see yourselves as a rare species, isn't it? You are on an equal footing as men. Men, women, professionally, men and women we are all equal. It depends on the skills each one has. As far as you feel competent for the job, then please come. Okay? Don't let yourself be intimidated.



**Teresa Cardoso**  
Vicepresident  
Portuguese Federation of Triathlon

## What role does sport play in your life? When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent

Well, it's like this, right now sport in my life is a major, major part of my life. I started engaging in sport at a relatively late stage. Only when I was fifteen years old. But I quickly discovered that sport helped me, both at personal level, and also in achieving goals, and also for the personal development of new skills. First, I started with rowing, I didn't start with triathlon. In Coimbra, not here in Aveiro. And then I started, later on, with competition. I engaged in competitions through rowing. I joined the national team and so on, and I stayed with rowing for quite some time. In the meantime, due to my professional life, I didn't have much time for rowing, and when one is used to having a certain level of results, I kind of lost interest in rowing. And most of my friends changed to triathlon and so I - about nine years ago - I also decided to give a try to triathlon, and it has been going on ever since.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

It's like this, I think it has been increasing. I've been practising sport... I've been in sport since 1989/1990 and I clearly recall that when I joined rowing I was the only girl in my age group. And even then, below me there was only two more and above me there were two other. But nowadays, when I look at rowing, if we're speaking about rowing, and the number of girls engaged in rowing has increased quite a lot. I think. In triathlon, I've only been with triathlon for nine years and I have also noticed that it has increased, namely even in older age groups. What I notice is that sometimes in youth sport - but this is across the board with regard to all sport - one can have good attraction of athletes, but then there is a period there, which is when they enter college that we lose some, and then when they finish their university courses we also lose some athletes, both females and some males also. But then later on, what I think is that in triathlon there is a great increase of female athletes from the age of thirty or forty years of age. I wouldn't say it's in fashion, but maybe it's a lifestyle that people tend to adopt, and it's positive to see that we're not the only women practising it. Of course that when we are surrounded by more it's always more pleasant. Now, as far as the organisations. Well, it's like this, maybe we don't have as many as we would like to have available for this. Sometimes it's also a matter of availability. Because, in terms of sports organisations, and federations, it requires some availability and it's an age group, normally those that are part of federations, it's people that have a job, that have families and all of that, and so maybe they don't have as much availability to take part in yet another organisation. Or maybe it's because of that that we don't find so many women. Maybe. But, never thought about it deeply to find a specific reason, but maybe it has to do with that.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Well, it's like this, I've only been with the Federation for three years, and so far, specifically, specifically no. There was chance which thin was already in the old, not old, in the former board, before ours that was to... Right now the prize money in competitions is the same for men and women. When I started competing, nine years ago, it was not like that. That is already a great progress, that it's like that. We really try to encourage women to participate, namely by giving visibility to our female athletes, a bit like a lever. Give them some protagonist, which they actually deserve for the results they achieve, and we think that this can be an example to attract more women to this sport. So more than... One of our great athletes from the past, and who gave great visibility to triathlon, was a woman that was Vanessa Fernandes. Just with that we already have a great reference for our sport because it's a woman. We had that great luck and we should, well not use, but it should be a major asset of our federation.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

joined three years ago. Two and a half, three years ago. My fields of action are mostly focused on the older age groups. In the dynamics of both national and international competitions, and in finding incentives so that more and more we can have more athletes that are not just in the elites. More amateur athletes practising our sport, like that. Then, I also have the portfolio of female triathlon, although who is more in charge of that... because I have the handicap of the Federation being in Lisbon and I am from Aveiro, and that... I feel that to a certain extent maybe I should be more present, although we hold online meetings and all that. But maybe if I were in Lisbon, closer to where action happens and closer to the Federation, maybe things could be a bit different, but well, this is progressing and that's it.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, I cannot say that... the challenge... Well, for me the greatest challenge is actually the distance of being far from Lisbon and that's where the headquarters of the Federation are located. Another challenge is that, sometimes I don't feel so much at ease, because Federations, whether we like it or not, are a bit political. Political, not in the sense of having a political party colour. But, well, it has a lot to do with laws, political initiatives in which I don't yet fit very well. I'm not very much acquainted with the subject matters. But whenever I have doubts, I have people in the Federation that help me. And that's my main challenge, to try to be a part of - to the greatest extent - of sport policies and where can we get support from, and take advantage from the opportunities that the government itself offers to federations.



## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Well, I think that the involvement of women in any organization is important. Either in a sport organization or in any organization, even like a company or whatever, because... Maybe we have a way of thinking that is different. It's not better nor worse, it's just different. And maybe we see things in a different way from the way men see. I think that the most important is that we have women in the organizations. I don't propose that it should be through quotas, or by imposition. I think women should be there, because they are capable of being there and have... Some have the curriculum to be there, and above all for being capable, and because they can bring to or initiate a different type of approach. It's only just that.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

It's like this. As I said before, I think it shouldn't be through orders, those situations. I think that really, if in sport itself there is already some gender equality. There is already women's triathlon and men's triathlon, and in other sport, so those ahead of Federations should include - not by an order, but because of thinking that it is actually important - also include female members. But I don't think it should be done under an order, but rather due to the person's merit for being there.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, I think that they should convey that message at the time... Because in every Federation there are elections, as a rule, every four years, I think that women should show interest, when the list of candidates are being organised for Federations, in order to try to take up those positions, because. It's logical that if we are waiting for things to come to us, of course things don't come to us, we have to show an interest in being a party of the organizations as such. I think that's fundamental. It's not just about saying that things are wrong, but we need to act for things to change.



# Italy

Mara Invernizzi · Fabrizia D'Ottavio · Grazia Ciarlitto ·  
Daniela Isetti · Emanuela Croce Bonomi · Eleonora Di  
Giuseppe · Ida Nicolini · Silvia Salis · Maria Amelia Lolli  
Tiziana Nasi · Chiara Pacchioni · Elisabetta Villa



**Mara Invernizzi**  
Vicepresident  
Italian Basketball Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport has always played an educational role in my life – it has allowed me to become the person I am, over and above who I am as an athlete, and so I think it's...it can really be a great source of education and personal growth for lots of kids today.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

My first experience with basketball had me in tears, because I had absolutely no desire to go and play in a gym with a coach laying down the rules. My dad, on the other hand, seeing that I was a tall girl, was worried about my health problems – scoliosis – and he pushed me to take up the sport. I was a very lively girl, and I appreciated all the aspects of the sport right away. Spirit... a team sport that also develops a lot of individual skills, and so I immediately fell in love with it.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, I believe that the number of women who play sport is rapidly increasing, if we're talking about all sport. And I also believe that in terms of quality, the level among... among female athletes in Italy has risen a lot. There's definitely a lot of... still a lot of room for growth and room for improvement, so there's still plenty of work to be done.

## As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

As vice president and federation board member, my... one of my first tasks was to bring women's basketball... to bring it up to the same level as the men's game as far as possible, with all the applicable limitations since the numbers are different the financial situation is also significantly different. How was that possible... by starting for little things, those little equality issues, for example... by having women play, trying to have women play at the same facilities, with the same rights, with the same conditions as men, so going from small situations to then gradually trying to get total equality, including for big... for big things. But what has fundamentally changed in my opinion is just the fact of being there. Even the presence of a woman is fundamental.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I was appointed vice President of the Federation exactly three years ago; this will be the last year of my term. My duties are... to begin with, of course, taking part in the board of the Federation, where in fact we discuss everything about Italian basketball, male and female, but especially I'm responsible for the female youth sector, and then I have... I was also, shall we say, one of the... one of the first to be responsible for... this new sport, which is 3x3 basketball, so streetball but as an Olympic discipline.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, the main challenge was being able to reconcile work commitments and family life with this commitment, which is always a voluntary thing in any case. I'm satisfied. I know that I could have done better and I'm convinced that if these roles could become professional positions in the future, they could really be a significant and more effective turning point for the sport in general.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Assuming that today there are no women at the top level within Federations – I think I might be one of the few to hold the role of vice President – I personally believe that the presence of a woman at... heading up a Federation can really be something... a positive element, for various reasons. At least for a different perspective from what the male presidents of all the Federations up until now have brought to the role, and perhaps also greater sensitivity, which... which in any case doesn't hurt in a world... in the world of sport.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Some measures have already been taken to encourage the presence of the... of women within the governing bodies of sport. For example, in fact, the percentage of... of female board representatives has increased, albeit from the upcoming elections onwards, because CONI (the Italian National Olympic Committee) brought in a law recently. So, shall we say, let's call them the 'pink quotas', which are not always welcomed, are certainly... effective. In the meantime, I believe that women should be involved in the whole life of the club and therefore the sport on a daily basis, because I believe that women today have so much to express and can really bring their experience to the table, and they might... they also want to redeem themselves for the many years where they haven't been able to play a leading role. So the incentive is definitely something that can be useful.



## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

When I was elected as a board member and then appointed vice President, I got a lot of recognition from... women as well as men, and perhaps it was unexpected to get it from... from the female side. Recognition and respect, and... Support that spurred me on to do... to do everything I could to assert myself... so I think that being there today, like I am and like other women are, sets an example and could perhaps be a cause for... for confidence, a reason for other women who perhaps don't yet have the courage to take confidence. But what... what I would say to women is to... to do a bit more of themselves. So many times, when we're scared that we won't be able to do as we want and get where we want, we back down first. Instead, sometimes you have to try and dare a little more.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, to do a lot of yoga and autogenic training. I'm joking. Joking aside, I can't manage that either. No, the advice I would give is... the tip that jumps out at me is to be themselves. Don't turn into a fake man, because today what we can offer and do and what is ascribed of us is very much linked to the fact that we're feminine, so we can bring to the table our sensitivity, our passion, our determination and listening skills, which perhaps aren't always so... characteristic of men.



## Grazia Ciarlito

Member of the sport governing board  
Italian Gymnastics Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

At the moment, the role that sport plays in my life is based around my role as a resident of a sport club first and foremost, and as a national board member for the Italian Gymnastics Federation. Although it's a voluntary commitment given that it isn't a professional role, it requires time. It takes time away from personal engagements, but it is definitely satisfying since we're passionate about it.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Well, my very first experience was as a young child I tried to get into artistic gymnastics, which didn't last very long at all, even though I was really enthusiastic about it. Later, I suggested to my daughter that she should take up the sport, and I pointed her in the direction of artistic gymnastics. Once she started attending the gym, the instructors there – it was the same sport club I had gone to – noticed that she was naturally suited to rhythmic gymnastics. That's when my daughter Marta started her sporting career, and that's also where my passion developed and where I got into the discipline of rhythmic gymnastics.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

In my opinion, we should assess the world of sport from two different perspectives. Firstly, take in part in sport females make up a significant and also successful proportion of competitors, since women and girls work very hard and often achieve great results in sport. The numbers there are encouraging, especially in our Federation, where female athletes make up a much larger proportion than men. In terms of leadership in the world of sport, things are different – the number of women drops exponentially there, especially the number of women at executive level.

## As a Member of the sport governing board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Significant changes are taking place in sport leadership to promote female representation in management and executive roles. From the next four-year term onwards, so-called “pink quotas” have been introduced, i.e. a requirement for gender diversity in national boards: the same principle applies to both national and international Federations. So international Federations have also opened up and embraced this criterion, ensuring the participation of both women and men in equal measure.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been board member since 2012, because I was elected for the first time at the national assembly in 2012 and re-elected in the 2016 election. So this is my second term. I've been doing it for eight years. I have mainly been responsible for rhythmic gymnastics, because each board member has a presidential mandate for the section's activities. I've mainly been responsible for rhythmic gymnastics as the appointed board member. But for this four-year term, I'm also the President of the Statute Commission, the commission that draws up all the regulations in terms of both the Federation's sporting activity and its administrative activity.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Essentially, every election is a challenge. That's the most significant one you put yourself forward to people, you pursue a project and you attempt to amalgamate your ideas on what the conception of the Federation can be, and so you try to reach a consensus on your ideas in order to get elected and become part of the sport board. That's been the most important challenge. Plus, of course, as regards the section's activities, there was a very important ongoing challenge, which was to ensure that rhythmic gymnastics had its own facility. In Italy, despite how successful the section has been, there was no facility dedicated exclusively to the sport. During this four year term, we've managed to open the first facility in Italy exclusively dedicated, tailored and conceived from day one for rhythmic gymnastics training. That was definitely a challenge that we've overcome.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Female participation is not particularly common, so much so that I'm actually the only woman out of seven representatives of sport club directors. So they're satisfied with this level of participation. I believe that women can participate more effectively in management activities, and I hope that we can step up to achieve this goal.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

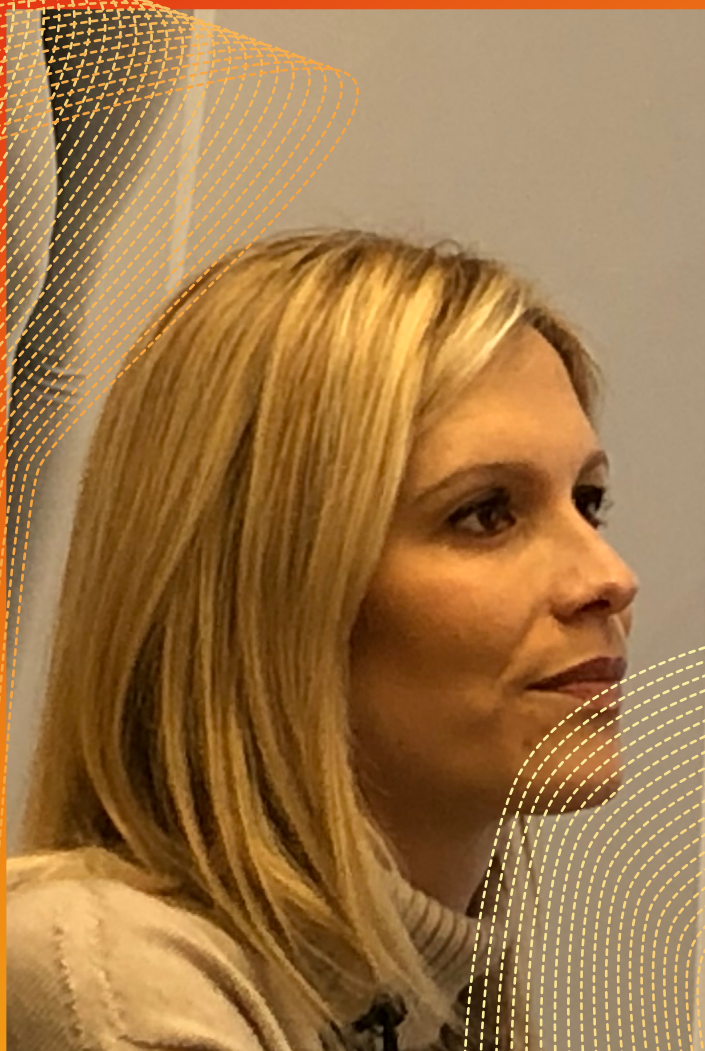
One measure has already been adopted and is already in place: establishing participation quotas for women. This will come into effect for the next elections in 2020. This in itself can be and certainly will be a step forward in increasing the number of women on national boards.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I hope to encourage women to put themselves forward and get involved in this activity. I very much hope... Of course, when I talk to presidents of sport clubs or women who are presidents of regional committees, I try to... I invite them to keep their positions and also to get involved, to put themselves forward.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

It's not easy to give advice. What I can say is that I think female participation benefits sporting activity, including at a managerial level. I hope, by virtue of this, that the numbers of women involved can increase.



## **Fabrizia D'Ottavio**

Member of the sport governing board  
Italian Gymnastics Federation



## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport in my life has essentially been the linchpin that everything else revolves around. I started as a little girl at the age of 5 and I stopped competing at 16, which is a significant career for a gymnast. So it helped me grow up – it shaped me. The entire rest of my life to this day depends on sport.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I first got involved in sport at the age of 5, but it was a completely random encounter. I wasn't aware of rhythmic gymnastics, as it was still a fairly little-known sport at the time. I saw it by chance one day at the stadium in Chieti, my hometown, and it was love at first sight. From there, I had my first experiences, my first training sessions and my first results, which led to me being called up by the Italian national team. From there, the successes kept coming and building, fortunately, which led to the rhythmic gymnastics team winning the first Olympic medal at the Athens Olympics. That was definitely my biggest and best result. I only retired after the next four-year period, with Beijing 2008.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, definitely when it comes to memberships – and therefore athletes – the female side of things is very active, both in terms of numbers and in terms of results. For example, looking at Italy (my home country), women have been so successful. The Olympic medal table is full of female champions. So from that point of view, women's sport in Italy is in a very, very healthy state. I come from the Gymnastics Federation, and within the Federation, to give you an example, female sections like rhythmic and artistic are practically the driving force, with great results. So from that point of view, it's a very positive situation. The situation is different on the other side, at the managerial level: although we're making progress, female representation is not yet comparable with the number of men, so there is definitely work to be done.

As a Member of the sport governing board did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

As a board member for the Federation, I haven't had an opportunity to deal with these issues yet. But that's basically because I belong to a Federation where differences between the genders, at least as far as athletes are concerned, are not that pronounced. As a Federation, we welcome various sections: some are just for women and are therefore very strong; others are just for men. But they're very balanced, so there's no gender inequality.

In the board, the situation is different, but it will start improving from next year, because 30% of the people who sit around that table will have to be women. This is definitely an important step forward within this four year term, which is the period for which I have been collaborating with the Federation. There have been two women in the group, including me. But it's fair to say that in terms of a secure position there has only been one, namely the athletes' representative, which in this case was me. Without

a doubt, this 30% compared to the single mandatory female member up until now is another step forward. So we hope to keep improving from this standpoint.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

My role is as a board member for the Federation specifically, as the athletes' representative. So I'm the link between the rhythmic gymnasts, the trampoline gymnasts, the artistic gymnasts – all the sections that are part of our Federation – and, of course, the President, thus the Board. Obviously I have a male equivalent, the athletes' representative for the guys. We work to give the gymnasts a voice, because thinking of my own experience as an athlete, looking back, I realise how often, when your fundamental objective is to achieve a result or train hard to reach peak level, often you're almost scared to express your needs and requirements. Not quite scared perhaps, but often they're overshadowed because training takes precedence. So in this case, a point of reference like a board member representing the athletes can be useful, because it gives athletes a voice when they might have difficulty expressing their requirements for various reasons. My experience began at a time when gymnastics was certainly still important in my life, although I had just ended my competitive career, but it was a period when I was doing many other things. I accepted this "challenge" because I was engaged by a very active and very positive working group that had good ideas to put forward to innovate and take the world of gymnastics to the next level. So I got involved in the hope of being able to contribute something.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The main challenges... fundamentally, they might have been more to do with me than with other people or situations. Because it's a familiar

environment for me, it's where I grew up. These are people I had already developed relationships with in the past. The most complex thing for me was maybe transitioning my role, in other words going from athlete to member of the board of the Federation – moving over to the other side. After all, it's not a transition that's particularly – I don't want to say "spontaneous", but natural. You need to adjust your point of view on certain things. You learn a lot of additional information that perhaps you didn't know about as an athlete: not because it didn't interest you, but because at the time you didn't need it, it wasn't useful. So it's more of an inner transformation that leads you to take on new skills, new responsibilities. So it takes... I wouldn't say courage, but resourcefulness, without abandoning your whole background as an athlete, which is crucial and which is probably also the biggest and most powerful added value that we have as athletes' representatives. Because we're "fresh", shall we say, from a sporting career – we've only stopped competing recently, so for many things we maybe have more direct and clearer experience compared to people who have been in management for longer but who retired as athletes longer ago.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

In my opinion, so far, despite the progress we're making, like the mandatory 30% female presence on boards starting from next year, female participation is still insufficient. Especially with regard to the highest positions, like President and vice President – as far as I recall, there have been no female holders of these roles, at least in our sector. This despite the fact, as I said before, that the female sections are very important. In fact, they're often the driving force behind the whole movement. There is certainly work to be done. If I remember rightly, in some studies from 2015, even in Europe, female participation on boards or in higher-level positions was only 15%. This percentage definitely needs to be changed somehow.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Without a doubt, upstream of everything else, it's partly the mentality that needs to be changed. Because we fall back on stereotypes that sporting situations are more compatible with men than women. For example, it's an environment where athletes need to be strong, powerful... These characteristics are more likely to be part of a masculine environment than a female one. Men who don't play sport is considered more manly. Women who play sport, including strenuous ones, are considered more masculine. This fundamental view then has implications on the whole viewpoint at a sporting level for athletes, but also at a managerial level. So essentially, we need to tackle this change in mentality, to break down these stereotypes between men and women, sporting or non-sporting. Then in some way we need to incentivise and encourage girls and women to stay in the world of sport once their competitive career has ended, if they've had a career like that, or even guide them with studies, specific study courses for the sporting sector to create a tailored pathway that supports them – because often you're scared to get started, to get involved in a situation where you're actually in the minority; you're afraid to put yourself out there to that extent. In some way, we need to create a pathway that encourages women and gives them the skills to reach certain levels.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I imagine that my role could help in this regard. Just think, for example, of the visibility that sport has. Nowadays, visibility is everything. It's essential. As soon as a Federation, for example, appears in public and organises a large event, an event that has national visibility, and people at home see that there are women in the working group, these women definitely help to send a positive message. Even if for the spectators it's nothing more than the mere image, the appearance of it, it's already a positive input in

this sense. So yes, more can certainly be done, but I think it's a positive influence from that perspective. These are small steps that will definitely lead to bigger results.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

The advice I can give is definitely to be a bit brave and put yourself out there. Because the feeling that I had, too... the initial difficulty of changing my role and changing my skills, my points of view... It hasn't been a simple process, but it's certainly been very interesting. So resourcefulness is crucial. You need to be very devoted to your passion, to your work. At the end of the day, we work to create the best environment possible to develop new champions who will then obviously become citizens of the world once they come to the end of their competitive career. And we know that sport can convey very important values. So never lose sight of the values and the primordial passions that made you fall in love with the specific sport in situation you work in. The basis for your work is always there – passion – and you should never lose sight of that. Another piece of advice I can give is to try to take on board everything you come into contact with as much as you can: people, ideas, ways of looking at things, ways of reacting to situations. Learn from all the situations you experience. This is very, very useful, because it allows you to expand your knowledge and get a broader view of the big picture, especially in the world of sport, which is constantly changing and brings you into contact with different cultures and people from countries with different systems.



## Daniela Isetti

Vicepresident  
Italian Cycling Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport is extremely important to me. I was encouraged by my parents to start doing sport, cycling obviously... I also rode competitively, but since I wasn't an outstanding athlete I rather quickly moved over to the other side of the desk... basically I kind of started off as a press officer for the Committee... for what was the Emilia-Romagna Regional Committee at that time, so basically I got some experience as a sport journalist, especially in cycling, but I also wrote about football and some other things too. After that, basically, little by little I began my... let's say my 'managerial career', which led me to the position I hold today. So basically sport has always absolutely been a very important part of my life, including in terms of taking part in sport, but unfortunately when I got into other types of activities in the same field, had to... had to give up on that. But it's still, in any case... let's say, the predominant part of my life, a great passion that's always been with me, both as a competitor and as a manager.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

My experience basically began at a young age with bikes, taking part in amateur activities. Then I started competing, and then, I went on to collaborate with the organization of the competitions – still cycling. So, in short, basically it was an approach, among other things, step by step, let's also say encouraged by my parents who were part of this world. So a path that in any case has always been exclusively in biking, in a nutshell, relatively to bike riding but also to organizational activities, including competitions, which is precisely why I've dedicated myself to it.



## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that the current level has clearly been positively influenced. The female presence in the world of sport has certainly developed. However, this presence could definitely be improved further, both from the perspective of participation in sport and from the perspective of women being appointed to technical and managerial roles. So, in short, I think it's definitely an enormously rewarding area we can work on, looking into a future where women can have even broader roles. For example, I believe that from a technical point of view, so specifically regarding technicians, the contribution of women is very important, especially when it comes to introducing people to sport.

## As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Saying that my Federation is male-dominated is not exactly correct in the sense that, for example, in 2018 out of the 80 medals our Federation won internationally, 41 were won by women, so basically, even if it was only just, the girls got over 50% of the medal haul. Let's just say that I... I also don't consider it very useful to do highly targeted initiatives. In the sense that the approach needs to be standardised in any case. It's clear that there needs to be different approaches according to gender, but as for all the policies designed to introduce people to and promote cycling, or sport in any case, I think they still need to involve all genders. Clearly, when certain technical situations are applied, it's obvious there needs to

be differentiation, because there are physiological differences between men and women. But I believe we've reached a level such that women must be seen in the same identical way. I don't think there can be any discrimination in this sense.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I am deputy vice President of the Italian Cycling Federation for the second term. So the terms are 4 years and we're approaching the end of the second term. I was obviously hugely pleased to be elected deputy vice President. In our Federation, people vote for 3 vice presidents and the one who gets the most votes obviously becomes the deputy. So basically, for me it was obviously an important sign of the respect that clubs in the cycling world have for me. My role, obviously... As vice President, my role covers everything that happens in the Federation. However, I have a particular sector to oversee, which is training, so the Federation's study centre, which takes care of all the training and refresher courses within our Federation, as well as providing, let's say, the trainers, so the training staff for the men's national track team, and these are guys who belong ... guys and girls who belong to the study centre, to this federal study sector system, so obviously sport scientists who've had a certain type of training with us. And so at this point they have – including from a technical point of view – significant... specialisations and roles, shall we say. So today they help prepare the men's national track team, which is led by the technician Marco Villa, a technician who's the envy of the whole world.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Challenges...it's not... maybe it's not in my nature to call them challenges. In the sense that from a general point of view I've certainly had to work a lot and, if I may say so, women still have to work more than men to reach a certain level. They need perseverance and determination. So in short, let's say the challenge might have been always managing to devote a lot of

time to this role and to what the role obviously entails. But it's something I obviously do with passion, I might even say boundless passion nowadays, so it's clear that I... I take great pleasure in doing it. Undoubtedly, in fact, the challenge – if we want to call it that – lies in being able, let's say, to maintain it, right? A certain type of focus for a long time while being in a situation that requires significant general commitment.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think there can be ample room within Federations... there's still ample room for greater engagement from women within Federations. Certainly, one thing that could work against this – although this applies to everyone, in general – is that the management positions are still on a voluntary basis, apart from the role of President. And so basically they're unpaid and obviously, therefore, this is definitely, shall we say... a deterrent when it comes to the amount of work that needs doing to maintain certain positions. So definitely, aside from this, within the federations there's ample room for improvement when it comes to the presence of women. But let's not forget that, in any case, CONI, the National Board, the Board and President Malagò himself were strongly behind a new, let's say, statutory regulation that requires at least one third of the members of each board of the federation to be female. So basically, this will definitely make... make more room for women, though I must say that to be honest I'm not massively in favour of the 'pink quotas', in the sense that I believe women still have skills regardless of whether they're part of the pink quota or not. But we can say that this will certainly help a lot of other women get more involved in the world of sport and gain greater consideration within Federation boards.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

This change to the statutes will actually be a great help. Other situations most likely depend on individual sport and individual disciplines, because we realise that each Federation can have repercussions in terms of different activities, depending on the activities the Federations carry out. No doubt having a particular focus on female leadership for certain sectors, such as the youth sector, could well be helpful.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Let's say that I think my role has contributed a bit in this sense, at a general level within our Federation, and so I talk about the Federation to encourage the presence of women within the various structures a bit. Because before my two terms as vice President, I did two terms as a technicians' representative on the board... even now I'm the technicians' representative on... as vice President on the Federation board. Before that, I'd already been vice President on the Emilia-Romagna Regional Committee, which over the course of its history has always had, let's say, an above-average number of women on its board. So basically let's say that, I think in some way... obviously I wouldn't want to be immodest or credit myself with merits I don't have, but basically I think my presence, in some way in any case, has perhaps inspired certain... certain situations. As for society in general, to be honest, I don't know how to answer that. Let's say that in the world of cycling, there is more of a focus on women's roles today.



What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I'd advise them to be yourself, maintain your femininity and in any case maintain a feminine interpretation of your role. And something that women know how to do better than men: not compromising.



# Emanuela Croce Bonomi

Vicepresident  
Target Shooting Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

I have always practised sport ever since I was a child, first sailing and then shooting. When I reached the age limit, I dedicated myself to the Italian clay pigeon shooting Federation because, naturally, physical sport was more difficult, so this is easier for me.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

It was a combination of things, because I was called up by the current President, Luciano Rossi. When I came to Rome, I didn't know what he wanted. He asked me whether I wanted to participate and join the board of the Italian clay pigeon shooting Federation, FITA. I accepted without knowing what I was getting into, but I am glad that I did. So I started sixteen years ago, and I'm still involved.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that female participation is almost a mandatory element now. There are women in all the Federations now, for example Sensini, who was a board member and Vice-President of the Sailing Federation before she joined CONI. So now, women are... I would say that one thing that has become almost mandatory in the Federations is to try to have women participating both on the board or as athletes, or in any other... in any other way.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

No, I... no, I was never involved in any of this. Only if they ask me, since I am involved with disabled sport. Right now, we are trying to create competitions in pairs, just like the other able-bodied Federations. Our disabled programme has no specific elements for women, while there are female classifications in the normal federation, just like in all sport. The only thing I can push for, which is my problem, is women in mixed couples, because there are very few of them. There are very few in shooting.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been acting Vice President for... For ten years, more or less ten years, maybe a little longer. And, in my role specifically, I only deal with, let's say, the disabled, with organising... In Italy, we created Para Trap through CIP, the Italian Paralympic Committee, which has now spread all over the world. It's due to us that we have been busy, to our President and to ourselves, as it's the only thing we do. Italy is in the lead here, we really are.



## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The challenges I had to face are challenges that I still face today, because we have been fighting for this for fifteen years, sixteen... for our initiatives, because fortunately, disability in Italy is recognised in an excellent way and the Federation is busy. In all other countries, it is much harder to get something done... To plan something. This year is the first year that there has been the world championship in Australia. Otherwise, all the large competitions have always been organised by us in Italy. Now, we will have the world championship in Lonato, the European championship for another year, all the international grand prizes. It all starts with us. So, we're in the lead in this sense. But we are under the IPC, the International Paralympic Committee.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Well, for Federation management, perhaps it's a big word. If women... I am of the opinion that if women are smart, they will succeed. There aren't any, because there are no pink quotas. These are all things that make no sense. If a woman is good, she'll succeed. An example would be Thatcher, no? She succeeded by herself, not because there was a pink quota. So, I mean, I am very happy if women join the Federation, if they become directors, the number ones, presidents, I am happy, but it is they who are capable, they must not... They don't need help.

In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

I repeat what I said before, we are always there: if women are smart, they succeed, they don't have to be pushed. That is, they should not need help. If they are smart, they get where they want, so it is not that one can do one thing... Yes, they can be put forward, but they must be at the same level as the men. Maybe it's because I'm not a feminist, but that's not why: it's because and that women succeed if they are capable, that's undisputed.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I must say that if we women have to ask someone for something, and a woman goes, for instance to the board, and a woman goes instead of a man, she certainly has more chances because it's more difficult to say no to a woman, so to speak. That's what I think. But again, I believe that women must be a little better than men, otherwise the situation is equality.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Yes, I really wish that... my role is not so important. I am there because I give myself enough to do, because maybe I also have a lot of knowledge that perhaps gives me some advantages, let's say. It gives me big advantages. Because I can maybe get to know things that many other people don't, so this is a big help because of my family, full stop. But I repeat, any woman who can, who wants to succeed, they will do so if they are capable, not... I can't... it's my firm belief, so if... don't give up.



## Eleonora Di Giuseppe

Member of the sport governing board  
Italian Federation of Equestrian Sport

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport has played a fundamental role in my life since I was a child. I must add that it wasn't just the sport that I pursued as an adult, and which has become my greatest passion, but also sports such as athletics, basketball, volleyball... They are all sport that I have pursued and practised in an amateurish way. Of course, my love and passion for horses then gave me a passion for equestrian sport, which I pursued when I was older.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I got involved in horse riding when I was a child. Not in what happens in the stables or the Olympic disciplines to start with, but riding in the countryside. I think riding to be in contact with nature... and that this is still a fundamental aspect of horse riding. And then, during the holidays when I was very young, we really spent whole days at the stables in the mountains. Back in Rome, I asked if I could start... even during school, to continue this sport.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, as far as riding is concerned, there's huge female participation at the sporting level, but it's absolutely minimal, far too low, in sport management or official sport roles. However, in general, I believe that there is a good female presence in the sport. In my opinion, it's still rather minimal at a managerial level.

As Member of the sport governing board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Riding is the only sport in which men and women compete together, so, in our sport, at a non-managerial but sporting level, there is a certain... a principle of equality, precisely because the horse is an athlete, just like a male or female rider, which obviously creates this synergy, this equality. What I've tried to do as a female sport manager has always been to give women confidence. I think that... obviously, on the basis of competence and not just because they are women. I'm not a fan of the pink quota principle. However, I see that women aren't able to team up like men do, and unable to free themselves from the duty or need to please. When we're children growing up, they tell us "smile, it'll make you prettier", "be polite, it makes you seem nicer". In some way, women hold onto this, to this need to please. Perhaps other senior figures, mainly men, reduce the chances of women – including those who hold roles, perhaps not those at the top of the Federations or sport sectors, but in any case, managerial coordination roles – the idea that you have to... sometimes, the idea that you have to do what... what you can, or what's important, even if it's not appreciated. But if it is right, it must be done.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I was elected by the National Assembly in January 2017. The Federation board members and the whole or an initiation first of all have the duty and the prerogative to guarantee proper management of the Federation, and to guarantee a completely legal management of the Federation in all its various aspects. This also means observing and enforcing the rules, principles and values of the sport system as well as the general rules that apply to every citizen. Before holding this position, I worked in various disciplines within the Federation and in various cultural and social initiatives, including ones linked to disability, and organising high-level sporting events. So, once I was on the board, I was asked to deal with these aspects in particular, as well as the general aspects. Once, later on, I strongly opposed a board resolution that intended to change a rule, and therefore... which was discussed several times and discussed again in 2015 by the FISE Extraordinary Commissioner, and the proposal... contrary to the current rule, the board resolution instead provided for the possibility of also slaughtering, and therefore of taking to slaughter, horses that were involved in the federal sport community, and that were therefore enrolled in federal activities. My firm opposition to this activity definitely created a lot of disagreement on the board. A few months later, these aspects were... that I was dealing with before, were instead, let's say, taken over and assigned to other members of the board.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

There are various challenges, but especially the challenge of sharing the idea that truth and honesty are imperative fundamental principles, and that we as an organization have prerogatives, and therefore it is true that we are in a community of friends in which some are closer friends than others, in which we would like to favour one rather than another from the heart, but we have an institutional role, which is to serve the good of the sport and our federative sport community. And this is not only difficult it's the only way to raise our sport community within the whole system, that... that concerns it.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I believe women are important. Actually, I don't see this... of course, there must be a division. Indeed, I believe that we must work together, men and women, each with their own sensitivities, their own skills, not just as individuals but also as a gender, because then, women have a broader vision, they are perhaps used to think more for some principles... men have many other qualities. The problem is that this... actually, creating a team is very common among men, and very uncommon among women. So, I believe that at various levels in a Federation, from the corporate board to the managers, the coordinators of the various departments and activities, we really need more teamwork among women, because I think their ability and sensitivity is an added value to everything they do.

In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, CONI recently approved the fundamental principles of the Federations, which foresee genuine pink quotas. This might be a step forward, even if I don't see our pink quotas as a goal, because pink quotas are still quotas within which women are placed. The goal is to have women placed in the same areas as men without needing a specific quota. That's what I think, and I think it may be the goal we need to achieve. I believe it depends in part on men, who are sometimes afraid of some female attitudes, and I believe it also depends in part on women, who do not know how to team up with each other, and therefore very often there is a competition between women instead of a synergy for common goals.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Well, sport... our state recognises the important educational value of sport, so much so that we are able to have both direct and indirect contributions at a national level, with a tax exemption. I hope these contributions can be increased significantly. The problem is that if we want to increase the value of sport, we must keep them, these principles. I believe that if we are good representatives, and if we manage to be an example for the rest of society, not only because we are recognised in functions like... like a sport sector, but also because it is financially supported, this function of ours... so, if we can remember what our prerogatives are, I think the task will be simpler, and so the presence of women within the leadership of a Federation is certainly a... a positive example for society.



## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

First of all, to study and understand the prerogatives of the role they are going to play. Every role has its prerogatives, and it is good to understand them. Then, everyone will interpret it on the basis of their training and their, let's say... professional and personal knowledge. But it's important to know what you're going to do. Secondly, I would say... to somehow forget that you're a woman. What I mean is it does not need to be juxtaposition. We must be able to carry our family, professional, training and even women's baggage, work as if there were no difference, work together with both women and men. But don't team up with men at the expense of women, don't do that.



**Ida Nicolini**

Vicepresident  
Italian Athletics Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

I started doing sport very early, when I was young. I come... I come from a sporting family: my dad was a football player who took part in the 1936 Olympics, and then he became a football coach. So, sport has always met with great approval in my family. I started doing athletics, and then I did the ISEF and started my career as a physical education teacher, and then I wanted to try my hand at training, too. I took courses of the Federation and started training the girls at the school where I taught. Little by little, I carried on and my passion steadily became stronger. So, I can say that it really was the passion of my life. I spent the time I had available to train the boys. I had great success in the sports field. One of my athletes was an Olympic finalist in the 100 metres in the Moscow Olympics in 1980, and I also had other good athletes, good and very competitive, who took part in the European championships, the Universiades. What can I say? I have really dedicated so much of myself, including from the family point of view, because then I decided to be alone, to live alone and to carry on this passion.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

As far as my time on the board of the Federation is concerned, it started many years ago. I don't remember exactly, but I know it ended in 2009. So, going backwards, I was a sport board director for eight years. The first four years I was... I was elected to the opposition, and the second four years I joined the Federation board committee, and there I followed the areas I was most compatible with, i.e. training, relations with schools and with physical education teachers.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Female participation in the world of sport is constantly growing. We've reached 28.2%, which is still low if we consider that the sample is... out of 47 million people who do sport. But some excellent goals have been achieved and one above all, which to some extent represented emancipation in the sport world, was the successful participation of the women's football team in the European championships last year. The women's national team made the sport the centre of attention for the media but also for people who follow sport, and many people started questioning some of the issues. And one of these is equal treatment for men and women. There's still a long way to go here.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I've been Vice-President since 2016, so in this last round of the election... of the elections. Honestly, if the question is what have you done for women's emancipation within your Federation, I have to say that I haven't done much, because within our Federation some objectives had already been achieved. For example, in the organization of the Federation, the top positions, which are the ones who kind of manage the federal sphere, are equal, so three men and three women. I have to say that this is a great success. On the board, we're the only Italian Federation that has a vice-President and three other board members, so there's four of us out of a total of ten on the Federation board, and I haven't really stopped to think about what improvements there could have been in the female sphere. We did something about equal treatment in road races because we opposed the unequal handling of prizes for races. Because since women run the same distances as men, or near enough, there's no justification to treat them differently when it comes to money. So this was one measure. That can I do in the future... well, I have several ideas which I'll try to explain.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

As Vice-President I deal with... the sectors that are closest to me, those I have most experience in, are training and relations with schools, study centres and research, and sport facilities, because for twelve years I was the administrator in two municipalities in the Pisa region. I'm from Pisa, I was a boardlor for the municipality of Pisa and I was a boardlor for the municipality of an iuliano, and had these powers. ve been in o ice since and nish my term in o vember this year, when there ll then be a new election for the new board.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, challenges are part and parcel of a woman's career. As a member of the Federation and Vice-President, I haven't had to face great challenges internally or externally, because it's clear that these roles have always been held by men and this tampering with power within the male sphere is not viewed favourably. ut in the ederation eld have to say that didn't have to ht at all, because my career as a woman in a male world started many years ago when I began training. Because I started training male athletes, thanks to the fact that I had some boys who were doing well, and I worked with Professor Vittori, who along with my coach was my teacher. teacher in the eld of athletics, but both teachers of life.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Unfortunately, the numbers here are truly... brutal, and capture a situation that's still far behind, not just in Italy, but also internationally. There are very few women in senior management, I seem to remember 4% in Europe, 9% as vice-presidents. So we're still far from achieving an equal status to men in these roles. Even though we have brilliant talent, because one of our representatives is on the IAAF board, Anna Riccardi. She's one of the women leading the way, and I hope, I and my fellow members of the board, we hope to pave the way for girls who want to take on this commitment too. It's an important commitment in someone's life, but we owe it to all women if we really want to give emancipation a boost.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, there may actually be some measures. These measures primarily concern the use of time. One of the negative factors when it comes to the growth of the women's movement in sport is the time it takes. Those who have family help, or who have organised their lives differently, manage to reach the levels we set. In our Federation we have female coaches who train our best champions, and this really is hugely rewarding, seeing women showing that they have the same job opportunities as men. What's certain is that it's the organization around women that needs to change, and they must be helped with what have traditionally been considered women's duties, and today we can no longer think of them that way. So a division of roles between men and women in family life probably helps make participation more diverse. We have two women presidents of regional boards, and this shows you that you can... we can do it. Then there are women who have families, and who have therefore balanced their working hours with time dedicated to sport in a... good, excellent way, indeed, I'd say, with great results.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Yes, maybe yes. Maybe it's the example that can give... paving the way. As regards my teaching career, for example, I've taught in schools for many years, and one of the satisfying things for me has been that many of my students have then chosen to become PE teachers. I was teaching in a high school, traditionally, I'd done my teacher training, so... it was a tradition that those who came from teacher training went on to do sport sciences. Instead I've had girls who came from my high school who have chosen this profession, so there's the possibility of paving the way and showing that we can do it.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I'd like to give some advice that I tried to follow but then wasn't able to see through, because, though it seems strange, four years in office isn't long, you only get to grips with how it all works when you're on the home straight. And the advice is to also seek out relationships with other women who work in other Federations. Last year, I had the idea of bringing together women from various corporate boards and other Italian Federations. But honestly I have to admit that I didn't succeed, because it takes up so much time. But the advice I can give is if we get to ether, if we find points, if we organise an agenda that we have to, how can I say, implement step by step, we'll probably manage to achieve something in the end.



## Silvia Salis

Member of the sport governing board  
Italian Athletics Federation



## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport is really rooted in my life, in the sense that since I was a child, I almost lived in an athletics field, because my father was the keeper. So, I was almost born in a field, saw nothing but athletics from morning to night, so I invariably became an athlete. It has been a life full of emotions, travel, experiences. Once I ended my career as an athlete due to an injury, I was very involved in sport: I am a member of the Board of the Athletics Federation and the National Board of the Olympic Committee. So, in short, my commitment is very broad. I also continue to handle communication for my sport group, the Fiamme Azzure - the prison service sport group.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

My involvement in athletics began when I was a child, because my father was the keeper of the athletics field in Genoa. So, I was practically born on a sport field and inevitably became an athlete. That's how it started when I was a child: for fun.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

My opinion on women's participation in the sport world is linked to the data, which is a snapshot of the role of women in the sport world. At the moment, let's say they are very scarce. A year ago, the CONI national board introduced a norm according to which - adopting a norm of the IOC, the International Olympic Committee - the board of the Federation must have at least a representation of 30%, in short, of gender difference. Unfortunately, in this case, it refers to women. This is certainly a step forward, but many steps are necessary when you consider that there has been only one female President for a few months in all the Italian sport Federations throughout the history of sport in Italy, and that was in horse riding.

## As Member of the sport governing board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

As a board member in the Athletics Federation, I have to think that our Federation is at the forefront because there are four women in our board, five if you include Anna Riccardi as a member of the board, and therefore she is part of the board by law. We are a very female board, so we don't feel this need. But certainly, the norm implemented by the IOC, the Olympic Committee, approved by the National Board, which means that 30% of the board of the federations... that there is a 30% gender difference in each board, means that this concept is beneficial to have a significant effect.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been a board member in the Italian Athletics Federation since the end of 2016, the year of the election after the Rio Olympics. I represent the athletes within the board of the Federation, and I take care of everything... everything, like all the other board members, i.e. in the boards of the Federation, we deal with all the issues and matters related to the Federation. I'm also part of an organization that supports and supervises the technical area. I have developed a project for student athletes at universities called Allenamento. It's for young people from our Federation, and provides them with a little financial support to encourage them to study. As board members, we also follow the national teams away. We are generally available to work for our Federation in any case that comes up.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Sure, in a male world like sport, being a woman, and also being young but nevertheless a former athlete who has just ended her sporting career, presents a series of difficulties. Let's say, it's not easy to be taken seriously, to make your voice heard. That's also why you certainly need greater participation, both by women but also people who, let's say... Who are from generations closer to the athletes who are competing today. It's too much to say we have genuine difficulties, but obviously, working and dealing only with men, often adults who are older than me, in short... Let's say it means that certain things are a little harder.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I don't have an opinion on the participation of women or men; generally, it should be about having involving competent people. Unfortunately, we are forced to... forced to support, to pass laws that protect the presence of women... f, on one hand, this has allowed us to put a firm foot in the door in many positions that we would not ordinarily be able to access because they are managed by men, on the other hand, it creates a mechanism by which men say, ok, we are forced to give those three places to women, right? On one hand, this makes you stronger because it forms a class of management that would not have existed before, but the downside is that men see it as an obligation, as something that has to be done. So, I'm still ambivalent towards... towards this type of mechanism or rule, because it is certainly the only way, the only way to access certain situations. On the other hand, it is also a way for men... I don't want to generalise, because there are a lot of men who don't think like that, but some men see it as a sort of sweetener. In my opinion, you can only change things from inside, so this is welcome.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

What I've witnessed since I've been dealing... let's call it sport politics in general: women are not even very close to achieving this kind of role. So, there's certainly a mechanism that makes it more difficult to gain access, but there is also a... a low interest among women in getting into sport management. It's partly a cultural problem, because it has always been the preserve of men, and partly it's due to issues related to... to so many facts of life that I cannot now simply summarise in... in ten seconds. But it's... there should be a culture in which women can take it as an option. That is, not only being an athlete or a coach, but also thinking, after being an athlete, there is... being a director. I mean, I can be a director, I can run a company. This is certainly a somewhat more difficult cultural step in our world, but as I said, the rules we have received from the IOC, that is, on... on the obligation to have a gender difference on boards, that they have... that will also have a spill over effect on the governance of companies and national bodies, as well as national Federations.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I believe that every woman who is able to, say, be present, to work and to be active in a world totally, perhaps as an appanage of men, can make a contribution, but they also contribute by setting their own example, with... well, just by doing... By occupying that position, and this is, I think, the most important thing. What I mean is that a young woman athlete competing in these years can see that there is a woman who's a little older than she is on a board, who supports projects, who is committed to the Federation, and this is a way of making her believe that maybe she can do it too, it can interest her, she can be good.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

My advice would be to pursue your goals and ideas, and not be discouraged by the somewhat male-dominated culture that pervades the sport world. I repeat, I am not generalising, this culture is absolutely not widespread among men in the sport world like all customs, it's hard to quit. My advice is not to get overwhelmed. What I mean is asserting oneself through education and presence without, on the one hand, feeling that one is worth less than someone else, nor like someone who has to be... who has to be protected by someone else. That is, to take a neutral and professional position on things.



**Maria Amelia Loli Ghetti**

Vicepresident  
Italian Golf Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

The role that sport plays in my life is huge. Golf, which is the sport I play, takes up most of my day: this is because I'm President of a golf club with two 18-hole courses, so they experience all the issues that arise in the day-to-day life of a club. In addition, I have been vice-President of the Italian Golf Federation for four years now. This honour was granted to me by our President, Professor Franco Chimenti, and it really is a great honour, especially because this is a very important period for golf, since we are coming up to an international – actually a global event called the Ryder Cup – the Ryder Cup 2022. The Ryder Cup is one of the most important sport competitions in the world: after the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, we have the Ryder Cup. It is followed by millions and millions of people. And we'll be hosting it in Rome. So being part of this Federation right now is amazing.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

It started... many years ago. Because my father was a golf enthusiast, so he always took me with him at the weekend. And so I've breathed this environment since I was a teenager, and even before.



## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I can speak for my sport, for golf, and it's not an opinion, but the data. The data say that female participation in Italy it is 25.6% and that's the most up to date figure we have, from 2014, which puts us at the European average, though even higher than the US, which is 24%. So I'd say it's still low, it needs work, but... but we're already at the European average, which isn't... it's not insignificant, as a result.

## As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

In concrete terms, no, I've never been involved, but I can say that golf, as a sport... as a sport that allows the different genders, by genders mean female and male, to play in the same competitions, on the same course, in the... in the same competition, in the same... that's something special. Because, for the moment at least, I can't think of another sport that allows this, and this is... it's true on an amateur level, so recreational amateurs, and then if we move up a level, it's also a pioneering sport because we have professional women. We allow professional women, and they have the same equality as professional men, and that's a great result too, which lets women have a career, and it's no small feat. Then I can tell you that CONI [Italian National Olympic Committee] has had an Equal Opportunities Committee since 2014, that CONI's always really taken the whole female hemisphere into account, so... Let's talk about fencing, we have the best, we have swimming, skiing, brignone recently... pellegrini... And we also have great champions in amateur-level sport, really brilliant.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I'll start with the easy one, how long I've held this role; it's my fourth year as Federal Vice-President. And my duties... I've had the opportunity to create, to take part in creating, because we're a beautiful team, this project behind me, "Golf è donna" ["Golf is women"], which we care so much about, and so it's... for this project, it aims to get women involved in taking part... novices, in participating, so extending participation to all women, and then to retain female players too. And it's divided up into various pink dots, which are the circles, we re we started in one last year with fifteen clubs, we've reached thirty this year, it's expanding a lot and we're getting a really good response.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The challenges I've faced in all the jobs I've done before. I haven't... there are difficult things in all jobs and, being a woman, sometimes there are greater difficulties in one sense, but there are also advantages, in the other sense. So I'm part of a very close, very united board of the Federation... it's all men. But I'm part of a Federation that's run by all women. Apart from the President, then we have the secretary general who's a woman, the head of communication and press who's a woman; if you walk round our offices, you'll find lots of women.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

It can only be a good thing. Like I said earlier, I'm... there are lots of women, and these women are very well qualified. I believe that women have different characteristics, complementary to men, and think that, as in all things, the right balance is the best solution for a harmonious working environment.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

What other measures should... could be adopted, after I've already mentioned CONI, what CONI's doing, what the Federation's doing, plus... I forgot, actually, that CONI recently decided... a year ago, it will be in force this year, that all Federation boards must have 30% women. And that's a lot. Logically we'd like... we don't want it to be an obligation, but if it has to be an obligation to begin with, it's welcome.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I think my role contributes, sure. I think I have a responsibility to do well, and this can pave the way for many other women. I know that some other Federation, meanwhile, has had a... a female vice-President. We have no female presidents in any of the 44 Federations, so this is a goal we have to achieve.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Simply to be themselves, not try to imitate men, be women in every respect, in their spontaneity, in their emotions, in their... we're different, we're more emotional, it's true. It's welcome, it brings something too.



## Tiziana Nasi

President  
Italian Paralympic Federation  
of Winter Sport

## What role does sport play in your life?

I would say that, perhaps coincidentally, sport did and does have a very important role in my life. Maybe it was somehow my destiny, as I come from a very sporty family. First of all, the ski resort in Sestriere was wanted, invented and founded by my great-grandfather. Furthermore, my mother was an excellent skier with good local results and my father, who was mayor of Sestriere for many years, was also President of FIS (Italian Federation for Winter Sport) for a few years, during the golden years of Zeno Colo and Celina Seghi.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

As always, somewhat by coincidence. I became President of Sestrieres S.P.A., the company that managed the facilities and sporting events in Sestriere, due to a tragic plane crash that killed my cousin, who was President at the time. The family group knew that I was very attached to Sestriere and passionate about sport, and asked me to take care of the Sestriere Ski Club first, then Sestriere Golf, and finally the company that managed the facilities in general. A lady, the mother of a girl I knew, contacted me and said: "We want to come there and have the 1990 Italian Open Championships for disabled people in Sestriere." I said, "What do you want to come to Sestriere for?" and I was shocked. And yet they did come, and we organized the Italian championship. That lady, Paola Magliola, to whom I will always be thankful, had the foresight to invite foreign skiers from neighboring areas as well, and this exposed us to more culture than we had in Italy at the time. Even the station manager and the managing director were a little shocked when I made that request, and replied: "Let them come, even though there is no snow". So these athletes from Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia arrived on 6 January, at the end of the holidays. It began to snow and it snowed for the entire week during which the competitions were held. Ever since then these disabled athletes, who at the time were not yet called "paralympic", became the darlings of the station.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

First of all, let's congratulate the great female able-bodied Italian skiers, who in recent years have proudly represented the country in competitive skiing. Unfortunately, the male athletes are not doing as well. The situation of Paralympic sport is very different, compared to the world of sport for the able-bodied. Until very recently, luring a female athlete with disabilities out of her lair was quite difficult. Fortunately, as always, role models have brought great results. I want to mention our great friend Martina Caironi, who among other things was in line with the athletes during the first few days there: she was seen by the other two girls with whom she won that wonderful 100 meters race last summer in Tokyo. I describe that as a "triumphant three-podium" because it was just like that. And these two girls at the hospital, one after the other, said: "We want to be like Martina". Fortunately, this is also happening in our field, albeit unfortunately at an extremely slow pace. Nevertheless, I'm sure that the two blind girls whom we brought to Beijing will be very successful, and act as trailblazers. I also really liked, during the whole Paralympic Games, how our athlete Melania Corradini was Lorenzo Roata's adventure partner in that nice, pleasant, interesting and in my opinion also smart, TV program that was called "Gocce Azzurre" (Blue Drops), because it recalled the blue circle of the Olympics. It was broadcast every afternoon, with live interviews and meetings.

As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I would say they turned out to be effective. I don't know exactly which policies led to this result, I cannot say. I believe that it is actually a union of forces between setting a model, telling the truth and carrying on with what the Italian Paralympic Committee, CONI [Italian National Olympic Committee]

itself, and the government are doing. Therefore it is a classic evolution, which certainly still needs to be helped a lot.

### What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been President of the Italian Paralympic Winter Sports Federation since 2010. As these Paralympics come to an end, I am concluding my career as President of the Federation, but I will not stray too far from the Paralympic world: that crafty little devil of Luca Pancalli, and I say that with great affection, and most importantly a lot of gratitude and esteem for him, wanted me as vice President of the Italian Paralympic Committee, so as to keep me around. However, I think I'm too old to do things myself. I have not had any negative feelings during these ten years, nor during previous years. I have also been President of the Italian Paralympic Committee of the Piedmont Region, and I have never felt that things were difficult because I am a woman. Actually, also found the three term limit right, and even perhaps the age limit. There are certainly women who have an incredible strength, but after a certain age you just no longer have that presence of mind and energy. I think it's not wrong at all to quit after three terms.

### What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

I would say achieving good results in the competitions, and obtaining exposure. Exposure is not something to show off. Exposure, for us, is directly related to the fact that we still need to make ourselves known and be appreciated. This is despite the fact that things have considerably changed lately thanks to great, successful athletes. Among these, for example, there is Alex Zanardi, not to mention those we have seen in those



beautiful images from the London Paralympics. This applies not only to the public, but especially to disabled people who are still somewhat “locked inside”, although much less than before, and with much less reason than before.

### What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

First of all, nowadays there is no huge difference anymore, and I believe that a woman can be a federal President or a federal executive. This also applies to the role of federal secretary, which is very important. Presidents feel like they're special, but in truth we are just political figures. The people who really control things are the secretaries, and I think that a woman can easily fulfill that role. And, a main achievement is the best thing there is.

### In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

The well-known female quotas, which in fact are held in the highest regard. Indeed, we've always had one or two women in our Board.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

thin so. don't thin a man feels offended or belittled by the fact that there is a female President, or that there have been female presidents before him. Let's think about what will happen in a few months: a male President is likely to be elected. I don't know who is running, but I don't think there will be any female candidates. I would say that it doesn't really make any difference.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Use your instinct as much as needed: do not only count on your technical preparation, your knowledge, your intellectuality. Also use your instinct a little, because the female instinct is often right.



# Chiara Pacchioni

Former board member  
Italian Federation of Badminton

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport has always had an important role in my life, because I've been playing sport since my early youth. I did track and field as a girl, and currently work in the world of badminton at a management level.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

My experience began in 2000 when my children were in elementary school, and I had to choose which sport they should play. I didn't want them to play football or do ballet, the same sport as everyone else. Luckily, I met vice President Miglietta from the Badminton Federation, who introduced me to this sport. We started a course for the elementary school, and that is how my children started their journey in badminton.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Currently, in my opinion, sport is still not very much played by women, especially in Italy. I believe that there is a root cause, a cultural problem. Too often, sport is still considered something that girls cannot or should not play at a competitive level.

As a Former Board Member, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

As far as I know, we do not have any specific policies at the Federation, at least when I was a board member. That is also because, as far as our own Federation goes, federal President Alberto Miglietta wanted a woman in his board. For us, this is truly a journey that began several years ago, and was likely also simplified by the fact that badminton is a sport that is played at a virtually equal level between men and women. Women work with us in all areas and at all levels, from players to coaches, all the way up to the managers.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I held the role in the four-year period from 2017 to 2020. As a resident of Milan, I was part of the board as a representative for PalaBadminton, which is our jewel-like facility for training, and acts as the Technical Center for the National team. I have always striven to provide my support with as much balance and breadth as I was capable of, thanks to my previous work experiences within the Federation.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

To tell the truth, I faced no particular challenges, other than the challenges that any candidates, be they men or women, face when running for office. As I have already said, our world thankfully does not have to deal with the same gender issues that probably occur in other situations.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

In my opinion, a Federation led by a woman must be the same as by a man, in the sense that issues must be addressed at a higher level than being a woman or a man. Problems must be analyzed for the good of the Federation, regardless of gender.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Currently, a step was already taken a few years ago, and it is now mandatory in all Federations that one third of the board members be of a different gender. This was an important step, because many sports, unlike ours, had never had any female board members. This is a first step. The other is a cultural problem: we must address the root cause, letting women understand that they must try, they must do things, and that it is not an impossible challenge.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Yes, in the sense that it certainly set the example that it is possible for a woman to hold the role of board member, and to align this role with the usual tasks that women have in the family and at work.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

To always think about the good of the Federation, to be objective. To give their contribution as best as they can, by analyzing problems, as women often have to do, with a smile on their face. They must look at the big picture, because very often we find ourselves having to face different problems that must be solved quickly. They must have that same spirit.



**Elisabetta Villa**  
Vicepresident  
Italian Federation of Triathlon



## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport plays a fundamental role in my life. I actually discovered sport as an adult, when I was 35, but since then it has become an important part of my daily life.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I started triathlon in 2011 with my husband, for fun. He wanted to try this discipline, as he came from the world of swimming. I wanted to try this adventure with him. Starting with that competition, because we actually started with a competition, I just fell in love, as I always say.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Women's participation in sport varies from discipline to discipline. There are a few disciplines that seem to scare women away, unfortunately. From my point of view, even triathlon can be a discipline that somewhat makes women do a double take, and makes them pause for a moment before giving it a chance. One of these reasons is the fear of having to face three different disciplines. In reality, it is true that triathlon is an ensemble of three disciplines, namely swimming, cycling and running, however our Federation creates and organizes a whole series of multidisciplinary activities.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Our board took office just over a year ago. During this year we have put several initiatives into practice. First of all, I would like to point out that a specific women's commission has been created within our board. It brings a group of women together, including two board members, in order to encourage women to participate in this type of sport. For this purpose, we try to help women train for triathlon and face the competitions in the correct way. Further, we try to bring more female coaches into the world of triathlon. This is done to be closer to younger athletes as well, who may see a woman as someone to trust and connect with.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been federal vicepresident for a year, since our board took office after the elections of 13 March 2021. The role that I have within the board is both as Vicepresident, so I act somewhat as a collector of the activities that are carried out within the working group, and I also operate directly within two committees. One is the women's committee, and one is the athletes' committee, because I was elected as a representative of female athletes. Within these two commissions, my role is being close to the world of women and triathlon.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

In general, the biggest challenge was understanding how a Federation works, because for me it was the first experience within a board at a national level. I must say, however, that our board included people who had already held the same role in previous years, and they acted as a guide for us to join this line of work.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I hope that many Federations do not clam up in a men's world, and I see that many of them are now opening up to women. To be honest, I consider myself lucky because throughout the pre-election period, and even after that, I never had to face any challenges related to my gender. I was simply elected for what I stood for, regardless of whether I was a woman or not. I have to say that I feel lucky because, within my working group, there are three women out of nine board members and a President, so there are quite a few of us. This leads to a situation that actually makes everything natural, and there is no perception of any gender difference. Everyone has their role depending on their skills, regardless of whether they are men or women.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

In my opinion, initiatives could be carried out to encourage female athletes, or even female enthusiasts, to become coaches, so that then they can eventually have a career and become first and second level trainers, and then possibly also join the boards with a role of coach representatives. Other initiatives may include organizing courses or conferences, in order to involve the women who are currently part of the governing boards of the sport clubs belonging to the Federations, so that they may also have the opportunity to express their potential at a federal level.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I hope that my role within the Federation will also act as an incentive for other Federations, and society at large, to spread the perception that the role of women is equal to the role of men, both at a federal level and in other organizations. As I was saying, I consider myself lucky because in my federation there are no gender differences or they don't matter. I think and hope that being able to collaborate with such a tight-knit working group becomes a symbol and inspiration for other Federations and other organizations.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Be yourselves. If you are there, it means that you have been elected for that role, therefore you have been elected for your skills. Be yourselves and carry on with your skills, so that your ability to fulfill that role shines through.

# Spain

Julia Casanueva San Emeterio · Mercedes Coghen  
Alberdingk-Thijm · Rosa Blanca de Salvador González  
· Asunción R. Lorient Pérez · Mariola Rus Rufino ·  
Susana Santos Menéndez · África Álvarez López · Diana  
Box Alonso · Isabel García Sanz · María José Martínez  
Sánchez



**Julia Casanueva San Emeterio**  
President  
The Royal Spanish Sailing Federation

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

With the sport that I represent, yes, I had been sailing for many years since I was 15 - 16 years old, yes I started in sport because we had a boat. In competition, I started around the year 96, it was when we really started to compete in a big boat and we did regattas and then little by little it impressed me much more, and I dropped a little more in length and then I continue competing until today.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that it is very deficient, that there should be more female participation, but I really believe that it is something that should go little by little, it is a socio-cultural problem, believe that efforts are being made by the institutions to achieve it, but I believe that we ourselves have to go little by little trying to incorporate ourselves and form ourselves from the base, to achieve, to raise awareness that we are also growing in sport in equality. I think sport in general is a world dominated by men, it always has been, so it is very complicated due to a socio-cultural issue to enter. In the sailing world it is no exception, I think that this role is the one that we have to change, but I believe that women have never had that role and therefore they have now begun to face it, it is a socio-cultural issue that prevents women from being there.

As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

As President of the Spanish sailing Federation, the policies that already come to us have been implemented ... not only at the level ... the Federation has implemented policies, let's say, recommended or imposed by the Higher Sport Board on the issue of inclusion of women in the sport governing boards. The same thing happens in companies. Likewise, policies have been implemented in my own board of directors before. It is true that I have six women on my sport board, people who are also all linked to management, or to the sport of sailing, but from different levels. We have a lawyer, we have managers, we have athletes, we have a woman who is a physicist, I mean all within the world of management or the world of sailing, linked in a professional or ex-professional way, because they were in Olympic preparation or good as amateurs.



## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I am the President of the Spanish sailing Federation, and I am the one who appoints its sport board. I have been in office since October 2015. We entered with a motion of censure, and we re-elected the previous president for mismanagement in sport, and then, later in the elections from March 2017 to the end of 2020, in 2020 there will be new elections. As for my role, my responsibility, let's say that as President of the Spanish Sailing Federation, given that the Spanish sport Federations are presidential, let's say that the responsibility is total regardless of whether the assembly, which is sovereign, also has a certain responsibility; but at the same time, the President responds to the assembly and the sport board, he or she also has certain responsibilities, but in the end the most responsible, being presidential, is the President.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The main challenges, the most important were our beginnings. When we entered, in October 2015, we entered with a Federation totally in debt, with terrible management problems that had led the Federation to a very high debt, with a very heavy federative structure. With, let's say, during years of great sponsors, of great income, of subsidies, ... we went to all the budget cuts, to all the years of crisis, and the federative structure was not reduced, with which, in the end, we saw that the federative structure was eating up the money that had to go to athletes. And we found ourselves with a pre-Olympic team, because we entered in October 2015, and in August 2016 it was the Olympic Games in Rio, with a totally unstructured team, without financial means and almost no human resources to help them go to the games. So those were the biggest challenges, changing the entire structure, generating a new sport model and cleaning up the Federation.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

No, there is no equality, there is no equality, well there is still no equality, in general there is now a 40% quota on the sport boards of the Federations. I am neither against nor in favor of quotas, I think it is not the ideal measure, but it is the only measure of being able to enter. Therefore, there is still no equality on the sport corporate boards. I think it is good that a path to access the board is set, otherwise it would be impossible to enter. But I think that access has to tend to be a normal and common thing, it should be common for there to be women on sport boards, and that we reach, if it is not equality, it does not have to be exactly equality, but yes, to a greater or lower parity.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Above all education. Training at the grassroots level, at the grassroots level in schools, at the grassroots level in sport clubs. The clubs are the ones that receive all the children, they are the basis of the whole sport. Sport clubs are the most important thing we have. I believe that, both at the level of the school curriculum, and at the level of sport, -education and sport-, they have to come together and set good goals, and begin to educate in equality from childhood. It is not useful just wanting to impose or implement an equality. It is good to impose equality, because we really have to start at some point, but I think that the policies that should be started, different from those that are being made, which we appreciate, and that we consider to be positive, are the ones that begin from the base, which is the most important thing.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

That they receive training, that they believe in themselves, that they think they can, because they really can. And that they do not think that this is only a world in which they are excluded, or to which only men dedicate themselves, that they see that ... believing in oneself, in the training that one has, training properly, they can occupy those positions in equality with the man. But it is very important that women believe in themselves, otherwise we will never be able to take that step.



**Mercedes Coghen Alberdingk-Thijm**

Vicepresident  
The Royal Spanish Hockey Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport for me? Well, I believe that it is my life or my half life, or not, it is the percentage because I have been involved in sport as a practitioner, as a leader and as a fan since I first had knowledge of it, only my family, my father introduced a little hockey to my school, and in my club, and at that time he decided that why not girls play a sport that was considered very masculine. I started playing in the garden with my brothers, then I started playing very young with older ones, I used to have a little crush on sport, and from there, my whole life in the national team, to the Federation, to the company, I really have been collaborating with sport all my life and I love it.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Well the truth is that in my family we have all played hockey, my father was a pioneer, was a player with some friends in my club, my mother, who is a coach where the sport of field hockey is very important, she also played, although really their relationship started out there and we've all been participants players, players of the Spanish national team so I don't know, we always played field hockey.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, the truth is, I think this is a bit of a blight on Spanish sport, don't you?, I have been collaborating with "woman and sport" for 25 years, I think, and unfortunately we have moved very slowly in this issue, right? I believe that many women leaders are missing, I think that little by little we are achieving the professionalization of women, both in the active part and in management, but we have a long way to go.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I have also been the Vicepresident of the Spanish hockey Federation for a long time and I have seen how the presence of women has evolved within my Federation, which is something I always insisted... we created the committee "Women and Sport", because I always believe that diversity enriches a lot, although it is true, I have to say that thanks to the very active and very targeted policies of the Higher Board of Sport, awareness in my Federation and, I think the importance that women are present on the corporate sport boards given in the other Spanish Federations, have borne fruit with these percentages of 20% to 40%, and I think that, ... well, the truth is, I've been lucky too, I mean, to live in a sport that since the games of '92, where I participated, budgets have gone more or less to the same extent for women and men in the selections, so, well we have to keep working because there is a lot of volunteer work within our Federation and I would like that in the future professionalization to be seen and that the people who collaborate within the Federation as professionals reach that percentage also equal for women and men.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Well I don't know if... I think I've been vice President of the Federation for 16 years now, as the President lives, generally has lived, has been a Catalan President, and I'm in Madrid...and where the most important institution of sport such as the Higher Board of Sport has the headquarters, because I really participate in many meetings and I have a lot of representation in events, because I have the institutional vicepresidency, but also many meetings of... well, with "women's universe," with "women and sport," with talent programs, I'm actually present at a lot of meetings with the government or with the governments, to try to make sure Federation is present.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The truth is that I believe that my challenges have not been much, because from the first moment that I was a member of the Spanish Olympic committee, I started in the Federation as soon as I left the Spanish team, so I think I was a very active person, because I was very active with my club, very active with the Madrid Federation and it seemed to me a natural step so it really is a challenge that I have not had to face, perhaps yes, always insisting when the message of "we should look for a coach", that it was equal for women and for men, always insisting that the language was in masculine and in feminine, those are the challenges that I have been facing with the invisible barriers that exist within female sport, that are not seen, and that you are more sensitive and we have been overcoming it in a personal capacity tell you that I have always been very affected, because I have been very active and very recognized, I was the captain of the team that won the gold medal, and it seems to me that the move from the responsibility of sport practice to what it is to be part of the sport administration, it was natural for me.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

As I said earlier, I believe that the active policy of the Higher Sport Board has borne much fruit and although we are not at 50%, more and more women have been incorporated. I also want to say that sometimes it is not easy and in some sports it is difficult to find women willing to take part in corporate boards. Equality, well, I think, that people who are really worth what they are, and are active, participate equally within Federations, although in mine, where a world championship is to be held in 2022, yes, I have had to insist that they have to incorporate more women, not because they are women but because then they can give that touch of difference, especially by being a celebration of a women's World Cup.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, I think that, as I said before, we must continue working so that women are really incorporated in a professional way, but this difference, the scourge we have in the wage gap is not only in sport, I think that women are suffering from this problem in almost all sectors, so what I think is, as there is also a lot of volunteering in sport, what you have to try is to promote conciliation that is, if we have to take care of our work, of the family, of the house, and also participate actively in the sport, which is usually during the weekend or in the evenings, then it is necessary to help us a lot and I believe that conciliation is an element where there is a lot to do and work, I would even dare say that in the future, also for men and now digitalization has come to mind, I think we should keep it, to be able to bring more women into the sport.



Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I think that the presence of women on all the sport governing boards of Federations and companies helps a lot to visualize that all women can get where they want, with their work, with their labor, with their effort, so I do believe that it contributes, I believe that the steps sometimes have to be taken by the women themselves, and sometimes we do not dare, in fact I ran for President of the Spanish Olympic committee, I lost, more people voted for me, but because of the weighted vote I lost, but I think it was really pushing a door, that is, you have to be in the places so that those who come after think that it is natural, normal and that they can do it, but by the weighted vote I lost, but I think it was pushing a real door, I mean, you have to be in the places so that those who come back think it's natural, normal and they can do it.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, the first thing they prepare for, like all of us who have to get somewhere, you can't get there by chance, and if you really get there by chance, maybe you don't do it with the necessary passion, then if they like it, I think that now, really, what matters is to be in the places, because you believe in what you are doing and it is the best way to get there. Hey, let them try it first little by little by offering themselves because there is a lot of volunteering as I have said within the world of sport, but if they really understand that this is the world they like, they should work to consolidate it and show that they can do it as professionals, not as women.



**Rosa Blanca de Salvador González**  
Vicepresident  
The Royal Spanish Archery Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

For me, sport is my life in fact, in this case archery. I like other sport, I also used to be a swimmer. But, above all, archery has been my life. I started shooting at the age of fourteen and, still, I am at the shooting line.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

As I've mentioned before, I started shooting at the age of fourteen. There began my involvement, but it came from my father and my mother, who first started to shoot. I ended up joining them, and there's where the whole thing began. And it didn't stop.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Hopefully, I think it is increasing. And, considering my contacts in the High Board for Sport, Community of Madrid... Very positive. To be honest, very positive, of course, without downplaying men. But, at this stage, the feminine influence and management are quite noticeable.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Sure. What's more, I used to be President of the Women and Sport Commission. And, with the help of the Spanish one and of a whole team, women had a substantial presence. This was to such an extent that some oncologists found that archery is very good for breast cancer, for both those with and without lymphoma. And it has been a success. This is still ongoing, of course. In other communities and elsewhere it has also been done. Because this was done in Madrid, in a hospital. It was first done in the Infanta Leonor Hospital. And, yes, it demonstrates that women have been taken into consideration.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I've been Vicepresident of the Spanish Federation for four years, and I'm also part of the corporate board, because I'm also... now I'm Vicepresident, but I also used to be President of the Madrid Federation. My duties range from all the preparation for our sport, together with arrangements of all the regions. We have reached very high levels, even having the opportunity to hold a world championship last year in Madrid, the final being held in the Royal Palace. In fact, the duties consist of continual work with regulations and preparation of competitions, both nationally and internationally. Of course, having our high-performance and national teams, and everything, in a manner consistent with the whole corporate board and delegate commissions... this is the work within the corporate board.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The main challenges for the Spanish Federation... well, what I've just said: it was a success to have the opportunity to hold that world championship in Spain last year. But, the truth is, I've faced my greatest challenges within the Madrid Federation, as its President: providing support and completing our shooting line, most of the participants being from Madrid. Madrid takes all the podiums since there are many talented archers. There are talented archers in the rest of Spain, of course. But that is all: to support our archers and our sport.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Yes, there is equality between men and women, but not in numbers. It is not that women are unwanted on corporate boards. It is just that, for personal reasons, women don't usually have all the time needed, and thus there are fewer women. Even though there are fewer women, they are welcomed and perceived as very valid.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

In my opinion, it is rather at a societal level. We know that those policies have implied great strides for women. But women, as I've mentioned before, don't usually have the same free time as men. Women are still mothers, workers, their sons' and/or daughters' psychologists... In short, most women don't have enough time as men. Those would be truly social policies to support women: to allow a woman to have enough time for herself.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Yes, I think so. Not so much for my position, but... a nice feature of our sport is that it is egalitarian per se. There are no gender differences. We all share the same shooting line: men, women, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters... because there is full equality. Male archers shoot in different categories because their power is greater. Women archers, in our corresponding categories. And children in theirs. And we all go hand in hand, we all definitely go hand in hand. There is friendship, there is fellowship, there is sportmanship. And, yes, I think archery is a model sport in terms of gender equality.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, I think it's very simple. First, find out about the sport where they want to be. Women should want to, and more women should be there. Though, as I say, in our sport there is gender equality. Indeed, I've been on a corporate board where I was the only woman. But it was only because there were no other women, not for other reasons. And I've been listened to, I've listened, and there weren't any problems. Therefore, if there were more women in sport... In any case, we add more criteria. Our criteria might be sometimes correct, sometimes wrong. But they might be positive. Then, I encourage women to get in touch with sport. To find out about the sport world, even to do some sport and to know about it, and then to help in its governing.



**Asunción R. Loriente Pérez**  
President  
Spanish Rowing Federation



## What role does sport play in your life?

The role of sport in my life is... everything. Because rowing is my life. But I always say that I was born in a rowing club. It is my family's sport, the one that we all have practised, with greater or lesser success, and the one we all have been devoted to, my father, my husband, my brothers; even myself. I started rowing, I rowed for a short time. Then, I continued as a referee. And, now, as the President.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I think that I first jumped on a rowing boat by the age of nine, or something like that. But, as I said earlier, I've been involved from the cradle onwards. Always. At home, we always breathed rowing, we always smelled saltpetre, since we were born.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Women's representation is essential. It's necessary. And, fortunately, it is improving. There is a growing number of women in all areas of sport. But, above all, in management positions, presidencies of clubs, regional or even national Federations, there are still few presidents of national Federations. Regarding sport licences, I think that men and women are equalized. But we're really taking the leap, and women are reaching management positions. Bit by bit. And, as I've mentioned before, it seems essential to me, because we are a very important part of sport. And, naturally, we must have an important role in sport decisions.

As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

We have been making small changes in participation in the call for championships in Spain. What we're doing is... to equally call men and women for the same categories and modalities. Due to traditional participation rates, we didn't use to call all modalities for the female category, above all for Olympic rowing championships, because in some cases there was a very low female participation rate. They are indeed responding. Because, in the end, if women are not called for a given modality, the concerned sportswomen might decide not to go for it but focus on another one. And, this way, we're opening an extra door, giving them another possibility. Apart from that: it is highly symbolic, but it's a very important thing we had to do. Since we are in the Federation, since I have been its President, in one of our most emblematic races, the eight with cox in the Spanish championship, women are given a place (men have traditionally been given a place, as it's been done today in this race well, it's being done tomorrow in the trainers' championship). In Olympic rowing, the only boat, the only modality where we give a place to the champion at senior category is the eight with cox. But it was only done with men. Since I became President, we also do it with women. I repeat, it's not going to... it has no greater implications, but it is symbolic and it is important. We have a commission of rowing and women within the Federation which is very active. They're doing a great job too.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Responsibilities of the sport governing board ... the daily management of the Federation, the day-to-day decisions. The elaboration of proposals to be later endorsed, agreed, at the competent body, sometimes at the assembly, sometimes at the delegate commission. The sport board is thus in charge of the agreement about the hosts for the championships

in Spain, the daily regulations, the daily newsletters... the sport board executes the daily work. I've been the President of the Federation since February 2018. For two years and a half, approximately

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The main challenges... all challenges are equally important. The main challenge we have undertaken is, naturally, to grow. To make our sport, a minority one, arrive at areas of our country where rowing is not practised. To grow as a sport, not only in terms of licences: to make our sportmen and sportwomen arrive better prepared to national teams; to be better prepared to face international races; to have selections, fair and equal selection processes for everyone... but, above all, the main challenge is to row through different modalities. There are several modalities of rowing, and each one fits better in a given area of the territory. So we're trying to implement rowing in areas where it hasn't arrived yet, where it used to be but it's no longer practised, or where the effort has never been done. So this is our greatest challenge. And to respond to current requests of rowing.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

There is no equality because, in general, there isn't an equal number of men and women on sport boards. Regarding Federations, there might be more or fewer women. I have four women on my sport board. But their role is essential, often their vision is different, they make an enormous contributions. I... women in my sport board brainstorm many ideas, bring wisdom, and are very dynamic. The effect is always positive and necessary.

In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

As I see it, in order to achieve equality within sport boards, what we're talking about here, it is essential to encourage and to help sportswomen not to leave sport at the moment of shifting from the junior to the senior category (sub-23). To allow them to juggle their sporting lives with their academic lives, with the rest of their lives. I think this is the main point: if women can find a balance, they don't have to choose. And, if they don't have to choose and they continue with sport, we will have female directors in the future. Of course, very well prepared and still interested, not having abandoned sport because they are forced to choose.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I think it does help. Because, well, it is still another example of what must be perfectly natural: women being everywhere, in a manner of speaking. Either in a sport board, or training a club, or being referees, as I am, for example. The proof of the pudding is demonstrate in the eating, and there is no better contribution than facts. In any case. Always.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

The main advice is for whoever is willing, whoever is having that concern, that aspiration: don't hesitate for a moment. Try, it will arrive. If you have a good project, a good idea, preparation, and interest, you can do it. No matter whether you are a woman or a man. We don't have to put a spoke in our own wheels. No. No doubts. Don't waste a minute doubting. Why not? If I want to do it, I can do it. That's all.



**Mariola Rus Rufino**  
Vicepresident  
Spanish Federation of Rugby

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport plays a very important role in my life. It's essential. I am a Physical Education teacher, thus I spend the whole morning playing sport with my students. And then, in the afternoons, I devote my time to rugby and to the Federation, so it is a very important part of my life. Besides, I am the mother of two sporty daughters, thus I also spend my day taking my daughters to and bringing them from training sessions and matches. Therefore, it is a very important part of my life.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I was living in Madrid, where I played basketball. I used to play high-level basketball, in League 2. And one of my basketball team mates suddenly told me: "Oh, Mariola, as you move your body so well and as you are so tall, why don't you play rugby?". And Mariana, who was the captain of my team, convinced me. And I started to go to training with her so that I was falling in love with this sport from the very first moment. Little by little, I persuaded my basketball teammates and girls from a handball team at the INEF (National Institute of Physical Education), there in Madrid. We finally set up a team at the faculty. And a few months later, we even joined the Federation. And there's where my career started: at the age of 19, I started playing rugby. A bit late, but, anyway, I've been very very tied to this sport since I was 19 (until 51).

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, I think that, currently, we are relatively few women at representative bodies of sport, and, above all, of women's sport. We are still governed or commanded by men within the Federations. But, even, not only within the Federations but also trainers, physical trainers, physios (therapist)... at present we are still commanded by men. I think that, little by little, this is going to change. Because, as soon as there are women like me, sportswomen having lived this experience... when you retire from professional sport or even amateur sport you can get back to sport one way or another, no? I started as a trainer, then I've been President of a club, and now I am at the Federation. But nowadays there are very few women engaged in sport management. And it needs to be there, huh? Greatly needed.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I've only been on the sport board of the Federation for a short time, but I think that I've done more for promoting gender equality within rugby as a player. Always. When we first became the Spanish team, initially the Federation didn't bet on us. We even had to request, to beg them for letting us participate in the first world cup, hosted by Wales, in 1998. At the same time, there wasn't even a Spanish female team. But we fought for our participation at that world cup. Then, of course, once we started succeeding, two years later we became European champions... well, we started having good results. But I think that, as a player, I've fought more for equality. Nowadays, for example, women of the Spanish team earn the same as men. It is not the case in all sport, but it is the case in rugby, because we, as players, have fought a lot for it. We have fought for our participation in European championships, in six countries, in world cups. And we have always made the grade. And now, as a federative, I fight for this equality to be kept, for women to have the best training conditions, for women to have the same conditions as men. And, fortunately, in our Federation this is being achieved, this is being done. As female players, we currently have the same level of engagement, of course; but also the same level of tools for training and achieving good travel conditions as male players do.



## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I've been on the sport corporate board for only three years. And, as vice-President, for only ten days. It's been a very short time. But, well, I've been bound to the Andalusian and Spanish Federations for a long time, haven't I? What I want, I mean, what I feel like doing, what I consider very important to be done – first of all, we're going to create a women's commission, a women's commission within the Federation, where decisions on what we want for female rugby will be made by women. Right? I'm going to work not only for female rugby but also for male rugby, and above all for development, which I consider basic in order to have some good rugby in the future. Then, for me, the crucial things are to create that commission, to make decisions within the Federation and to start working, first of all for female rugby union and rugby sevens, since at this moment these girls have very important goals: Olympics and world cups. And, then, to work for development. For girls being between 15 and 16 years old at this moment not to leave the sport, since many women of that age tend to leave sport, not only rugby but all sport in general... we want to motivate women for them to reach the highest performances, to reach the highest categories, right? To me, these are the essential parts of my work as a federative: both the high level and the development.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Ok, challenges, well... The most important thing is to... to make a good start at the Federation in order to be convincing. Not only myself but also the whole women's commission. They must be convinced that we, as women, are able to achieve all the goals we have. Moreover, they aren't easy goals, since due to this situation our budgets will be reduced. But, above all, the most important thing for me is that they get convinced that we are able to manage sport, both female and male sport. But, above all: that we women are able to do it. It is my greatest current goal.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Well, I think that the participation of women within executive committees is very low. I think that, after being sportswomen, we start having a partner, a family, sons and/or daughters... and many times we forget about sport. And, as I see it, it is actually a mistake. I think we have to maintain the bonds to sport. Furthermore, because almost always sport provide us many satisfactions, and, as I see it, it's good to somehow give back those satisfactions, isn't it? Therefore, I encourage all sportswomen, even after leaving sport and becoming mothers or anything else, to keep on being trained in sport, either to become referees, trainers, delegates... Because, as I see it, every sportswoman would like to have by her side another woman to help her, to train her, or even refereeing, no? I think it is crucial. I also think we are very noble regarding sport boards. We didn't have female models in sport management. I am one of the first women to be in the Spanish Federation as... well, now as a Vicepresident. Within the sport board, there were some other women before me, but very few, no? I think that, just as we didn't have female models in sport, neither did we have female models in management. That's why I think that within ten years this will change: there will be more girls devoted to sport management, refereeing and training, because they will have female models. For example, when I started to play sport, I didn't have female sportswomen as reference points either. Not in the case of rugby. I did have female models in basketball, but not in the case of rugby. Now, for example, my twelve-year-old daughter is a rugby player, and she has available a lot of female models motivating her to keep on playing, right? So I think this will also change sport management. The day after tomorrow there will be more women leading sport teams, clubs, Federations, thanks to those who are already there, no?

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, as I see it, nowadays positive discrimination towards women is still necessary for attaining equality. Right now, for example, out of 35,000 sport cards showing photos of rugby players, only 5,200 are of female players. Therefore, we still need more scholarships, more grants of all kinds, so that more girls are playing this sport, more women. Also at school, with... to include this sport at school is crucial for them to get to learn about rugby. And at University. I mean: these are two main pillars for more women to play sport. For example, regarding rugby, within our Federation, there is a program called "get into rugby", thanks to which more than                      irls have met the oval ball for the      rst time, our ball, and the ground rules of our sport. Then, well... that's it: we have to keep on carrying out these actions. And, likewise, we have to provide more loving care, don't you think? More... more... I don't know how... I don't know how to express it... Mmm... My mind has gone blank... well, about taking care of ourselves, right? We have to take more care of girls. When we are 14, 15, 16 years old, many times we women leave sport. Not only rugby but all sport in general. But it is especially the case of our sport, since it is a mixed-sex sport, so many girls withdraw because the boys they're playing with have become huge and very strong. Therefore, as close persons, both people in the management and their male counterparts as players, we have to take special care of these girls, to provide them special loving care, for them not to leave this sport and to encourage them to attain the senior category. Then, as I see it, we need to provide these girls considerable support.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Yes, I think this will contribute in a positive way to attain equality. Because some women have been within the Federation so far, but we didn't have the chance to make a lot of decisions. And, for example, this is the first time that I am going to be within the executive committee making decisions, regarding both male and female rugby and development; all kinds of decisions. Besides, I think it is crucial that we start to be in these positions, for the day after tomorrow there will be many women within sport boards of Federations... and clubs, right? Since clubs are equally important. And... also for us to manage sport by ourselves. Nowadays, girls are managed by men. We have male trainers, male physical trainers, male referees... and we have to change all this. We, women, have to get engaged in this so that we can attain our goals. But we have to go ahead with the willingness. Because it is very easy to be a sportswoman and, later, abandon it. Therefore, it is important to go on with it and to be trained in order to become female sport managers.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, the only thing I would do is to encourage them. I'd 100% encourage them to keep on playing sport. All sportmen and sportwomen have felt immense satisfaction while playing sport, right? Both winning and losing. But, above all, belonging to the rugby world. For example, regarding rugby, the team is very important, then... I still keep in touch with my oldies. Two weekends ago I went cycling with all of them. Some things are never forgotten. I mean, for girls who play rugby, and, well, for boys too, that unity as a team always remains. Well, as I see it, somehow you have to bring that satisfaction back, right? I think that, if you have felt that, if you have been so lucky to feel that, then you can make a little effort and give back to sport some part of your life, not all, just some years. It is a rule we have in rugby, an amateur rule. So if you have received something, you have to give it back somehow. You don't have to join the sport boards, which might be a boring bureaucratic choice for many people, no? But you can become a delegate, a trainer... or whatever, right? And you can support your sport. I do think it is important.



**Susana Santos Menéndez**

Vicepresident  
The Spanish Royal Federation  
of Baseball and Softball

## What role does sport play in your life?

Well, I think I've been involved in sport for my whole life, no? Not as most children nowadays, who are absolutely sedentary. We didn't have internet connections, so we used to spend our time... mmm... swimming, playing tennis matches with our friends, etcetera, etcetera. But, from the beginning of the 80s, when I got into the world of baseball, sport is more than half of my life. I have a part-time job, and I devote the rest of my time to work on the Asturian Federation, to work for the Spanish Federation; I am devoted to my scorekeepers since I am the President of the National College of Baseball and Softball Scorers, I am an international scorekeeper... I mean, half of my life, not to say almost my entire life.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I think it was in the early 80s, around 19... I don't know exactly if 81 or 82. It was by chance that I got to know the leaders of the baseball junior club of Gijón, and they persuaded me to try playing. In our sport (they're actually two sports, we cover baseball and softball), we don't have female baseball, so as girls we have to play softball. So they persuaded me to... to try playing softball. And later I started my training courses to become an instructor, the courses to become a scorekeeper... and so far.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, I think there is still plenty to do. The truth is that the Spanish Federation has a President who is really aware of the issue of equality. Mmm... since my early stages, I mean, progress has been impressive. I mean, this was a sport for men, and female representation... well, there were softball female players, but, representatives, within sport boards... nothing at all. Nowadays there is gender balance: we are three women and three men in addition to the President. And, as I see it... while... I mean, what worries me the most, I mean, it's that it would be... I want gender parity to be true, not just to have a mandatory quota. Then, if it's just to have a quota, we become trophy executives, as I say. In these terms, I am a warrior. I mean, don't elect me as a Vicepresident of the Spanish Federation just to exhibit me.

I talked about this with the president and with the secretary general, because at one point I had to tell them: "OK, I am the Vicepresident of the Spanish Federation. When we have to represent the Spanish Federation, for example, at a European Championship, senior... Who goes there? The Technical Director, the Secretary-general, the President...", I said. "I'm not even given the choice or asked: "Susana, as the Vicepresident, do you want to go to the European Championship as a representative of the Spanish Federation?" Then they, without any problems or objections, they told me: "You are absolutely right". That's the way the cookie crumbles. I mean... And personally I can't bear it. I mean, to get a position just to be a small trophy, as we say in Asturias."



As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I am a member of the commission... let's see if I say the right name... because it used to be called "woman and sport", and now I think it's called "woman and equality"... Member of the commission "woman and equality" of the Spanish Federation, where all the sectors are represented. That is to say: female directors, female players, female coaches, female judges, female scorekeepers as it is in my case... right? This commission, I think, was created in 2019... sorry, in 2009. The... the Federation: I still think it is really aware of this issue. And equality policies, let me say it once again, are useful if they are true, if they are true. So... then... well... within the Spanish Federation, we work for making women as fully visible as possible. By women, I mean: female national coaches, female judges... from all sectors.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I've been Vicepresident of the Spanish Federation since the last... I mean, the last full term of the sport board. That is to say: this is an election year, so I've been Vicepresident since 2016. Beforehand, I had been a member (I'm still being) of the assembly, and I used to take part in the delegate commission within the sector of judges (that is to say: official judges, referees and scorekeepers on baseball, right?). The duties, the work of the sport board is, I think, the work of the entire Federation. That is to say: to regulate the aspects of sport, economy and training. It is in... it is in what we work within the Spanish Federation, what the sport board does. Then, proposals will be adopted or not by the delegate commission, and, in other cases, by the assembly. But the Federation itself is in charge of aspects of economy, sport and technical training.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

No doubt about it, the greatest challenge we have is to increase the number of sport licences in terms of both players... I'm referring to women, ok? In terms of both female players, female coaches, female judges... because, for example, since we cover softball, there are female players' licences, in great numbers; not comparable to the number of male licences, of course, that's why we aim at endeavoring to increase the number of female licences. Male referees... I mean, mmm... How many male referees might be there, 90 vs 10? Female referees, very few, even... even if softball is a female sport. Because, for example, in Europe, I mean, in Europe and within the international sphere, right? When participating teams are female teams, there are female referees, OK? But, in our case, it is minimal. Therefore, to me, this is the greatest challenge. That is to say: to attain a higher number of licences of female players, of female judges. For example, in the case of scorekeeping, in the case of scoring judges, there are more girls than boys; it's not in an exaggerated amount, but we're certainly more girls. And I, to me, that's the greatest challenge. Moreover, at another level, to make ourselves known within the media. I mean. You may notice that, at the national level, baseball only appears on TV if there are either a huge hit in the national states because something happened, scandals of any sort... I mean, in the Federation, what we are doing is to promote streaming broadcasts of the sport, to use social media a lot, and to become much more visible within the mass media. I think these are the two most difficult issues we currently have to face.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

As I have already said, I consider that things have greatly improved. I mean, I think that important progress is being made. The other day... well, by the other day I mean some time ago, there was a Federation meeting with the State Secretary for Sport. I think I've correctly named its position. There were... I don't know, maybe 50 Federations represented there? And only three women. That is to say... it's a pity, but it's the truth. As I see it, we're carrying... we're carrying a historical burden, or traditional burden, I don't know how to call it... and we have to get rid of this because it's... it's... if someone says gender equality has already been attained, as far as I know... I don't think it has been attained, OK? I don't think it.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, let's see... I consider it essential to have legislation, to implement laws for conciliation. Just can't imagine finding a balance between work, family, and being the president of a Federation. And it's even to this day, and it's impossible to think in the same way. It applies to sportswomen and it's impossible for them to find a balance between either work, or studies, or exams for public services... that is to say, sport tends to be left out because there are always other things to do. So, I would find it essential to have something, a law, legislation; something to facilitate conciliation in order, then, to develop personally and, then, to properly do our jobs.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Well, I think so, because... if women see other women at positions that used to be reserved only and exclusively to men, as I see it, we become visible, and, then, it's positive, isn't it? In order... in order for equality to be attained. Is there still much to be done? Of course. Is there still a lack of equality? There isn't. But I do think it is a step within the path to attain it.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, let's see... as I see it, the best cover letter is the work well done. That, regardless of the results produced or not... to me, to be able to say: here you can see, sirs, what I do. Well. I would tell women, obviously, to make themselves heard, and to never give up. And to give battle, to fight for their dreams to come true.



## África Álvarez López

Member of the sport governing board  
Spanish Surfing Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport is 100 % part of my life because I live for sport. I practise sport, I am the mother of three sportpeople, I've been linked to sport for my whole life, and I'm currently holding leadership positions within the area of national sport.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I first got involved with surfing when I was 12 years old, at the beach of San Vicente de la Barquera, when I surfed for the first time and so got to know this sport, which has fulfilled me. I used to be part of it as a sportswoman. Later, I got familiar with the sphere of the Federation in Santander. Besides, I got in touch, in a very special way, with Javier Vila de Savenelle and with Carlos, the current President of the Spanish Federation, because, on the occasion of a Congress held at the Magdalena Palace, we happened to meet: I was in charge of the project "grados de evolución deportiva", that means degrees of sport evolution, and there we met each other and started to work together.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, in my opinion, little by little women are being selected for holding leadership positions. Honestly, it's been very difficult. Indeed, all undertaken actions are aimed at paving our way to sport governing boards. As I see it, there is still much work to be done. I don't think this is due to a lack of will on the part of the governing board of the national Federation; I think it is due to a combination of circumstances. But I do think we're now on the right track, and, little by little, I hope that there will be more female presidents of Federations.

## As member of the sport governing board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Within the Spanish surfing Federation, we have always worked on equality in a normalized way. Ours is a Federation working equally for the global framework, for the female and male frameworks. We have a similar size of male and female sport licences, we don't need to undertake great one-off actions aiming at correcting something that hasn't been done; a great job is being done. Along with it, we collaborate with all the projects on female sport, with all the projects sponsored by the High Board for Sport, which are aimed at strengthening those actions within the field of female sport. A very good job is being done, several one-off actions are being undertaken for the purpose of giving visibility to sportswomen, in this case, the Spanish female surfer. Besides, above all regarding the media, several actions have been undertaken to improve its dissemination. I don't think we need, so to say specific policies to correct anything, because in this sense we're doing well.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Well, I've been holding this position for approximately 2 years, 2 years and a half, 3, in a leadership position. But see what I was talking about for the previous question the president of the Spanish Surfing Federation, Carlos, who is a praiseworthy person, a great professional... even if I wasn't on the sport board, when I was in other positions, he has always counted on... I mean, counting on the female-male global framework and on the absolute plurality of the perspective from all is always very important to him. What I currently do within the corporate board is, just like the rest of my colleagues. I don't have a special role: we are all for one within a single team, we support the same main goals of the Spanish Federation, led by its President. We are in charge of monitoring the Federation, adopting rules, taking part in all the sport governing boards, especially concerning planning, calendars, and the implementation strategy for our sport fields, which is the main objective. Above all, we are focused on the sport framework, prioritizing the results of surfing as a widening discipline, in terms of sport.



## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The main challenges for me are, as you ask, since I took this position, is to get surfer. That all surfers consider surfing as a sport discipline. The Olympicism and the fact that surfing has been included within the Olympic framework, those have been two key facts. Because, let's say, in surfing, we have an industrial line of work, a very powerful one, in which there is a lot of pressure, and which is calling us, and many times we risk getting diverted towards this part and lose the technical performance side of sport, the concept of a sport club, the fact that a surfer spends the whole year training to attain technical, tactical and motor-perceptive goals in order to participate in a competition, to achieve the best results possible, to improve oneself, and, then, to follow the philosophy of surfing, which is very important to keep in mind. So, at the same time, there is a very strong industry with other goals. So, to me, the challenge is to prevent this industry of getting diverted from the sporting goal.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Well... Let's see... maybe there's no equality in a literal sense, because we're not balanced at 50%. But I can't say I have personally seen any inequalities. Because I've been for many years and in many sectors within the field of federate sport, as a sportswoman, as a national coach, as President of the regional Federation, and as part of the national corporate board. And I haven't seen inequalities just because of being a woman. It might be true that within some Spanish corporate boards there are much more men than women and it's necessary to give them a wake-up call, because female participation is required. But, in my opinion, it derives more from circumstances of routine than from the fact that women are vetoed. However: as I see it, there remains a long and important way to go, and women need to have more visibility, more responsibilities. Because she truly has it, even if not on the front line.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, look: the main policy is common sense. To require, as it's currently being done, a specific proportion of women within sport boards for accessing public funds aimed at promoting equality. Well, this might be an alternative. As I see it, what has to prevail in the first place is the ability to lead, and later on an absolute knowledge about the discipline to be led. And, then, of course, it's better if equality between men and women is ensured. What can be done? Well, we have to keep on demanding it. To keep on saying that, to get registered grants coming from the High Board for Sport, we then have to move towards this direction, rewarding those Federations giving visibility to, for example, women in leadership positions. And also bearing in mind that... it is important to highlight that, to reach a managerial position, many times women have to work three times more than men do. And that's really sad. Because it's as if you have to prove it. And, well, nowadays that's dying out. I admit that I am young, I'm 41 years old, but I've seen that. So now it's not so necessary, and now it is widely known that the value and the ability of a person and of a professional are not gender issues, but issues of preparation. But, as I see it, that window saying "Federation, if you have to apply for, or you want to apply for this project, remember that, if you don't follow this line of equality, you will not be eligible for it". As I see it, the solution is among that line of policies. And, additionally, it's in setting an example. We have to set an example: if we expect equality within some state bodies, equality must be granted within all the platforms. Within all the bases: from the bottom-up.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I do think it helps. I think it helps, because... well, in the end, I... we all are guided, as I say, by equality. We are reproducers of what we see. When you see a woman in a managerial position, as a woman, you say "I can aim for it". It's exemplary, because, in the end, you're showing the image that it's possible. I am the mother of a large family. By holding a managerial position and having three children I'm projecting an image that might tell "and, why not?" to another woman. To step out of the clichés. Because, within the Spanish managerial environment, my own personal suffering is what I have fought the most, something that, as a woman, I've had to overcome when I've needed to travel to Madrid every week, round-trip, leave my children at home, and keep on fighting for it. Because it's a woman's genetic condition, something that, in this sense, men don't have, isn't it? We are the, we are the ones who have it. I think it's just a matter of people riding over these clichés. And, indeed, of women holding managerial positions and finding a balance between our work and family lives, with all that it entails, we make our work visible. And we have to stress that a woman is not a bad mother if she decides to work; that you're not arbitrarily hired if you're a woman and you hold a position on a sport governing board because you're a woman, or because a given entity set it as a prerequisite to access funds. Not: you're there because you are a woman, because you deserve it and because you have the professional ability to hold that position. Then, the fact that, as a woman, I am a member of a sport board, does it promote equality? Of course, it does. Of course, it does promote equality. And, as I see it, my Federation is responsible, in that regard, and we work for equality to be true. In fact, as I'm saying, within the Spanish surfing federation, sportsmen and sportswomen, we go hand in hand; there might be more male coaches than female coaches, yes, there might be a greater imbalance regarding coaches. But, in general, there is equality. And we do work for the sake of equality. I do think it's very important, yes.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

To be strong, tenacious, resilient, and a strategist. I don't really think... I say it once again, because I want to deliver a message of full respect towards my colleagues, presidents and managers of Spanish sport. Being a woman, I've never felt a gender gap. Because I'm who I am. But another person might have felt it, that's why we're doing what we're doing: precisely, to make the gender gap disappear from wherever it exists. As women, they have to be strong, because women, in a given moment of their lives, probably 70% of women will have to deal with that female side of the family; and you have to be strong. Because that goes... we have it in our DNA, and, at a certain point, it is very difficult to be apart from your loved ones. And in order to work and to be one hundred percent devoted to your position, you have to be at a hundred percent. Because you have to be a professional, and the fact of being a professional is independent of being a man or a woman. You have to work the necessary hours. And, then, you have to be a strategist, because in the cases where you find barriers, you have to study long term how to overcome them. But I do want to deliver a message: to me, the most important thing of all is for women to understand that, if they want, work and consistency are possible but it is necessary to be a fighter and to be steady. And you must fight a lot, precisely to get respect and for them to see the strength in you, not to allow anyone subduing you for the fact of being a woman.



**Diana Box Alonso**  
Vicepresident  
The Royal Spanish Handball Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Well, would define it as everything. I think that from my point of view, I'm one of those who have had the great privilege of doing what they love, and, in this case, through sport, right? I think that sport has always significantly contributed to all that I am in my life. I began playing sport when I was very young, and then I really discovered that through that sport (in this case, handball, although I like all sport) I could open... or, I could have a new way of life, right? The one that I liked, right? Then, I realized that through a team sport you can learn to be tolerant, to share, to have that empathy, so necessary to attain goals... that is to say: a large number of circumstances, or experiences, or values, that have helped me throughout my life and are still helping me, right? Then, new frontiers have been opened to me thanks to handball. I've discovered plenty of wonderful people thanks to... thanks to that sport that has made me travel, or move in different teams believe in the culture of hard work, in that discipline, in that consistency. And, in the end, it also leads you to an understanding that life is simpler, isn't it? As I say: to me, sport have been everything; sport is everything: I keep on working on sport, I'm still involved with sport, and I do believe in sport. That's why I keep on working, as... as I've told you, and I won't stop to doing it. Because, as I say: to me, it's a lifestyle. And, as I see it, it's a tool with an extraordinary potential for children and the elderly; for everyone. So, as I've told you to summarise briefly, sport in my life sport is everything.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

"Well, then... as I see it, just like many boys and girls, no? At school. At ten years, I was already... I've always been that kind of person who likes all kinds of sport. I mean: my memories of my childhood always include a... a racket, a ball... playing sport, right? But it was actually at school where I think we have to give value to those people who inspire in us these values, right? Apart from those who teach the subject, right? Of those who come and try to catch children's attention through different sport disciplines. In this case, it was... I used to play basketball. Look, this is funny: at ten years, at school, I used to play basketball, at ten years. But then a teacher came from Vilas, and he was a handball lover, right? So, when he was finishing his lessons, he once said: "Let's create a handball team". And, in addition, he gave a leading role to female sport. As you all know, we're improving in this sense, but at that time (now I'm 49 years old) there wasn't obviously a sharp and upward trend, it was not looked over, or at least it didn't have as much visibility as it currently has. So he instilled this in us, he told us to team up, and we decided to try. I can easily say that from the very first day I played handball I said: "This is my sport. It has everything: it's dynamic, it's intense, it's a contact sport...". I think I have a strong personality, right? I mean: not an aggressive but a strong personality. Honestly, handball allowed me to develop personally; as I see it, to fully develop my personal strength qualities. Thereafter I began to play handball. And I kept on, I kept on playing, until... well, unfortunately, when we were 14-15 years old, we no longer had the choice to keep on playing, because here there weren't female teams. And I didn't stop: we found a team in Alicante, some mates and I used to go to Alicante three times a week, because of our love of sport. And, while I was there, I received a call from a team from Valencia: Amadeo Tortajada, which was in the Division of Honour. And, well, that was the beginning of my career, let's say, in elite sport, and of my training at a professional level, right? But, as said started out at school. And, besides, that's why now, from... from one of the positions I hold, board member for sport, I tend to strongly stand up for the importance of working with children at school. I think those are the main recruitment centers, and it's where

public administration truly has to make that, that investment, right? Because it is from there that people will come having those values, and, that way, or that kind of personality, or characteristics, when it comes to thinking, to acting; those who will be the society we want to have in Torre Vieja, isn't it? So I defend that... that initiation tooth and nail; and, obviously, everything else. But, as I said: at school. And I have the greatest memories of all the people who taught me. And I'm very grateful, too.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, I always try to adopt a positive spirit and attitude and I don't really like looking back, right? I think that... we have to think about the present, about what we can do, and about the future, so as to improve, right? It is clear that we're no longer in the same situation as we were in 10 years ago. I'm absolutely delighted when I see women in important positions, within Federations, within clubs, as presidents... I mean, it strikes... it strikes me as normal. I think I'm somewhat one of those who take the view that... I don't see the difference, and we've never seen it, so I think it is important that women increasingly take on these kinds of positions, because we have much to say. But let's avoid that dynamic, that perspective that it is important because we are better, or... but simply because we might provide a different view that also contributes, because of our experiences or because of x reasons, and that is positive too. So I think we have to congratulate all women who take a step forward. We have to congratulate and keep on encouraging all those people who give these opportunities. And, in the end, we have to try to normalize this situation. That is to say: women having the possibility of being at the forefront of a Federation, of sport boardships, of clubs... That is to say: it shouldn't... or, we have to try, over time, not to consider it as news, but as something usual. But, well, as I've said, I am... I try to see, you know, positivity, evolution, and not to get trapped in what wasn't done. So... we have to keep on encouraging all those women, who have the potential of doing it. And... I insist: we have many things to contribute, maybe because we have a view that for years



we've been prevented from sharing, it's true. But now, many times, it only consists of listening to one's experiences and the way they occurred. And I think that enriches the surrounding community as a whole, so... very pleased, and... and I keep on encouraging them to take on those positions.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Of course I did. And now I'm going to somewhat set a turning point, because I consider it important. Just as I was telling you earlier, women are increasingly holding positions within Federations... they are... well, we're seeing many more... As I see it, the importance of these people... in this case, since I have the great luck of having a President such as Francisco Blázquez, who proves me right once again; I mean: it all depends on the people. Paco Blázquez, a person who... who was really aware that we are all equal, from the moment he entered the Federation. He was aware that, if there was something to improve, it was the situation of female handball. But it was not 'improve' in the sense that we didn't reach the standard, or 'improve' in the sense that women would not reach the goals; it was 'improve' in the sense of improving equality. Talking about gender equality policies, I'd say, because I've experienced it in my own skin, in mine and in many of my teammates' skins, well, being in the same national team and not having the same salaries as our male counterparts. I mean: in my opinion, this difference strongly discriminates against women. Because we all do the same effort, the same work, the same time therefore, once again, don't understand that difference. And here we've had a president who, from the very first day and, indeed, the facts that was in his governance board, and that I accepted that proposal), has been committed to gender equality. From the very first day, shortly after he entered the sport governance body, he did equalize male and female players' salaries. Male and female

players are treated in the same way. They all go to the same hotels, they all have the same equipment, obviously respecting their differences, they all, between the ones for men and the ones for women. And so many other things we're currently doing, opting for a serious improvement of the female player contracts; male players have their own agreement. We keep on working to improve. I mean: we're constantly monitoring needs. I can assure you that since the election of my President, since the decision of the sport governance board to work towards this direction, his gender equality policy has been on the table, regarding any of the approaches we adopt because there's no other way we can achieve it. It is not a temporary choice, it is not merely a play to the gallery to make a good impression, not at all. In fact, he has just been re-elected for four extra years, with the support of a large majority from all the sectors of handball. It means three legislative terms. It is very important: it's not a coincidence; and his policies are the same. And the day we were there, in his election, his words were focused on sport, on female handball. It does not mean we forget about male handball; not at all: all our players, both male and female, are equal in our eyes. But we are, and we've been for the last eight years, really aware of the need for highlighting, for pointing out the value of female handball, for giving to women the place they deserve; and, indeed, we've been and are also aware that our Federation is absolutely committed to equality. So I can tell you: yes, I've worked side by side with my President, with my executive committee; and, besides, we're not going to stop doing so.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Well, I've been in this position for eight years. And now, for this new legislative term that my President is starting now, I've already told him that I am at his disposal, obviously with less time than before, but he will decide, right? And, even if I weren't there, I would keep on working with him in whatever he asked me, right? Basically, I, and, above all, my participation... I mean: Paco is a President who works a lot with his corporate board. That is to say: he's not a President making decisions independently or without consultation; on the contrary: he has placed, he has people, obviously from all the sectors, presidents of Federations, female players, we have women within the corporate board. So my role has been mainly the ink, or the area of female handball and the relationship with the associations, right? Unfortunately, a few... a few weeks ago we got the bad news of the decease of Claudio Gómez, the manager of the association of players, with whom... with whom I had a very special relationship, and who we've worked with, I've worked with, right? And along the same line, right? Along the line of the struggle to defend the handball players' rights. So my job, basically, or my participation, is mainly that. But, as I say: my job with Paco is extensive, he consults us about everything, we work on calendars, on improvements, on contracts, on proposals, something to what... to what we dedicate much time, right? That is to say: he is a President who opens a wide range of possibilities for you and who listens to you. I like people who listen and are enriched by what others tell them. But, as I told you: at the beginning, we created a task force group for female handball. At that time there was no association of sport clubs. I understand that a given sector considers it necessary. I've seen that, when we all work together, mean, people from the different sectors, we can do it, if we are willing, if we all are willing, setting our personal interests aside and looking for improving female handball, it's possible, isn't it? And these are the lines we've been working along. Ángel Sandoval, who was involved at the beginning (he's no longer working on it), has been among those

people being vital for that handball task force group; he knows very very well female handball a coach had the pleasure of havin him for fteen years. And, I tell you... I mean: during all that work, all that lookout for goodwills, we've had this task force group for handball, always working in to improve. And, you know: it's not that easy, huh? for clubs to reach an agreement between clubs, female players, referees... that is to say: all the elements that make up this great family of handball. And we've succeeded. At present, I can tell you that every time there is a proposal, it is received and analy ed by everybody. nd somethin very di icult to achieve (which, in the end, it's normal; something that we're normalizing) is for people to set this particularity aside, right? I mean: we can't prevent the emergence of personal views from the clubs, from the female players themselves, from the male players themselves, or even the referees themselves, right? We've reached a point where, as I see it, we're all being quite generous because we all know that, if we want our sport to improve, generosity is the most important thin gand a point of view that suits us all, at some point,not everything we wanted...but, let me say it: always based on that... that... attitude of generosity. Then, that work on female handball within the task force group... it is also true that it is currently on this period because of my job. During the previous years, well, I couldn't participate as much as I wanted and I couldn't attend all the meetings, and Paco knows it; but it doesn't mean that I haven't worked nor that I haven't been in touch with my President and with all we were talking about. So... you know: it's been mostly oriented to the improvement of handball and to work by and for sportwomen.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, I would say from the start, isn't it because we did come from, I'd say, kind of a broken handball, right, with different interests. It was a challenge: it was very important that all those elements got to listen to each other, right? And, then, the greatest challenge is the improvement of the working conditions of female players. I belong to a generation that, unfortunately, has hardly known what it is to have a contract, to contribute to social security... I'd particularly tell you that I've always... I've always been worried about it. That is to say: I think I've found people who have always instilled in me that sometimes this would be over, and that we have to think ahead, right? And thus it was. The clubs I've tried to take part in may have offered me less money, but they have guaranteed a contract, right? And, to this day, I've been contributing the Social Security during my working life thanks to handball. But it's not that usual. I remember that, when we joined the executive board, in 2013, at a national level the proportion of contracts in handball was minimal. It wasn't that important. Other things were more important, right? But to have a contract was not that important. To me, it is basic: it's the stability of a player, of female players and colleagues that have been devoted to handball at a high-performance level for 20, 25 years... not only those who've taken part in the Division of Honor, but also in the national team, in Olympics, in European championships, in World Championships... it implies a very demanding life, a life full of determination and, obviously, consequences... Because handball is a rough sport, a sport which (as many others, but we're focusing on handball) tends to cause lifelong injuries; sometimes it happens that at the age of 45 your knees feel like if you were 80, right? All those things that have been underestimated are currently on the assembly. We've been making improvements year after year: in every board meeting we set out the need for increasing the contracts. We're also very aware that we come from a crisis so that there are some things we can't demand, to some extent, because the sport clubs are also facing a complicated situation; but we've got across which is the pathway. Nowadays... in our last assembly, we approved an increase of full-time contracts for both groups and . That is to say little by little. It is difficult to understand

that. It's what I mentioned before, right? I mean: the right thing would be that all women had a contract; well, we have to move forward in a way that is appropriate to the situation. But we do have a Federation which... which is not away from it not only our federation fights for understanding these proposals, bringing them to the board meeting and approving them, but also it collaborates. They... we collaborate with the clubs in the Division of Honor through the sponsorship by Iberdrola, allocating part of that money towards those clubs where the female players have contracts; our collaboration consists of giving them an amount of money that is proportional to the number of female players having a contract, so that the clubs can afford the payment of the social security. That is to say it is very clear to us that our goal is to reach 100% of female players with a contract; for women to have decent conditions, allowing them to focus exclusively on playing handball; and we want them to be aware that this Federation is not going to change this road map. And that's our greatest challenge, isn't it? I don't like to make comparisons with other countries. I know it, we tend to hear about French handball, about Romanian handball... I have that information. I mean: we all know how they work and how we do; it's crystal clear. But we are from Spain: we come from a situation, we're dealing with a given set of circumstances... and what we have to do is to work with what we have. And, if we can see that things are improving year by year, that we are moving forwards... as I see it, this is the way. Now, we mustn't stop: we have to carry on, and to believe. But, as I told you... as I see it, the greatest challenge is to achieve soon (because this is what we will leave behind for the future female players; I may have an exceptional pool of young players) a safe future, for example, a future where they will have conditions allowing them to devote to their sport. Because it's hard to see how these professional female players usually need to run to the training session after work... and that distribution of functions, that tiredness... sometimes it's not possible. So, as I tell you: our goal is to have 100% of female players with a contract. And, as always, and as it is characteristic of this federation, we will fight for it, and this goal is not going to change.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I can give my opinion on the Federation I take part in. And, obviously, I can say about it that within my Federation there is absolute equality... 100%. We're currently 15 people within the sport corporate board. I insist: for this previous period, a four-year period; for this new legislative term, the new executive board hasn't been established yet. There are five women. Obviously, I'd like to have a greater proportion of women, but we are there, right? And... as I've already mentioned: our President is willing to increase the rate. But, personally, I don't see any differences. I mean: I don't see any inequalities, I don't see a lack of appreciation of our contributions. Obviously, I'm sure that, I know that there are inequalities within other structures not only within the field of sport, where women might not receive the same attention or esteem. But, you know: I always try to be in structures that can give me the feeling that what I'm doing, the time I'm investing... the feeling that it's positive. Obviously, if it's not the case, I will never be there. It's sad: sometimes we struggle to make... to make our environments and the people surrounding us understand it. I have noticed it, I mean: I have felt that discrimination as a sportswoman. Now, as a person in decision-making positions, I wouldn't say I've felt that. As a sportswoman, I have felt it: disregard of our high-level international competitions... we shouldn't forget that handball has existed for many years, and there has been an extraordinarily high level in female sport, but it used to be invisible. In the Olympics, we went virtually unnoticed. I mean: I have certainly felt it. The difference, as we mentioned before, in terms of incomes. The difference in terms of the hotels we stay in. The difference in terms of the equipment we have... I can tell you, as I always tell, even if it feels like a highly repetitive anecdote... but, in the end, all these small things were so easy to get or to do, and that affected us so much... I mean: the equipment... we've never had female equipment, right? Sometimes we had to use the male equipment, and what if it was six sizes larger? We did have to use it, ok? I mean: that's a lack, in opinion, that's a lack of respect, right? A lack of respect to the work done by... at that moment, by that group of women. In my opinion, that's the starting point of respect,

isn't it? That point where women's work is given value, where men's and women's work are equal. So, as I've mentioned: from my positions, from my positions within this corporate board, I haven't felt it. I tell you: we are a group of people and, many of us, we've known each other for so long... we're all human for the same things, and there is maximum respect between us. And, above all, apart from respect, you know. I mean: as I've always said, my opinion is that the most positive thing we can contribute with, as women in the executive board, is our different vision, right? Because, as women, we might see sport, our sport, with different eyes we see things that, as men, for x reasons, they can't see. And, in that regard, they are very... they are very attentive. And they appreciate very much our point of view, because it helps them to understand many things.

### In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

In the end, there are many possible measures, aren't there? I mean... well, by "many" I mean some... right? Because, I tell you, to me, equality has a... a broad explanation, doesn't it? But I try to summarise it in a simple way when I try to transmit it, right? And it is: normality. That is to say: we don't need to look for large structures that... no, I think that, in the end, it is as easy as seeing things in the same way, right? That is to say: a boy and a girl are equal. We like it or not. To me, they are exactly the same. It is true that the improvement of gender policies can be achieved through what I've told you, I mean: issues related to labour, medical care (which is crucial), having protocols to defend women in all aspects. But, I insist, and I'll get repetitive, ok? I mean... in the end, let's simplify it. I mean: what we want for some people, we need to want it for everybody. As women, we are in a... I've never started a war between men and women, I've never considered male handball as the problem of female handball. No. I've always thought that people holding positions as representatives, those in leadership positions, in decision-making bodies, are the ones who have to equally establish the rules. So that's the starting point, because there are no problems among us, as sportmen and sportwomen. On the contrary: this kind of views generates non-existing problems. Then, do we still have work



to do? Yes. We have to make policies for women to have access to courses, to facilitate their training we have different circumstances. We have to bear in mind that women have a role, and that they usually assume the responsibility of a family. And it is like that. Some of our sportswomen have to postpone the decision of having children until the end of their career in sport. Why? I mean: it is a halt, but it doesn't have to be an everlasting stop, does it? Then, these are the policies we have to frame. I'm talking about motherhood. And, I insist: I've seen my female teammates many times, and, within handball, it's wonderful. I mean: I insist, I've seen those mothers with their children in those world cups, and they've had a halt, and nothing happened. That is to say: they keep on practising sport, and they've come back with the same energy. We have to provide them with opportunities. With the appropriate tools. We have to understand that we have to start getting used to the need for conciliation, also in sport. Then, those people, I insist, the ones who have to establish the rules, or have to establish the criteria, or have to take account of all the interests... they are the ones who have to apply to themselves, as I call it sometimes, a "mental reform", right? Because, I insist: our sport doesn't have problems. I have many... I hate to hear it, ok? Within our world, the handball world... I mean: there is a category, the youth category. I'm talking about players between 15 and 17 years old. Many girls abandon sport at those ages. And everybody says, many people tell me: "Well, you know, girls' change of environment, they start dating boys..." Well, as I see it, it's a way too simple view of the problem; with the greatest respect. Right? No. As I see it, those girls see no pathway; they see no future, they see no guarantee, right? And, besides, those girls want academic training, they want to study, they want to go to university; but, apart from it, they have responsibilities: they have brothers, they have families, they have grandparents... and the burden is almost on their shoulders. I mean: that's the truth. So: let's provide with the appropriate means, let's facilitate the situation for those girls, who may consider it too difficult and hence they abandon sport it's not that they don't want to play. I mean: it is not that they are not passionate about sport, or that they aren't able to find a balance it is actually that they see that the future they are offered is not granted. So, as I see it, these are the policies we have to focus on. But, I insist: from public administrations, from

Federations, from any type of institutions... but, I insist again: let's forget about establishing differences. Women can give birth to babies that's the only difference, the only one if we want to point out a difference. We're able to give birth to babies, to be mothers, to bring sons and daughters to life... it can't be something negative. It can't be a burden. On the contrary. It has to be what it truly is: something wonderful, to believe in the possibility that all women consider that option as something positive, and that they don't resign because they want to have a career. That is to say: there are so many things that, as I see it, if we are willing, open-minded and we pursue our efforts to improve understanding and to simplify complex problems, we'll achieve it. It will take a long time. I don't know if I will see it, but I am convinced that, if we keep on fighting, we will fight for it and we'll achieve it.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Yes. I am convinced that it does. I want to believe... no. I strongly believe that we add. I'm kind of summarizing what I've explained to you before, ok? I mean: our contribution, which is many times a contribution of experiences; many times, it's not a contribution of academic training, right? I mean: it all adds up, everything counts to it; no. Many times, people who... or, in this case, our President wants to be surrounded by people enriching or providing him with that view, that way to understand handball, so as not to lose any aspects that could be improved. So I think that, as women in sport corporate boards, we all help to promote gender equality. And, besides... these four women, they're all superb. Maru Sánchez, an extraordinary handball player, goalkeeper, secretary of the association of female players...; Lidia Pena, the Vicepresident of the Catalan handball association; Jessica Alonso, a tremendous professional handball player, the delegate of the national team in its highest category; and Tati Garmendia, a fabulous player, and the President of the female handball club Bera Bera, from San Sebastian. I mean: let's imagine how

many experiences can be gathered by these elite women, including me. Ok? Because, you know: which particularly leaves a mark on us, on this generation, is to have experienced some situations that shouldn't have occurred. And we have a very clear idea about... notice the positions I've mentioned, notice the responsibilities these women have. Each of these women is striving to improve what they already know; those lacks, those necessary improvements. And they're fighting for all female players. They want to give those girls what they didn't have, what we haven't had, and what we know it's essential. So... yes, I do think we contribute. As I see it, we are just like all the rest of the people within this group, and that we are valued and considered.

### What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

To be brave. To trust what they can contribute with. That they have no doubts. It's something I've also noticed, right? I mean: many times, when it comes to encouraging other women; they are invaluable women, but they hesitate, they don't think they would be able to. That's absolutely wrong. And it is the result of what? Well, it may be the result of many things, right? Sometimes, of the lack of time, of the large number of responsibilities; other times, it is because they think they're not qualified. And that's wrong. I'm saying this because know them, right? And it's difficult. Many times, it's difficult to convince them, or for to make them understand how necessary they are, right? They... so... above all, to be brave, and to trust themselves. To bear in mind that, many times, their personal experiences are the best value; their own experiences become the best school for other women, because those are the values they're going to transmit to other women in order to avoid the repetition of... of bad circumstances, bad stories. And... to bear in mind that they're certainly going to contribute to an improvement in the future, for all those young women who want to live enjoying sport, and who would like to only focus on sport, forever; and it's so difficult, but it's not like this. Could give a lot of examples, not only from elite sport; but also in elite sport. It is a misconception: many people think that people playing sport at the highest levels have much free time (women, in this case), and that they have all the time available to

focus on training. No. It is not the case. That is to say: many times, we have to make it visible. And we're increasingly finding more interviews, more stories; that's why I am thankful to you for devoting time to this, ok? To make visible all these women who do a lot of things and obtain quite good results... if we focused on them and we gave them that quality at all levels, that necessary environment, then... we might have many more female world champions, European champions, and champions of life, in general.



# Isabel García Sanz

President  
The Spanish Lifesaving  
and Rescue Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport has been present in my life since I was 4-5 years old. At the age of 5, I started to swim; at the age of 6, I was already participating in a federate competition. And, from that moment on, my whole life has been revolving around sport. I used to play many sport when I was at school, until, well, until I got to know lifesaving and rescue at the age of 18-19, the sport I currently lead.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Well, in 1989, 31 years ago, when I did the training course to work as a life guard. That was the first time I got involved with this sport. Which is a fascinating sport. And it didn't exist in my region, it didn't exist in Castilla and Leon. And, well, from that moment on, I consider that... well, as a group of teachers and trainers, we consider that date as the beginning, the moment when we constituted the Federation so as to make known a sport that we considered fascinating.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Female representation within sport organizations in terms of management is essential so that there is a balance, so that there are different sensitivities and so that there is a true inclusion of women across all strands and among all levels of sport. I think we are still a long way from achieving it: sport is still chiefly masculine. Still, above all, at some levels, the highest level is quite sexist in some cases... but, above all: sport is focused on the male gender, and it's very difficult for women to be under equal conditions. Above all in management positions, where, in the end, in these positions, in a way, determine the policy of each of the sport entities.

## As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Within the Spanish Federation, we've been working for more than a decade, practically fifteen years, on equality policies across all strands we worked on it, in my opinion, in a coordinated and in a transversal way, together with all the departments within the Federation: the department of high-level technical training, the department of training, of school, and the department of events. So that there would be gender parity within all the calls for people, within all the processes, within all the selection processes, regarding sport events, a championship, state selection so that priority is given to ensure parity regarding all economic resources of the Federation. And, above all, if we were able to get funding for specific activities, for sportswomen or for female technicians, on the part of the

Federation, our policy was to economically implement those line items for men too, so as to make equality absolutely effective. Currently, there are many aids for the female side, but, as we consider it, equality is there when all have the same opportunities, male and female. But we had already reached a point when we achieved equality, but we somewhat forced inequalities by having activities restricted to or financed only for girls, and not for boys. Therefore, we have achieved full equality in terms of calls for referees, organization of meetings, participation, competitions... within virtually all strands of the Federation.

### What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Duties of my sport corporate board... we schedule all the activities, all the projects to be carried out by the Federation, in order to address them at the General Assembly; we also conduct a follow-up of all those projects, at both the budgetary and the executive levels; and, of course, we take all the decisions on modifications, on future projects... all the proposals come from the different departments, we treat them at our sport corporate board in order to adopt them later on at the General Assembly, so as to carry them out. I've been holding the position of President since 2004, for... for 16 years.



## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The main challenge, also the most serious and the most complex one, was taking place when I was chosen to head this Federation. I inherited a bankrupt Federation heading toward ruin. That was what the High Board for Sport suggested to us; and, obviously, we couldn't let this sport disappear and the Federation disappear, right? So, for the first eight years, we had to make absolutely restrictive policies of expense control or generation of resources... Lots of people have been working voluntarily and for free for the last 16 years, in order to get the Federation on the ground. And we have managed, in these 16 years, that our Federation becomes one of the Federations with more weight, not only at the national level but also at the international one: we currently hold international positions. We didn't use to be represented in Europe or the World Federation... And, well, now I am the Vicepresident of the European Federation, I hold a position on the executive board of the World Federation, we have representatives within all the commissions and all the decision-making bodies, both at the European and at the World levels... so I think this has been an important challenge: to achieve enough weight to implement at the World level the policies that we also want to implement in Spain.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I don't think there is equality. Equality may exist on paper, it might be compulsory to... to have an equal number of men and women, or a proportion of 40-60 men and women within sport corporate boards... But, in terms of decision-making, I don't think women holding positions within sport corporate boards have the same weight as men. In no cases. At least, in a few cases. Obviously, there are some cases, and there are some exceptions, and I think that we're increasingly working on it; but, to this day, I don't think it is real equality.

## What other policies or measures do you consider important to adopt to foster equality?

I think that the main measure should be taken in terms of education. If we all get educated on equality, we will all internalize that, indeed, that is... it's the society. That, men and women, we're all the same. And that we are all people, and that we have to treat all people equally. While we don't internalize those educational policies, or that education, we will only be able to achieve that, indeed, just for show... just for... well, it is politically correct; there are a number of ways we know to be correct in today's society ... but, if we don't believe things are like this, in the end, in many areas it is difficult to achieve real equality.

## Do you think your representation on the board contributes more broadly to gender equality in society? If yes, How? If no, why not?

I think it does. In the end, all the people taking part in sport corporate boards, both men and women, we contribute something to achieve equality, right? That... that further step forward, or that belief that, indeed, we can reach those management positions, we can reach them and be equal on all strands of society. And, little by little, well, reach the High Board of Sport, the Olympic Committee, the European and International Federations... Little by little, you're making some progress, and doing a little bit of that educational work with all those not thinking that things should be like this; or, at least, we're giving some ideas in order to facilitate progress in that regard, right? Something that, obviously, if there aren't any women...; or there isn't regeneration. Because, in my case, at an international level, there are people at a ripe age holding positions, so it is important to promote a generational change. That age: we can't think the same if there are decades of difference between us, right? It is important, as I see it, to have that female representation. And, well, I try to contribute to our society, as fully as possible, in order to achieve that equality, real and effective at all levels.

## What advice would you give to other women taking up sports board positions?

To believe in themselves. To believe it is possible. To believe that they are able to, and that they are trained enough to do it. That it is necessary to fight for it obviously, it is not easy to arrive or to keep being there; but it is possible. If they believe, because for sure they can do it: to go ahead with it. That they have the courage to come forward, to aim for it, to fight for it and I am sure they will get to be in those management positions that are so needed in our society.



**María José Martínez Sánchez**  
Vicepresident  
Spanish Tennis Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Well for me, sport has been my life because from a very young age I started practising it, when I was 6 years old I already knew tennis and the truth is that it has been a whole life dedicated to a sport that has formed me not only as a professional player but also as a person because it instills in you values that are very important for life as well.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Sport for me, the truth is that it has been everything, and for me it represents the fact of having known a sport from a very young age and having played it has been something very important, and it always makes you move in a healthy environment and being linked with sport already during your career and after your career I think it is something fundamental.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, I think that the fact that women represent sport organizations is something that until very recently was very unusual, but I think it is also a key factor, because I believe that women can also contribute different points of view and the fact that ... I don't know, I think that women are always more responsible and more faithful to everything, so I think they can contribute a lot in all sport in general.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Well, the role in equality, the truth is that I have been working for the Spanish tennis Federation for a very short time. I have been on the board for three months as Vicepresident. My work is responsibility for women's tennis. Equality policies I have not gone into yet but I think it is on the agenda and throughout the candidacy process, so I think I will have to do it.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Well, I have been on the sport board for just three months and my work in office is responsibility for women's tennis.

What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Well, challenges I have not really faced practically any yet because I already told you, I had been in charge of women's tennis for a very short time, but it is true that being responsible for women's tennis we have a lot of work to do we have to promote grassroots tennis a lot and if we strengthen the pivotal parts, I think we can bring out great female players in the future.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Well, currently the Spanish tennis Federation barely has women on the board, now there is a rule that says that there are twelve members and of those twelve four have to be women, then little by little we are equalizing but we still have a little work to do.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, I think it is more a matter of ... in terms of equalizing ourselves with respect to men, well a little ... that they take us a little more into account, not that in the end the work of women is not only to be at home and take care of children. I believe that nowadays both men and women are workers, they have children, so we have to distribute tasks a little bit and little by little. I believe that being in representations and in high positions of labor Federations and a little in general in everything.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Well, in particular my work does have to do with the issue of equality, right? Well, that's why, because I am responsible for women's tennis, then my work is a little bit, well, it is true that today in tennis men are a little more positively viewed. But little by little the role of women is becoming more important. Now we are getting better female players and also people who have been professionals are entering the positions on the Federation. So, I think it is a plus point and little by little in the future it will become more and more equal.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Well, I think that as I said before, it is essential that there are women within sport Federation representations and little by little we can achieve it, so from here I simply encourage women to present themselves as candidates because in the end it is a decision, right? Of the President, the one who forms his board, but if the president has confidence in the people he puts in, then little by little we women will be able to go deeper and deeper.



# Turkey

Filiz ıkriki · Hacer Akyüz · Ümit Uar · Gülkız Tulay  
· İlknur Meri · Afife Beşik · Yeşim Kuruođlu · Özlem  
Akdurak · Deniz iek · Nisa Ersoy



**Filiz Çikrikçi**  
Vicepresident  
Turkish Rugby Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

For me, sport is the most important phenomenon that comes after my family in my life because I can't think of a life without sport. It is very important, so I postponed my future. Sport is definitely the best work that a person should do.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

We were selected for this sport three years ago. Federations are elected every four years. We have another election next November. This sport is my life. In the past, I was interested in wrestling but my family was interested in football. Rugby is a type of sport that is a mixture of wrestling and football. So it has been actually always in my life. But I have been a board member professionally for three years in this Federation.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Nowadays, women are trying to do the highest level of professional work in every field, not only in sport. I don't believe we have really done it better than men. We are now in every field, in every branch of sport as women, and also we will continue to be. I think we will be more successful than men in this regard.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

As a member of the board of directors, I am the Vicepresident at the Rugby Federation. One of the good reasons for gender equality or the existence of women on Federation boards is that our managers, minister, especially our general managers are really supportive in this regard, and we attend the forums in order to play a more active role as women on board of directors definitely. We have done this in our country, and we have had really good results.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

As a board member, I have been in it for three years. There are four branches under the roof of our Federation. Three of them are Olympic sport. We operate in American football, rugby, baseball and softball branches. As a woman manager, I am the Vicepresident, and now I am in the Federation. I have the same authorities which chairman has. I am the main lead in all the job responsibilities, sport training camps, and all the organizations that we operate.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The first of the difficulties I have faced since I came to this position is the communicative difficulties that we have with people. In federations that do not have a specific infrastructure, you have to exceed the standards. In the first years of federation, we did not have one certified referee, our trainer and no athletes who did this job really well. We did not have one arena of the right size under this Federation, we did not have our own arena in which we could play. But now we have them. In other words, the thing that forced me the most was to put things into effect in this Federation. Everything else happens on its own.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think women are really the second position in our country under the roof of the federations or under the roof of sport. But now, we are definitely and definitely coming to better ranks because women have been more successful. As women I think we will have a say as much as men in the future.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

The places where women should play an active role in sport branches within the Federation are really important. If you are a woman in our country, you need to know where to stand very well. For this, one of the first measures that should be taken is expanding gender equality more in our country. I believe that if more women are supported, and the opportunity is provided for them to achieve something, women will be more successful than men.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

As a woman, I have proved that there has been no discrimination in the Federation since the first day that I took office. Because now, as men and women in my Federation, I can say absolutely that all of them are equal. Therefore, women provide equality when they take part in a certain form or at a certain level. As a woman, I definitely don't allow discrimination in this Federation. I insist on equal treatment. Especially athletes ... and I feel compelled to prevent this myself. For example, no matter how many camps we provide for men, I try to provide an equal number of camps for women athletes too. In this way, when we enter a certain environment, when we have a meeting, it is pleasing for women to have a President with whom they can talk about their private things without feeling discrimination or feeling alone as women.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

As a woman, the first thing that we have to do is that we see ourselves more superior to men in terms of sport. Because we have such a complex structure. If you say power, I think we are the strongest physically and mentally. I think that our ability of thinking superior to men is given to us by birth. Men are born with more muscle mass than us, but I think we have a brain that can overcome them. So my only advice to women should be believe that they never lose their trust in themselves. Because when we believe in something as women, we can achieve it.



**Hacer Akyüz**  
President  
Turkish Orienteering Federation



## What role does sport play in your life?

When I was the age of about 10-11, I started as a licenced athlete in the basketball branch. In high school years, at the 17-18 years old, I was in the volleyball branch six times in the World Inter-armies Volleyball Championship. Then I was a team captain in the military for several years. After that, during the university years, I met the badminton branch in Erzurum, and I was elected to the Turkey Badminton National Team and had a sport training camp in Edirne. I also participated as a skier in the inter-force ski branch in the military. Then I joined the orienteering branch at Gülhane Military Medical Academy, in which I started to work so I played in these sport branches. Since the 2000s, the sport in my life is a process which includes refereeing, coaching, management, and the presidency in the orienteering branch.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

In the 2000s, the orienteering branch was a sport branch of the military in Turkey. While working as a physical education teacher in nursing school, it was a military branch. In order to lead female athletes, I was a teacher who had nearly 400 female students. We introduced our students to the orienteering branch. For about 10-12 years, at the level of youth clubs, we constituted in the Turkey championship team. Of course, we always achieved it through our athletes. In the field of orienteering, I supported female athletes before the establishment of the Orienteering Federation, after the establishment of the Orienteering Federation and also at the University of Health Sciences which was Gülhane Military Medical Academy in the past. And now I am the President of the Federation. In addition to the orienteering training in Gülhane Nursing Academy, from the next period of the first achievements of Turkey to the first period of the Orienteering Federation, I took part as the member on the board of directors, a member of the education, the assistant of provincial representative, the coach, the referee. Now, as the Federation President, I continue this duty in the 2016-2020 period.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

would like to speak about my branch firstly. In sport organizations, when women see role models, women's approach, their support and their participation to sport changes. Also not only in the management dimension but women also need to have experience in the processes which include sportmanship, coaching, refereeing, map drawing, being a leader, in order to have women in the organization structure. Now, it is necessary to examine this aim not only as orienteering athletes in our field but also in all the sport Federations and at the ministry level. Especially, what percentage are women in management in many Federations? What percentage of women are in the Ministry of Youth and Sport and in our provincial organization? Our women are sitting in these seats. Of course, there are three women presidents in 65 Federations. There is no need to comment any further. We are so low in number. There are three women on our board of directors. In the supervisory board with five members, two of them are women, and in the disciplinary board, two of the five permanent members are women. Considering this, should this number increase according to my opinion? Yes, it should increase. I guess you will ask me to discuss my answer that to the question of what we should do.

As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I especially participated in the workshop process of sport Federations. Other chairwomen were there. There was a commission that includes the presidents of other Federations and also me. We expressed this situation in the commission. In particular, it was persistently expressed by me. In coordination with the youth sport ministry, we should definitely accept the quota for women as deputy ministers, general manager, deputy general managers, and departments, the provincial directors of 81 provinces, and

especially for the management of Federations. We have expressed this. Three chairwomen have voiced this too. And I hope that this will be shared in certain points in the legal proposals in the coming period, and it will be considered after this speech.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

My first board membership was between 2011 and 2016. Our Federation President was Mehmet Genç. At that time, I was responsible for several boards such as the education board and the health board. I was on the executive board too. In the next presidential term, I was in this position for about 3.5 years after the election in November 2016. Our responsibilities regarding tasks are to develop of orienteering branches in Turkey, to spread to base, to pave the way of 81 provinces, to sign various protocols, to represent this Federation in the country and especially abroad among world Federations as Turkey, and to announce the name of Turkey especially in the different fields of sport or animations. Announcing news about training studies, competitions, sport training camps, raising awareness of the orienteering on the base, moving this or animation to a different dimension with cooperation among public institutions in Turkey, leading, increasing the recognition of this sport is the most important issues that are especially emphasized by our management.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

When I hear this question, especially in terms of how much women are in the system, the first thing that comes to my mind is that a very low number of women are in especially map drawing and racetrack planning. Of course, this is a military branch. We encountered problems that are the presence of women in the military, their involvement in orienteering, and regarding women in the process after our Federation became civilian. We have a few female athletes, coaches, and mappers about map drawing

and racetrack planning. But we are in a relatively better situation in terms of especially coaching and refereeing. Is it enough for me? No, it's not enough. Of course, we should increase these numbers. But as the first chairwoman of the Turkish Amateur Federation, we experienced firsts on this issue at many points. This will be a model in the next period, and I think that it will pave the way for participation activities, leadership, and taking part in management. The second problem we encountered is that our technical colleagues on the field can already organize the activities. We have no worries about this. But in the past years, during the economic crisis in Turkey and the world, we experienced problems in finding sponsorship as a sport branch with less visibility than other sport branches. Economic imbalances, unfortunately, caused them. These were our biggest problems.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Regarding the institutional participation of women, when we look at the organization of our sport ministry, our minister, deputy ministers, general managers, heads of departments, central organization and the provincial organization, unfortunately, we are unsuccessful in the institutional participation dimension. However, in recent years, women's participation has frequently become the topic of debate. We are in similar positions as all presidents. I'm sure... this is not heartwarming at all. This issue is now open to discussion, and proposals for setting a women's quota in the context of the proposal will most likely go to parliament as a law draft. It is not enough.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

As I said in the workshops, definitely we need to have quotas. Especially, various non-governmental organizations have already been working to increase the schooling rate of female students. But I think that we should add the articles regarding the quotas within the main statutes of the Federations by changing regulations. At this point, we will have such approaches in the next 2020 November elections.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Of course, the presence of women on the board of directors and the presence of chairwomen, have positive contributions. Because the woman's perspective is different, women can see and perceive the details. Yes... maybe, the physical strength and muscle mass may not be the same as men. But the more analytical approach of women is important for our sport branch, and my presence here has contributed positively. It certainly added value to the Federation in terms of a woman's approach touch, and I think this would be a model for the other Federations. And for this reason, in the workshop, the statement of our ministry that "yes, we should do this" already involved in the issue of a quota for women.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

The first and the only thing that came to my mind is that women shouldn't have any difficulty in making the decision while doing what they love, and dream. They should say that "Yes, I want this". They should not behave timidly, they should reveal their dreams, they should reveal their feelings, and they should put them into words. Yes, women are much different and can do so much more easily because they think more. Please, you should listen to the voice of your heart. Please, you should not think that this is male work. Please, as you are, you can lead a group, you can also lead men. Please, you should trust yourself. You can do this, and you should develop yourself by getting out and about. For women on boards, in non-governmental organizations, and public employees, they should not expect that it is necessary they can see me from the branch office, the department and the different departments of the ministry. You should do for yourself. You should give on this struggle yourself. If someone does not think you can do it, you should say "Yes, I want to do this", and you should go for it.



## Ümit Uçar

Member of the sport governing board  
Ice Skating Federation in Turkey

## What role does sport play in your life?

My whole life consists of sport. So I have been in sport for about 30 years. Because we have been involved in sport as a family. My son is an Olympic athlete. As the family, we always support sport and athletes in order to support my son on the Olympic way.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

We started ice skating in 1991 with the opening of the ice skating rink in Ankara. Because my son was going to kindergarten at that time and after the opening of the court one day we took a message from the kindergarten administration if our child was interested in ice skating, they would take him to ice skating rink 2-3 days a week. I was working very hard at that time, I was the manager at the bank. I asked my child and I sent the fee. Our whole adventure started this way when my son was four and a half years old. At the end of the year, a Russian teacher told us that our child was talented and whether we thought that my son would continue this sport professionally and that he would be an athlete one day. My son loved it very much. We started this way. In 1991 the Turkey Skating Federation opened an office. Until that time, ice hockey and ice skating in Turkey were under the Ice Sport Federation. And the Federation was including both ice skating and ice hockey. I have been in the sport since 1991 with my son's sport life and the establishment of the Ice Skating Federation. Our membership of the International Skating Federation started after 1991. As a result of the insistence of the International Ice Hockey Federation, the Sport General Directorate divided Turkey Ice Sport Federation into the

Turkey Ice Skating Federation, founded in 1991, and the Turkey Ice Hockey Federation because the international Ice Hockey Federation was different. Since 2006, I have been interested in all the international legislation of the Ice Skating Federation. I did all work voluntarily. Meanwhile, my son's training was continuing. Then, I started to serve as a delegate to the International Ice Skating Federation. Before 2011, I worked as a manager for several international competitions. As a result of the decision about the 2011 World University Games being organized in Turkey, I was appointed to the European Cup competitions in Istanbul as a competition manager. For four years, I worked in the International Skating Federation with Marilyn Mark. In 2011, I took part in the international Federation with Marilyn Mark as part of the five artistic skating branches of Erzurum University Games. In that competition, my son competed in sixteen branches. It was an inter-university competition at Olympic-level. We only received medals in the context of our branch. Then, I continued my duty at the International Skating Federation. My son attended two Olympics Games. He is also a member of the Ice Dance Technical Committee at the International Skating Association. I continue my work in the Federation as a board member. We try to support our children from the age of five until the end of their sporting life with our knowledge in terms of legislation.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think there is no such thing as the representation of women and men in sport organizations. Women and men have equal rights. In my country and in other countries, I would like women, who want to be athletes, can be in sport activities and can participate in sport with the same equal rights. Because these are already choices. Regardless of gender difference, if people make their choice of sport, this is one of the most peaceful, one of the beautiful cultures in the world. And also it is a culture and an understanding of manners that bring countries of the world closer together. If they want to do it, why should there be gender discrimination? This is what I think.



As a board member, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I have not been involved in such an official project so far. But I have taken charge in the Turkey Skating Federation for many years. In addition, the International Ice Skating Federation is an association that consists of 72 member states' Federations. Our congresses are held every four years. We are together with all the delegates. I have not observed that there is a distinction among women and officials, delegates and athletes in this community. I'll give you a very good example. Zahra Lari is an athlete in the Emirates Ice Skating Federation. She has a completely different religion and culture. But in Turkey, she now represents the athletes from her own religion. This shows the perspectives of the International Ice Skating Federation to women, and therefore the perspectives of the Turkey Ice Skating Federation to women. Because Federations in Turkey always have to act according to the rules of the international Federations. If the International Ice Skating Federation had discriminated against gender, race, religion, and language, Zahra Lari could not be on the ice courts today.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been on the board for the last three years. But in the past, I was the organizer in the international competitions of the Turkey Ice Skating Federation, and I was responsible for international legislation. I have always been interested in international legislation. I have been on the board of directors for the last two years. The structure of our board of directors consists of the President and 14 members. These are people who have different professions. The President and members on the board of directors decide together about all matters regarding our Federation, our athletes, the competitions in which athletes will participate, the work related to the infrastructure, the support of our Olympic athletes and the material aid.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The biggest challenge for us is that people, who are on the boards of sport Federations in Turkey are not always people who come from the sport. And a certain part of our electoral system is regarding policy. Because we describe Federations as amateur Federations, autonomous Federations, semi-autonomous Federations. The government expects us to find sponsors, and the government is right. But like in other European countries, you can find a sponsor for a football player, especially in Spain and Italy. You may find a sponsor for the basketball branch, for the volleyball branch. But it is hard to find a sponsor for a newly started sport like ice skating. Therefore, in terms of budget, our sport ministry and state institutions contribute to us. They also follow this. Generally, because of these reasons, there are people from politics in the membership of the board of sport Federation, and they don't come from sport. Now, everyone has different duties on the board that consists of 14 persons. A person may not understand sport, but he/she is better on budget issues. This is very important. A particular board member is responsible for advertising and communication. Everyone has different responsibilities. But this is different in terms of athletes and sport. People who have different responsibilities should make one decision together. Now, in terms of legislation and general rules, explaining the sport to everyone from the beginning is my biggest challenge, and also my biggest challenge is that I ensure they come together in one correct decision. There are two women on the board, but we have no difficulties with gender equality. We have an obligation to decide different responsibilities and different information at the same time.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think there is equality. Now this has a legal aspect, an official aspect. There is also a practical aspect. Officially, Turkey is a country that gave to women the right to vote and to be elected in 1923. And every woman's right exists legally. But is this available in practice? I'm a little skeptical.

Because I think that although women have formal equal rights not only in my country but also all over the world, they are lower in numbers. In my opinion, women are always more disciplined, they know what they want more than men, they are more organized than men, they are more grounded, more responsible people than men. Women know how to organize in an activity much better than men. I can say that being more inclusive of women will bring to every organization the most successful results. Why aren't they equal? More precisely, why are they not equal in practice? This is not a problem that we can solve right now. I don't mean it's a men's world. But I believe that when a woman wants something, she should show her competency in a subject and she will receive her deserved success.

**In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?**

As a member of the board of directors, this is not a topic that I am fully authorized to talk about. But if I were a President or an authorized person, I would prefer to start by selecting equal numbers of women and men to be the fourteen board members. But for achieving this goal, I must be a candidate for President or the Ministry of Sport should have a declaration which mandates this goal on boards of Federations.

**Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?**

I can definitely say "Yes" to this question. I explained this response to your previous questions. Because the understanding of women's responsibility in a organization is always very different than men. I believe that women work more creatively more orderly, and I believe that women have more sense of responsibility than men. I also believe that their working power is more than a man.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I advise them not to be afraid of the number of men. They should be competent in their work, and they should work until the end. When they work, they will supersede people who are not as competent with the power of their knowledge. They do this only through knowledge and working. If women want to become masters of a subject, they should research until the end. And they should see to change official and legal documentation. So “they are men and I am a woman?” I do not accept such a thing. I think they should continue. And in my opinion, if a woman puts her mind to it, if she wants to work, if she loves what she does, she will surely overcome male domination. Anyway, I don’t think they consider that men always are superior or there are more numbers of men in our country. Maybe we should show ourselves much more. I think there is no cult that knowledge cannot defeat.



**Glkız Tulay**

President  
Turkish Chess Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport is a very important communication tool for me. For this reason, I am a person who admits that it was a major thing for me to be interested in sports since my youth. Yes, the presidency of the Turkey Chess Federation is an extremely important sport branch. For this reason, I want everyone to be interested in at least one sport branch and to prefer chess, if possible.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

My interest in chess started with my son starting chess. After him, my daughter started to be interested in chess in 1998. I am willing to accept a social responsibility for this because I am a mother who knows the very positive effects of chess on children. I founded one of the first chess clubs of Turkey, Zeki Chess Club, in Tarsus which is the city I live in. Today I am continuing this duty as the President of the Federation.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Nowadays I believe that women should be represented more in sport organizations. Of course, when we say a sport organization, when I think everyone from sportman, coach, and referee to sport manager, numbers are not enough. Therefore I believe that everyone, especially women, should work hard.

As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Regarding gender equality, many programs are organized in especially the 8th International Women's Day and during the week. Many NGOs feel responsible for this issue, and invited us and people like me. Also, our work is a good indicator of gender equality. Regarding this, I participated in the issues only by giving speeches in organizations of NGOs or in organizations that I was invited to.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Today, I'm President of the Turkey Chess Federation. But previously I started this assignment as the board member. Yes, I was a board member of the Turkey Chess Federation between 2004 and 2008. I was responsible for the national teams between 2008 and 2012 as Vicepresident. I was the President of the Turkey Chess Federation between 2012 and 2016. Now also I have been President of the Turkey Chess Federation since 2016.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

As a woman, being in this position is a very proud situation. I have always understood that it is very important to see the difficulties encountered positively and turn them into positive. For now if you ask me what is the most important challenge that I encountered, not allowing much time for myself, my spouse, my children, my family, and my social life is. Other than that, I did not encounter any major difficulties.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I believe that women should be involved in all parts of the sport. From being an athlete to being a manager... especially in sport administration, it is necessary that the number of women should increase. For now, if you ask is there equality right now, absolutely "No". I can give an example for my country, but I can see very clearly that this is the same case all over the world. There are 64 sport Federations in our country today. Only three of them have chairwomen. In order to increase this number, we all have to work hard.



## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

All of us have a lot of duties to increase equality. Perhaps, we have a bit more responsibility in this regard because we are an example in this sense. We do everything in order to increase the number of female athletes, the number of female coaches, the number of female referees and the number of female licensed athletes within the scope of our own internal policies. We produce a number of policies. For example, when too little in 2010, the number of women licensed athletes was 45,000, it has increased to 320,000 today, and also the number of referees and coaches has increased at the same rate.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I believe that my being a woman member on the board of directors of mine, my being the chairwoman and as well the other three women on the board of directors have contributed very seriously to gender equality. And I am doing my best to increase these numbers.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I think that women working in sport Federations or sport clubs or anywhere in the sport have very serious responsibilities. Since we are role models, we need to work hard and produce more programs for women and girls. For them to take inspiration from us, our efforts should increase more and more every time. I think these are very positive things that continue with good examples.



## İlknur Meriç

Member of the sport governing  
board and General Secretary  
Turkish Bridge Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

When I say the role of sport in my life, I can say that it is indispensable. I am currently a licensed bridge player in the bridge branch. I also work as a board member of the bridge Federation. As you know, bridge is a type of intelligence and mind sport. One of the biggest reasons that I love bridge is that I will be able to take part even when age makes other sports physically impossible, and I will be able to experience this competition excitement as an athlete. But since my youth, I have been doing many sports such as swimming, basketball, water sport, windsurfing. I want to continue as long as the physical effort of my age is enough, in other words, I want to continue the sport until I am very old.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I actually started in high school. My father was interested in bridge. He was reading about this. The technological side of bridge is quite different. He was an innovative person. He was a person who liked to read. In that sense, in my high school years, I started learning bridge with the encouragement of my father. But after my university education, I took a break in business life. So I could not play very professionally, but I was trained as a licensed athlete for more than fifteen years, and I continue my activity in this sport. As a competitor, I continue as an athlete.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Of course, I will answer this question in terms of our country. When we look around the world, this can vary in many different regions. Frankly, do not think that our youths, children, and girls can participate in sport sufficiently in our country. But I do not want to limit this to only girls. I think there are impossibilities in some parts of our country. Such things are not for our sport branch. But in general, I see that even if women exist to be athletes, it is more difficult to find them in a certain number of managerial fields. According to my own experience, we are fewer numbers.

As Member of the sport governing board and General secretary, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Frankly, I was not directly involved in such a study, I can say that. However, there have been a number of things that I indirectly supported. If we talk about our own federation, we continue our efforts towards women to be a part in this sport and taking places in the administration of our Federation. I have read studies on this subject. At the same time, we have a women's board in which I am involved. Here, we talk about how our women can be more active, and we talk about how they can be involved in this sport.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I was on the board in previous periods. As a board member, this is my fourth year on the board of the Bridge Federation. At the same time, I take part in certain subcommittees of the board of directors and I continue my studies. At the same time, as you know, I continue its general secretariat for nearly a year. What are our duties? First of all, it is to spread our sport to the general public and to more people. We are working for this aim. We are trying to include our children and women too. What are our responsibilities? Of course, while doing this, in other words, while popularizing bridge, we work with ethical values and we work on a number of projects with other sport branches that we collaborate with. As you mentioned, we also have work such as some sport schools, summer camps, and national team camps. We try to fulfill our responsibilities. But our priority is to promote and popularize the sport of bridge. Because as you know, I think that it is very effective against Alzheimer, old age, and it can be played at a very advanced age. It is a sport for everyone, for people with disabilities. In this sense, we make every effort because it enables us to train the mind, to improve intelligence, to improve memory, to teach the culture of discussion. Maybe we think that in the social sense, it will add some things thus we make every effort.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

I think you are asking about board membership. Actually, I did not have any difficulties for our own community, due to being a woman for our own sport. I did not encounter any difficulties. I can say for our sport. In this sense, all our friends in the management, our athletes in the community can be older. Their support is also endless, I have not had a problem in this sense.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I do not think much of it. We have three female presidents in the sports Federations in our country. But I know that there are quite a few women who are ordinary board members of Federations. As an athlete in the older age group, women may have more difficulties in spending time in sport due to their home life and their duties in society. In this sense, I think our women should be supported. I never think it is equal. I think that there should definitely be a quota in our federations, in the administration and on boards of the Federations, and I think it will be useful in this regard.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Yes, I actually answered this question in the previous question. For example, we have made every effort to find women in our administration period. However, this needs to be continuous and to be institutionalized. Of course, the way of this is to bring a certain quota. Because, when the administration changes tomorrow, when the Federation presidents change, this will change. Maybe there will be no women in the Federation. Therefore, it should not be left to the arbitrariness. I think it is necessary to bring the quota application without leaving it to arbitrariness.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Definitely, my answer to this question is yes. From women's perspectives, women feel more comfortable and they are more confident because they feel that they are represented. And I think I am a model for them. In a sense, we are showing that they can take part in such tasks, and perform these tasks. I also get support from our friends who are men too. With the elegance of a woman, the more elegance of finding solutions, being more embracing, I realize in our solutions and communications that women are happier. Therefore, as both men and women, positive support always comes from our athletes, administrative, the ministry and the Federation board. In this sense, I think this is a serious morale booster and encouraging. Therefore, definitely think that actually contribute to gender equality.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Of course, I recommend to them to take part in sport boards. They should be on these boards without fear. In fact, except for specific gender discussions, you don't think whether you are a woman while working. Of course, there is a responsibility. Due to the imbalance in these positions in society, the sense of responsibility is a bit more. Therefore, we have to fulfill our duty more meticulously, more successfully and more tactically in a tough stance, so that we will pave up our way. It should be seen like paving up their ways of all women. When we look at women in terms of gender, there is a representation. First of all, with this responsibility, I think that the work should be done in a way that will properly cover all basic concepts such as properly, ethically, ethically, and fairly, etc. Even I can say that this is absolutely necessary. Apart from this, what can happen when women take office on the boards? Of course, think that in some things, male dominance and the numbers of men on boards should not prevent things that you will do as an individual, and I think they should not bring obstacles in front of you. This is my suggestion.





**Afife Beşik**  
Vicepresident  
Turkish Swimming Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport has been very important to me since my childhood. I played on the volleyball team in high school. After that, I actually wanted to continue. But when my family insisted to me in terms of university or sport, of course, I chose the university and continued my education life. Sport has always remained in my mind as an unfulfilled desire. I do sport in the form of walking, fitness, tennis. I have always played sport in my life as an amateur but not professionally. Sport is always in my life. My children also swam for a long time as licensed athletes. We started with them in terms of health. Then, they continued their lives regularly so that they could get discipline. Now they still continue and study at university. Sport has always been in our family life.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Personally, swimming is a sport which I love so much, and I always swam as an amateur during my childhood and youth. My daughters were getting very sick. So we were going to the doctor every fifteen days. There were tonsils like strawberries. Our doctor said that the immune systems of daughters should be strengthened. For this reason, swimming is a sport that should start at the youngest age. At that time, the first swimming pool in Kocaeli had just been opened in that year and we met swimming thanks to my daughter. Firstly, my daughter swam to learn. Then the team needed someone, and she took part in the team after the earthquake. After that, we established our own club, and this was a process that continued with the chairmanship of a swimming club.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I am not a feminist, but I am someone who believes in the power of women. Wherever the woman is, there is success and beauty. There is humanity, there is love where the woman is. Therefore, there should be female managers in all Federations and clubs. Thanks to them, success comes, balance comes. Thus, she beautifies those around her, communication becomes easier. So there are many plus features. The woman should be at every stage, in sport clubs, and also in administrations, Federations, ministry, and state level.

## As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I did not engage in gender discrimination policies either in my professional life, in sport management, in the club or during my duty at the Federation. I did not prepare for such a policy either. It is no. The answer of this is "No" for me.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been working in the swimming Federation for two years. There will be elections again after the next Olympics. The duty of swimming Federation, the duty of chairman and the duty of board members is actually to represent Turkey in the international arena in the sport of swimming and to increase the level of success there. How do we do this? By increasing the success of the clubs, by supporting children individually, by organizing Turkey championships, by organizing international and national championships ... to develop Turkish sport and also Turkish swimming sport, to choose children as national athletes and to send them abroad, and to produce projects ... these are duties. Producing projects is our duty in order to improve swimming.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The problem I faced in this task is that everyone wants to do something and the rules of the state and the rules of people do not sometimes match. This is an area where the competition is too much, even parents are competing. No matter how much you love your job, no matter how much you try to glorify, there are many people who try to pull you down. The competition is more. If so, you need to make rules. Those rules are trying to be constituted. If strengthening trainers and increasing the level of knowledge are tried, there will not be conflicts. There are problems related to communications where the competition is. I think it's the biggest problem. Other than that, it's a little bit about the monetary resources. But the chairman is solving them. The rest is based on communication and setting rules.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I don't think there is equality. Those who choose are men. Once upon a time, a female President was appointed to the swimming Federation, but she was not very popular. She didn't want to be there either. Maybe because there is no woman who demands answers. Those who choose are men. So women should try hard to get onto every committee. That is what I absolutely think. But those who choose are men. But the numbers of women who want it is also low. So the majority input is from men. I think that the more women here are on boards, the more beautiful it will be.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

First of all, women should want. If women want, everything happens. I am very clear about this. It is necessary to empower women who want. These are the things that can happen with your projects, by establishing associations, and also by increasing the number of women in Federations. The more we come forward, if we reveal our strength, emotions, thoughts, and then the woman will get stronger.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I think that I am contributing. Yes ... maybe if I was not, there would be a man there. It would be a minority numerically. Therefore, I think it is nice to be a member of the board of directors in the swimming Federation as a woman. It's a good thing to show that women can also be there. I wish, but I would be happier if we had a woman President.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

What do I recommend to women? They should never give up. Negative things will always come up against them. They should want to do the right thing there. They should do what is right. They should struggle for it, and not give up. It is important to increase, to show the power of women and to do good things. The more we are, everything will be so beautiful.



## Yeşim Kuruođlu

Member of the sport governing board  
Turkish Underwater Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

The role of sport in my life actually dates back to my childhood. My mom and dad were both athletes. Especially my father was a national athlete. He also served as the President of two Federations in the following years. He was a person who did it... let me tell you. Both wrestling and gymnastics... therefore, from the day I was born while watching my father's training or other competitions... you know, in Turkey, even voluntarily since primary school years... I started that way, but from an early age in secondary school I started playing volleyball and other sports such as athletics and gymnastics until I finished university. In fact, I never thought of this profession, that would become an athlete. Then, while I was thinking about where I could express myself best, I found myself in the exam of the Sport Sciences and Technology School of Hacettepe University, which was established for the first time that year. I won. I did not become an academic immediately after that. I worked outside. I have taught. I have been a fitness trainer. I learned some of the characteristics of being an athlete, human relations, teamwork, self-confidence and discipline, which I constantly learned from there, and acquired some values that still have reflections on my personality, that is, when I was a teacher. Then I went through an Olympic academy process. Since 1997 I have been talking with friends, with whom I still talk on Zoom, every Monday. How can we be better? How can mutual agreement be achieved in the interpersonal, inter-country, intercultural communication of sport in human development? How can peace be achieved? It has become something we talk about. You know, aside from the professional side, on the other hand, I think it is very important for the social development of people. That's why, even though I can't do sport as actively as I used to... because it causes injuries when you do it from a very young age and for a long time after reaching a place. Even though I am not as active as before, I try to convey to my students the other qualities my father left me. That's what matters to me right now.



## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

The sport branch I represent is actually a federation that hosts different branches under the Underwater Sport Federation. So underwater hockey, underwater rugby, scuba diving, freediving, lifesaving, spearfishing, snorkeling, etc. and waterskiing, there are other branches under it. Actually, it was 2003 when I met this sport. I started to work as a research assistant at Istanbul Technical University and our university is also very strong... more precisely, this Federation had a structure with teachers and athletes who contributed to the federation when it was first established. That's when I met underwater sport for the first time. Because I was working in the sport department there as a research assistant. In the following years, I started to attend various competitions under the roof of the club, under the roof of the club of Istanbul Technical University, as a branch manager and a branch captain. It coincides with 2007. Underwater... I started to take part in underwater imaging competitions with video and photography, as the branch captain of the technical university, as the responsible. That's how I started in competitions. Afterwards, I found myself in this community while accompanying me in both underwater imaging and scuba training, one star and two star diving trainings. It continued after that. It also has a feature like this: We were in the same class with the current President of the Federation, both in masters and doctorate. In other words, we received our doctorate and master's education together, and at that time ... his transition to the Federation President ... because the chamber had put a lot of effort into underwater hockey and rugby. He said that he wanted me to be on the board of directors in his first year because he had known me for many years, because of the nature of sport, because my father was also the President of the Federation, and with this thing of the technical university. Frankly, it was a surprise for me. Then, when I think about it, I think that I am a person who can support both. I mean, being a woman or being a friend at work. However, I was offered membership of the board of directors as my main profession and having spent time in other Federations. I have been working in the Federation in this way for two periods.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

If we look at it from the point of view of my own country, I think that the place and success of women in sport increases a little more every year from the point of view of Turkey. Especially, the fact that half of the group that went to the last Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games consisted female athletes, and the medals were taken by female athletes again... that is, 5 medals out of 13 medals... if I'm not mistaken, that's a pretty good number. The gold medal is the first medal we won in boxing. From the point of view of sportive success and performance, I believe that women will represent more and more in all organizations, not only in the administrative boards of the Federations, but also in other commissions, education boards, health boards and other technical boards. However, in terms of my background in this Olympic academy, maybe I can answer a little bit. I think it is the same way. Women try to raise their voices more or they compete by giving various messages such as the German Gymnastics National Team. I think they somehow have the responsibility of making themselves heard more or being a voice for those who cannot be heard. But if we look at Turkey, it is because women are rising more and more as both athletes and managers in sport. At least, this is my view.

As member of the sport governing board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I can answer this question as follows. Our sport branch, as I have just said, is a branch of sport that can be done by men and women together, as it includes more than one branch. Let me give you an example. Example. In underwater imaging, you dive with a photographer and you have a body with you, and this diving, or rather one of the competition types, you must have a mannequin with you. So there's a silhouette of your body. Here a layout is created under a flash or water and a photograph of it is taken there. There's no limit to that. In this branch... buddy could be a woman or a man. However, a relatively more aesthetic stance can be achieved in athletes who dive with their female bodysuits. But this does not mean that the ones used with the female body are better. This is never out of the question... as I said that I have been in this field since 1980. This is not a criterion for us. I'm trying to say this. Since it is one of the rare branches where the two sexes are together, we did not engage in a policy towards women or a study of the type of involving them a little more. Because we are already more comfortable due to the nature of our Federation. If I have to say it from my own perspective, as I completed my fifth year and went towards my sixth year, the sentences they spoke and the tones of voice they used with the other male members of the board of directors, always in our distance, in our relationship, when they were with me, were within the rules of courtesy. I can never say that there has never been a situation that I was very uncomfortable with in all these years. Likewise, when I went as a thing... So when I went as my duty, the same way... I was able to start an engine and drive the safety engine myself in an exam. By taking a friend with me or if other things needed to be done, I was able to do them too. I have not experienced. As I said, since it is a sport that can be done together. I have not heard anything that comes to my ears or says it happens like this or that. At least that's what I can say. Therefore, we did not do any promotional work, frankly.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

As in all Federations, the board of directors has to take the decision of the board of directors, not the decision of the general assembly, on various legislative issues. These can sometimes be instruction revisions. Sometimes, there may be some revisions in the regulations, or a number of petitions are received from the Federation, with a petition about it or about exams and other coaching exams. Or inter-institutional cooperation requests are received. We are also a Federation that works together with other state institutions such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Coast Guard, the Navy, the Ministry of National Education... we are also a Federation working together with universities. Relationships related to these, some legal issues, legislation issues, acquisitions... in the same way, new tracksuits or materials will be purchased for a national team. When it comes to spending, these are all items that come to the board. We discuss these among ourselves. We have members from different fields. There are lawyers, lecturers, and navy. There are members from their own administrative areas. Together with them, we all make these decisions by talking. In general, our duties consist of this. It's my sixth year.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Actually, I did not encounter any difficulties. I was just an examiner. I have to tell everyone there very tactfully. Even though everyone has the ability to do a certain job, I asked, please, can we do this? Actually, I didn't have to do that. All the other responsible people at that time... but I am saying that those people we work with were no other board members or other members of the Federation. They knew me. Of course, I was a member of the board of directors, but they did not know how good my abilities were, they did not guess. What was it in the psychological conditions of that day? What was on their minds? I do not know. When I again asked them for that task as an examination officer, they were on hand and they said that they could not take this responsibility. But such behaviour of theirs was something that would affect not only me, but also in that institution, and it would affect the safety of the work we did that day, or rather the good performance of the work we did that day. They thought I couldn't do it either. It was the opposite there. Then they were very surprised when I said I would do it. And by taking the initiative, I did that job and finished it. In fact, they say that everything we experience in life has its positive side... After doing that thing, I can say that maybe my place or my stance in that thing has changed a little bit because of that. So maybe that day, it was an exam for me. You know, the fact that they pulled out so I wouldn't... maybe it was something like let's see if she could do it. After I did that job and saved that day, of course, the behaviour got worse. That was the day I had the most difficulty, but I got over it. I'll say so.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Interestingly, women are represented a little more on the academic side of the business, namely on the academic side of the sport. Maybe it's almost even. Or rather, head-to-head. You know, things that exist... but from a managerial point of view, of course there is no equality. So there are a few female Federation presidents or Vicepresidents. There are one or two women on their boards. There must be a woman branch manager at work, but today I can only say the name of a person whose name we know at higher levels. That is, I am speaking for sport, I am speaking in terms of sport or animation. He is the endo an, the general secretary of the national Olympic committee. She also spent her years to the Olympics. More precisely, to the Olympic committee... Other than that, I think that the woman who has risen so high is not in the institutions. I think she is not equal.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Now, sport is actually a culture and a work of consciousness. Just being an athlete may not be enough to be a manager or just coming from the kitchen of this job may not be enough to be a manager again. Or being an academic may not be enough. Actually, there are some things for women to be in more managerial positions... What can I say? I think they need to settle some things in their heads. In other words, even though we say that we should bring women to better places in the field of sport, let them exist more and take part, then this is still a male dominated field in the world. It's like... I'm thinking. In other words, I think like civil engineering or mechanical engineering, I think that sport is the same for us. Why am I saying this too? Girls or women who apply to physical education sport colleges or sport science faculties every year are much less than men who apply to master's and doctoral programs. So if we direct children more to sport regardless of gender and allow girls to stay there longer, and we can also place this area in them as an education, as a culture of etiquette, then I think women can still be more involved in the management staff. Because if we think about it for now, it's really hard. So I think they may not be welcomed in the same way everywhere. I mean, it's a little bit that my own genders should not give up... or what should I know? I have been educated this much or that much, I've been involved. I did sport. After that, I think that there will be more women if they choose to stay inside more and play a more active role, instead of getting married or withdrawing from here. It's really both sides.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

That's a difficult question. Contributing to society we don't know, let me put it that way. So I'll say it again like the previous question. Sport is a matter of culture. You know, apart from football, things that can be talked about... so there are many branches. Unique individual sport, separate team sport... it is another thing to place it not only professionally or in terms of performance, but as a part of life. This is what we call physical literacy. In other words, it means internalizing what we read, what we see in the media, and making it a part of life. Now it would be wrong to say that we can be a role model without these, or that we contribute to the empowerment of women in the field of sport. But as said before, the more successful our female athletes are and the more they express themselves in this field, I think that girls will participate in sport more from a young age. I think that as participation in sport increases, sport culture and sport awareness, physical literacy, health and sport literacy will develop. So without these, the others are just a few examples. So, that's what it's all about... there is one President of this Federation in this sport, or there is this person in this Federation... I don't think that the society already knows us.



## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

What do I recommend? Harmony is very important with this team in the first place. Why are you there when you achieve that harmony? Well, there is something you can add to that Federation, not really with your knowledge and gender, it can be with your education. How should I know? The other may be with your own sportmanship with other relationships, or we may actually contribute in many areas. It's very controversial, or there are times when everyone speaks their mind. Well, boards of directors in other words, it doesn't mean that one person is talking or one person is talking about an idea or an issue or just agenda items, and one person says that let's vote. Maybe I'm a little lucky. I don't know the others either. But it consists of members where we all have a say, and our words are listened to thanks to the features we all bring, and our opinions are sought. I can easily say this. Here is my word to other women: rather than it can't be me and I can't or let me be here... if she thinks that she will contribute to something, if she thinks that her knowledge and experience will be benefited by being there or just in the boards of directors ... It's not shyness. I think she should verbally state this to the people at the top of the Federation that she wants to be here, or at least that she can be useful in his subcommittees. It's a really nice thing. So, when I think about these past six years, the times we spent on the board of directors or the competitions or courses or other exams they could attend or attend, or others who contributed to my life or contributed to me... what challenges do they have in this sport or what do they like or recommend? Listening to these helped me a lot. I hope many of my fellow women should experience this opportunity that I have had.



**Özlem Akdurak**  
President  
Turkish Sailing Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

I believe that sport is extremely necessary for human health, both in youth and in later life psychologically and physically. I think that sport is extremely important for me, my family, and my children as well as for many young people that we try to set an example to.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

My acquaintance with the sport of sailing started many years ago when I met my husband. My husband's father, my father-in-law, Metin Akdurak, was an Olympic athlete who represented our country in sailing at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. My husband is also a national sailor. Therefore, I found myself in this beautiful sport of sailing. About 20 years ago, with my encouragement, we decided to take sailing lessons and formed a yacht crew with my seven businesswomen friends. Therefore, we have been participating in yacht races for about 20 years with the boat that is named "Ayna". Afterwards, my eldest son was promoted to national sailor in every class of national sailing. My younger son is also involved in sailing, and I conducted two separate sailing clubs for about 10 years after my retirement from the financial sector. This process encouraged sailing in the new Turkey and I had the pleasure of being in every level of sailing until I became the President of the Sailing Federation.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that not enough women are represented in sporting life numerically. At the same time, I think they have not taken charge. This, of course, depends primarily on the increase in the number of female athletes, then the increase in the number of female managers in our clubs and, in parallel, the increase in the number of female managers in our Federations. These are all things that encourage each other. So I think the current number is not enough. For example, when we look at our Federations, we unfortunately have only 3 female presidents among 64 Federations. I sincerely believe that this number should increase rapidly.

## As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Unfortunately, I was not able to participate in such a study myself. The management of sport in Turkey takes place within the framework of the practices determined by our ministry. I am also the Vicepresident of the World Sailing Federation and the number of women on the Board of directors of the World Sailing Federation has been determined by a certain quota. I talked to my board of directors about implementing a similar practice in the election of the Turkish Sailing Federation to be held in the coming months, and this is a topic that everyone is looking forward to. However, for now, it is unfortunately not possible to implement it in our written applications. But I would gladly take part in such a study.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Since the general assembly held in November 2016, I have been the President of the board of directors of the Turkish Sailing Federation. We also have a female friend from Kocaeli who joined us on the board of directors. But unfortunately, we do not have another female in the 12-member board of directors. Therefore, at the moment, the direct management of all the activities that we carry out as the mission of the Sailing Federation is under the responsibility of the board of directors which I am chairing.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

I have not encountered any gender problems. I have not encountered a problem arising from being a woman directly. Turkey is a very democratic country in this regard, and there are serious incentives for women's participation in all stages of life. Therefore, I have not encountered any problems with being a woman. However, of course, even if it is very small, due to the fewness of women in sport, there may be a perception by male directors that very hard decisions and strong decisions cannot be taken by women. When they saw that this was not the case over time, I saw and experienced that this perception changed in a very short time. Therefore, I have not have any problems with being a female manager in Turkey. I have not experienced problems in the sport life. I was in senior management in the previous years spent in the finance sector, and did not find them there either.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Unfortunately, equality does not exist in numerical terms, as I have just mentioned. But every day, the number of female club presidents is increasing. The number of our female friends on the directors' boards in Federations is increasing. But when we look at the facts right now, to be realistic, we see that there is no such equality.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

When the boards of directors are elected, as per the practice in Turkey, the President is elected with the entire list of boards of directors. In other words, we enter the election with the list as we call it. Therefore, we are planning to introduce at least a 30% mandatory quota in the number of our board of directors in the new term elections that will be held a few months later. Although this is not included in our written rules, we are determined to apply this as a principle as a regulation.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Definitely, yes. Because increasing female managers in every field and every issue becomes a role model for our young girls who take them as an example. So even our very little Optimists now have little ones who say, "When I grow up, I'm going to be President of the Federation." I believe that I am an example in perception and in setting goals. Therefore, of course, it is a good model for women, our senior managers.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

My colleagues, like me, are already fulfilling their duties perfectly, and their contribution to the management is really at an extremely positive level. So I thank all of them. However, I advise our friends who will aspire to these positions or who are considering becoming one, to take steps without hesitation from the difficult structure of elections or the somewhat male-dominated world of sport, and set and determine their goals in this direction. Because everything starts with targeting. Sport suits women and women suit sport very much.



## Deniz iek

Member of the sport governing board  
Turkish Sailing Federation



## What role does sport play in your life?

The place of sport in my life is of course very important. If we speak in today, we can say that we've been working out in my own way all my life. I live in a small town near the sea. I always try to walk by the sea on my way to and from work. Other than that, I try to make different moves from time to time. But more seriously, I'm already a former athlete. I played volleyball in elementary school, middle school, high school, even college, professionally. I have experienced the effects of sport on personal development, especially for young people, and then I could clearly see the results of this in my own children and students. Apart from that, sport is definitely very important in social life. Maybe it starts with sport to express oneself, to see if one can do some things or not. But of course, we need to give them the opportunity to do so. Sport begins with giving people an opportunity. Because if we can't give them the opportunity, maybe because we are managers, we may be thinking this way when we start to deal with sport at the managerial level. If we do not give them the opportunity, they cannot do sport, they cannot improve themselves. I think that sport is absolutely important for the state of well-being, which we now refer to as wellness in society, for inner peace, to be happy, to enjoy the work one does, to feel some sense of success, to be healthy.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I got to know sailing actively in 2011. As part of my job, I work on European Union projects. I can say that I was introduced to a sailing club's proposal to write a project for the Eastern Marmara Development Agency, a local development agency where I live. In that process, we prepared a technical support project on the "International Aquatics Organization". Our aim in that project was to organize water sport at an international level with better quality, to do more efficient things in larger organizations, to represent Turkey in the international arena and to develop sailing sport. After this project was accepted, we established closer relations with the managers of the Karamürsel Alp Sailing Club. I saw what they did. I saw what the sport of sailing was. Over time, it started to attract more attention. Especially since it is a sport done with nature, and it is an environmentally friendly sport in the sea. My own children started playing sport. They started sailing. On that occasion, we entered the sailing family of the sailing community together later.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

If we look at gender equality, women need to be in the sport in order to gain a place in society. As we have said before, the improvement of sport to personal development, to the existence of the individual in social life is absolutely indisputable. When we look at it from a representative point of view in sport, of course, it has different dimensions. At the athlete's point, women need to be more encouraged and have more opportunities. Actually, I think that what we call gender equality means more equal opportunities and opportunities for both genders. If you look at it from this point of view, if you give more opportunities to girls, young people, or women in organizational or managerial dimensions in sport, you are actually paving the way for them. You can see that they contribute to their

improvements by expressing themselves better, both in their personal improvements and in their status at some social points. From my own example, in fact, my management of a sailing club was perhaps an opportunity that it was given to me. Men are given more opportunities. Do we think it's the same in different countries. Women who have achieved some rights later in time, but in our country, of course, there is a different dimension to the event. You evaluate every country and every culture within itself. I think it is increasing day by day. I think that there are more women in terms of representation in sport, but when we think in terms of athletes, of course, the number should increase and they should be encouraged. Maybe if you compare male and female athletes in terms of the difficulties that they experience in daily life. Female athletes face challenges to go to training. While participating in competitions, they may have to struggle with different things while participating in competitions. Apart from that, if you think in terms of management, after being the manager of a sailing club or a sport club at the upper levels, maybe there is a search for perfection in women. There are questions like, "Can I do it? Can I do these things?" But we don't see this in men. When an opportunity comes their way, they say spontaneously, "I can do it". But when it comes to a woman, are there other women? Are there any examples? What are they doing? Can I do it? They face such questions. If they can overcome these questions, then they will definitely contribute to whatever sport it is with their personal knowledge and characters. Another dimension is that referees are also another stakeholder of the sport. If you think from the point of view of referees, being the decision maker in an organization, a game, a competition, knowing the rules, being able to make the right decision... The more experience our female referees gain in regional races, national races or international races, the more accurate and desired decisions will be made at that level and the more successful results will be produced. I guess that's all.

As member of the sport governing board , did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

When it comes to developing policy on this issue, I have to say this. In our country, we have to implement the policies in line with the decisions taken by the higher-level policy-making institutions at the ministerial level and their evaluations on this issue. Apart from that, as the Sailing Federation, we have activities to pave the way for female athletes and increase their number. Why is this important? I remember the decision of the World Olympic Committee that there should be 20% (I'm not sure) of female athletes among the athletes who will participate in the Olympics. I'm not sure about number. The important thing is that if we are to be able to send our female athletes to the Olympic Games successfully at the level of Olympic athletes, our infrastructure must consist of a large number of female athletes. This means that activities which we do and we organize an optimistic championship for girls. What's the purpose here? In fact, giving them an opportunity... because by eliminating the inequality of opportunity arising from gender, maybe we want to give them more opportunities. The child who sees this and sees that he/she is successful can set bigger goals for himself and can set Olympic goals. Therefore, if we take a decision or a policy developed by a World Olympic Committee on this issue. And we carry out activities in accordance with it. After we include it among our goals, of course, are the decisions taken in the question you asked important? Yes, of course... By adopting the decisions taken by the umbrella organizations of the upper institutions and the policies they have developed, we contribute to them. As I said, activities for female and female athletes... I do not only say this for sailing, it applies to all branches and will certainly give good results for us in the future in terms of gender equality.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I have been working directly on the board of directors of the Sailing Federation for about 3 or 4 years. Of course, due to a two-year pandemic, we have all had a problem in terms of the concept of time. So I thought a little. As the Turkish Sailing Federation, our goal is to develop Turkish sailing, to achieve greater success both nationally and internationally in the field of sport, and to raise more successful athletes. Apart from that, we aim to reach more athletes. Turkey is surrounded by seas on three sides. Like Lake Van, we have lakes and lakes that allow us to sail very big. First of all, our goal is to ensure that there are sailing activities wherever possible, wherever sailing can be done, wherever sailing can be done physically, geographically. After that, I can say that we are working to increase the number of athletes, to sail, to develop more athletes technically, to participate in competitions, to make them careers in sport, and to make sure they have sport at some point in their lives if they choose a different career later on. Of course, as a Federation, we carry out extensive studies. We have clubs size. We encourage and support clubs. As a result, sailing clubs are formations that enable their existence in the movement right next to the sport and intertwined with them. We support both sailing clubs. Both organizationally, we organize training activities for the development of sailing sport throughout Turkey. We are working on the improvement of trainers. We organize activities that will contribute to the training of sailing coaches who will train world-class athletes and who can achieve great success. On the other hand, in connection with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, we are trying to contribute to the work done at the ministerial level in terms of sailing, the targets set. On the other hand, we are working to make sailing clubs stronger as a non-governmental organization, maybe to do successful works, to be more sustainable clubs and to contribute more to sailing.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

thin the difficulties and the main difficulties. If you are in a federation now, of course, the things to do are to solve the problems of clubs, athletes and coaches... but I can say that we are working very productively with our team as the sailing Federation. If we think about it on a large scale... our duty is actually to solve problems. There are always problems. Big or small... what we do is to try to solve the problems our athletes, coaches and clubs face. If I think about it as an individual, I cannot say that I have encountered such an extraordinary difficulty or cannot say that I have encountered such and such a thing as a woman. But maybe we find it interesting. Because we are few in number - that is, at this level, at the level of the Federations' boards of directors - there are not many women. I can even say that we are getting more encouragement from someone. Although it is said to be difficult and it is said that the number of women is small, if you are given this opportunity and you are trying to do something about it, there are definitely people who support you. I see a lot of support from my family in this regard. Of course, I love the motivation and encouragement of my friends on the board of directors at the club, our own sailing club, Kaytazdere Municipality Sailing Club. As the sailing Federation's board of directors, I can say that we always feel the support of our President's very valuable friends in the other board of directors. I will not speak directly of a difficulty. On the other hand, during the last two years of the pandemic, we have experienced difficulties, like the difficulties experienced in all branches or in all areas of life. But what we try to do is always; "What is our goal? How can we turn the current situation and current problems into an advantage to achieve this goal?" Rather, we have always focused on this as the board of directors. What happened? We tried to conduct our meetings online. We prioritized education. We tried to do different things in online training. In other words, we tried to turn the situation we are in into an advantage and COVID into an advantage for ourselves as much as possible. In the meantime, of course, there were very difficult days in terms of health. All over the world, in Turkey and in other countries, your partners related to your projects, everyone, I wish God's patience for the losses experienced by COVID.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

This is a responsibility in terms of participation... being on the board of directors of a Federation has some responsibilities. After all, you have to attend the meetings, you have to follow the agenda, and you have to get a reaction about it. Since it is a Turkey-wide organization, you have to attend the meetings held at the center -monthly, more frequently, or at wider intervals. Sometimes, we need to travel. You have to travel. First, you have to be able to travel. To travel, you have to be able to travel alone. You need to be ready for this. Now we immediately think in terms of men and women. You have to be used to travelling or get used to it afterwards. Of course, family responsibilities and work-related responsibilities may restrict you from travelling and limit your opportunities. You have to take this into account. Therefore, in order to be on a board of directors and fulfil those responsibilities, you have to firstly organize your life. If you are married, you have a family or children, you need to organize their lives according to this. From this point of view, when you evaluate it as a woman and a man, of course, there are many more problems to be solved for women or much more regulation needs to be made. If I think about it from my own perspective, since my children are older, I can fulfil these responsibilities without disturbing their order and flow in their own lives. On the other hand, I need to be able to devote time to my own profession without disrupting the responsibilities of my own profession. We call it multi-planned time management, or now you have to live by managing time very well. As long as women can do this, of course, they can take part in the board of directors. Of course, it exactly depends on individual skill. You have to personally ask for it. You need to put this in your personal goals. In our culture or in Turkey... I don't know about other countries since I haven't done any research on this subject... but men are more suitable for this, they live more mobile, they can move more at the point of travel. You know, a family responsibility is asked from the mother. As I said, if you can organize them, if we can gather them from this framework. Maybe women need to be willing to work on the board of directors, on the board of a Federation. Secondly, she has to put it into her personal goals. Thirdly, it needs to be at a level or in a way that can adapt its conditions to it. If you have a small

child and a small baby, you may not be able to travel alone. At this point, the following is required; if we want a woman to be in such a position, we have to contribute to her differently. In the European Union Commission I think there is an image. One of the delegates has a baby in her arms. She even breastfeeds her baby in the big meeting room. It just occurred to me right now. If she has to travel with the baby, yes, she can. The baby also adapts to this situation. The mother also invents herself and without any problems there... anyway, whatever that woman's contribution is, whatever her potential is personally as a specialist at work, her contribution can make that contribution. And therefore, it can certainly work in such boards in a way that will contribute to the development of societies and the goals of the European Union. But that's it, help is needed. Maybe I can say that policy makers need to make some decisions and take them into account.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Specifically, I can't say that we've made a decision about this recently. However, the fact that the President of the Turkish Sailing Federation, Ms. Gülüm İsmailoğlu, is a woman, and she offered me this position. This is an indication that it is an indication of the existence of encouraging women to be on the sport corporate boards, both individually and as a Federation among our strategies. But we clearly encourage women sailors to join the committees that will represent our country on behalf of sailing in some international committees. Currently, we have sport people representing us abroad under different titles... we are worried about sailing and especially on their being women. Five or six of them are currently female representatives if I remember correctly... therefore, if not directly for the board of directors, we are working to increase the number of athletes in every field, to encourage female sailors as referees and trainers, and to represent our country and Turkish sailing by female sailors in international committees.



Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I think that the formation of the sailing Federation has a positive contribution to the perception of society. To put it simply, I think I am an example to the next generation. I think it is an example for the boards of directors in other sport branches and the Federation boards. I think there is still data in the Ministry of Youth Sport to contribute to its own policies in this regard. Numerical data... on a larger scale, this has changed the outcome numerically in terms of international sport organizations in terms of the European Union and other structures that work with it in the first place. When we think of it as a perception, I think it is important to explain the possibility of this to all the athletes in the sailing club I manage. Because they know that their Deniz sisters are members of the sailing Federation and are available on the board of directors. They know that some decisions are made there. They know that they contribute to these decisions in some way at work. They come to me from time to time and give me ideas. They can say, "Dear sister, I have a question, and please talk about it there, do it like this, take those decisions." In fact, they think that when women are given the opportunity, maybe they can be on the board. Actually, this might be a very good answer for you. My daughter is currently a physical education teacher. She is also a sailing athlete. You know, a yearbook is prepared when you are finishing high school. There is even a sentence about you in your yearbook, "Our friend who wants to be the President of the sailing Federation when she grows up". In other words, this is of course due to the presence of our Honorable President Ms. Özlem. This is a very clear example. If Ms. Özlem can be taken by my daughter who is an athlete or by a sailing athlete as a role model, similarly, women who exist in administrative dimensions in all federations are definitely influential in terms of encouraging both women and young women or little girls. Also, I think it is important for men to get used to this idea and to see the possibility of it.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Of course, there are difficulties, but the important thing is to think that these difficulties can be solved somehow. It is said that especially women's analytical skills are more advanced. There are scientific studies about it. Of course, we will try to solve the difficulties within ourselves first. There is a solution for all of them. If we set ourselves a goal, it is a personal goal, a career goal, or a personal goal. If we set a goal for ourselves, we always face difficulties and try to overcome them as we progress towards that goal. Meanwhile, the same is true. If you work on a board of directors, you will of course have difficulties. And you take some measures to solve them. If you look, if it worked, you will continue. The measure you have taken may not have worked and you will try something else. It works. In other words, you should have an approach such as constant editing or correcting mistakes or solving problems in such a return. If you take this approach, you can already do the duty as required or you can fulfil the responsibilities that come with being a member of that board. What we should never forget in such a situation is that we are always an example to others. To those younger than us or older than us... because, for example, I am encouraged by people older than me, by women, in my family or working life or in the circle I know. I hear that they say: "You are doing great things, I wish we had such an opportunity". This means that we are an example for others. But while being an example, it should not be in an approach like we are under problems. If there are working women like me, they too... on the other hand, of course, as I said, there is a target. This is also a Federation goal, a federative goal. There are a number of targets that were set throughout Turkey. There are sporting goals. In fact, we are trying to reach these goals as well, while contributing to them. Actually, we need to realize this. Maybe we need to announce our work to someone. So if no one knows what I'm doing, how can I be an example for them? When we look at it from this point of view, there is actually such a benefit to your project. y

revealing women working in the field of sport on the sport boards working in this way, perhaps you are making our voice heard more regularly and in a planned way. And now you have set an example for me. I think that from now on, I can do an announcement or dissemination work systematically.

What they have to do too they are definitely doing something good and doing something right. They contribute to the country and contribute to the youth. They contribute to the future and I think they should share them as much as possible. I can recommend it to them. Let them share their good work with others. Of course, it should be from social media. But in a qualified way maybe yes, that's what I suggest.



**Nisa Ersoy**  
Vicepresident  
Turkish Automobile  
Sport Federation

## What role does sport play in your life?

I can say that sport is a factor that has actually entered the flow of my life. Discipline, as well as selfless work... sport is a source of life for me. Of course, in sport, for a person who does sport, being able to strive beyond this, self-confidence that comes with the feeling of success and being in the society with that self-confidence... actually, it makes sense. In fact, I think sport is a factor that strengthens the existence of people with all their identities.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I have been very interested in cars since I was a child. There were other sports that I did when I was little and in middle school and high school. I was always a licensed athlete. But my passion for cars drew me to this road a little bit. Of course, back then, I never knew there was such a sport. More precisely, I didn't know it was a sport with cars. At a young age, I did not have the opportunity to start from lower branches, namely karting, which we would call the kindergarten of automobile sport. I and my family were strangers to this sport. Then, after completing my university education, I went to watch a race where my friends were included in the program. There was such a thin as love at first sight. That's my sport, I said. I wanted to do this. I absolutely love cars. Since my childhood, I was always interested in cars and my husband was already working in the automotive industry at that time. My husband provided this opportunity for me and I immediately started researching. I built myself a training car and a racing car. It was 1999 and this is how I met this sport. Since 1999, I have never left my relationship. I started as an athlete. I joined the board of directors in... Of course, we, I'm always different... In fact, I used to compete but now I am experiencing the sport in the background, which concerns the organization and the athletes, and the administrative stage. I'm still trying to learn. In other words, I think that my journey with sport will go until my last breath as long as my strength and physical competence continue. Because I am on the board of directors today, but if I have a

chance tomorrow and participate in a race, I can sit in an automobile seat with that passion and desire. Mine is such a passion.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

The place of women in sport... if there is a female athlete who represents a sport and performs a sport, I think that there must be a woman in its administration. Because I believe that there should be administrators together with the athlete representing the sport so that the woman can understand and explain the advantages and disadvantages experienced by the athlete, the strait forward parts, the difficulties, the progress of the organization, while the woman exists with her own gender. I have experienced this in our own sport as well. When we look at the rate of women in Turkey, that is, when we look at the rate of women doing sport, it is around 7% and we have 7% female athletes compared to men. In the branches they chose, as we all guessed, women show themselves more in branches such as volleyball, ice skating, gymnastics and dance. Definitely think and know that there are women managers in those branches, in those branches of sport. But are female managers less than athletes? In percentage terms, the data tells us it is around 4%. This means that yes, our female athletes are involved in sport, but they do not prefer to be in the management or administration after this stage, or we can think that women actually withdraw from sport because of other issues that life brings to them, such as home and children, along with other things. This makes me think. If I have to give an example from my own situation and my own position, this is what I have observed. Actually, I know that we, as women in this sport, are not this much, we are more. However, while life roles are being shared, the role of women in life is more diverse, so maybe she has to give up at some point, give up sport that she did at one

point, the sport she did with great devotion and zeal for a period she loved. In other words, what I can say in terms of countries is that women who have practised sport, have done any kind of sport, actually have positions that will develop sport in different positions in the future, even create awareness to the extent that they can connect with this sport, produce social projects, and maybe even have positions that can be represented abroad. I wish that.

As Vicepresident of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

As the Turkish Automobile Sport Federation, the organization we are affiliated with is the FIA. There is a very general roof within the FIA and different boards are held under this roof. There are different commissions. I had the opportunity to join the FIA's women's commission. It was on Zoom. At the same time, we have our women's commission, the women's commission in automobile sport in Turkey... the meetings, in which our President also physically participates, actually shed a lot of light on us. In other words, the topics discussed at the meetings there, the sharing of opinions of women from different countries, the perspective of different countries on sport, the training of female athletes in these countries and their adaptation to this sport, social responsibility projects, how we can integrate women's inherent superiority into sport... At the same time, we have joined the boards to ensure that these projects, which are very comprehensive, prepared in the form of such thick guides to train athletes, are given to us and put the hands of all stakeholders on their implementation in the countries and that these projects are aimed at establishing the existence of women both as athletes and as administrators. Of course, the main idea here is applicability, sustainability. Projects need to be feasible in order to be sustainable. Here, we chose sustainability on our own behalf in Turkey, and we are able to implement its applicability by adapting to the conditions of our country and the periods we are going through. Among them, there are missions we have taken for ourselves, there are projects

that we participate in jointly, and we even have projects that we participate in directly and approved by the FIA. These are educational projects. We are also trying to ensure the feasibility of the women's commission and these in Turkey. Of course, very diverse, multi-coloured... it is not always easy for us to provide the results that emerged with the participants from all over the world and brainstorming in our own country with our means, conditions and what we can provide. But I can say that it is a topic that is discussed in all countries in general... maybe it would be right to say this only on behalf of motor sport. The presence of women in this sport is about what can be done to increase the number of women and what can be done to keep women in this sport. In fact, we do not reach this awareness... The women's board commission of the FIA was established in 2010. We also established our women's board in Turkey in 2015. So our journey is not very long. It's an 11-year journey, but in these 11 years, we have some really remarkable projects that we have implemented and carried out in partnership with the FIA. Therefore, these sharing, in fact such experiences, are always an advantage. I don't think it's a disadvantage at all. Today we start by dreaming. Yes, we could not implement all of them in our own country, but this year we had the opportunity to do what we dreamed of 5 years ago. Therefore, 5 years from now, we will have the opportunity to do what we dream of today. That's why we attend those meetings and keep dreaming. As women, we are a very crowded team. I am not alone and I believe we can achieve all of this. As the Turkish Automobile Sport Federation, the organization we are affiliated with is the FIA. There is a very general roof within the FIA and different boards are held under this roof. There are different commissions. We had the opportunity to join the FIA's women's commission. It was on Zoom. At the same time, we are our women's commission, the women's commission in automobile sport in Turkey... The meetings, in which our President also physically participates, actually shed a lot of light on us. In other words, the topics discussed at the meetings there, the sharing of women from different countries, the perspective of different countries on sport, the training of female athletes in these countries and their adaptation to this sport, social responsibility projects, how we can integrate women's inherent superiority into sport... At the same time, we have joined the boards to ensure that these projects, which are very comprehensive, prepared in the form of such thick guides to train



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physically participates, actually shed a lot of light on us. In other words, the topics discussed at the meetings there, the sharing of women from different countries, the perspective of different countries on sport, the training of female athletes in these countries and their adaptation to this sport, social responsibility projects, how we can integrate women's inherent superiority into sport... At the same time, we have joined the boards to ensure that these projects, which are very comprehensive, prepared in the form of such thick guides to train athletes, are given to us and put the hands of all stakeholders on their implementation in the countries and that these projects are aimed at establishing the existence of women both as athletes and as administrators. Of course, the main idea here is applicability, sustainability. Projects need to be feasible in order to be sustainable. Here, we chose sustainability on our own behalf in Turkey, and we are able to implement its applicability by adapting to the conditions of our country and the periods we are going through. Among them, there are missions we have taken for ourselves, there are projects that we participate in jointly, and even we have projects that we participate directly and approved by the FIA. These are educational projects. We are also trying to ensure the feasibility of the women's commission and these in Turkey. Of course, very diverse, multi-coloured... It is not always easy for us to provide the results that emerged with the participants from all over the world and brainstorming in our own country with our means, conditions and what we can provide. But I can say that it is a topic that is discussed in all countries in general... Maybe it would be right to say this only on behalf of motor sport. The presence of women in this sport is about what can be done to increase the number of women and what can be done to keep women in this sport. In fact, we do not reach this awareness... The women's board commission of the FIA was established in 2010. We also established our women's board in Turkey in 2015. So our journey is not very long. It's an 11-year journey, but in these 11 years, we have some really remarkable projects that we have implemented and carried out in partnership with the FIA. Therefore, these sharing, in fact such experiences, are always an advantage. I don't think it's a disadvantage at all. Today we start by dreaming. Yes, we could not implement all of them in our own country, but this year we had the opportunity to do what we dreamed of 5 years ago.

Therefore, 5 years from now, we will have the opportunity to do what we dream of today. That's why we attend those meetings and keep dreaming. As women, we are a very crowded team. I am not alone and I believe we can achieve all of this. those meetings and keep dreaming. As women, we are a very crowded team. I am not alone and I believe we can achieve all of this.

### What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

In 2015, we came to the management of the Turkish Automobile Sport Federation. I have been active since then. I started as vice President of management. For the past two years, I have served as the vice President. Of course, our main subject is to gain athletes, to support our athletes, and to manage and manage branches, which are affiliated to us as the Turkish Automobile Sport Federation, and to set the sporting rules. And this is our main mission, as Turkish Automobile Sport Federation, to ensure that they are organized and performed in a safe manner, with our clubs existing in almost every province of Turkey. As a woman, this Federation takes part in these issues and at the same time, "How Can We Empower Women in Auto Sport?" I also preferred to be very involved with the question. And on this occasion, we established the Turkish Automobile Sport Women's Commission in 2015. There are 16 volunteers in this commission and they come by election. Actually, this is more precisely, by transferring seats. At the same time, we are working hard to increase the number of female athletes that women want to be a part of, and to raise awareness of social responsibility, awareness in traffic, and the advantages and disadvantages that this sport, not sport, actually brings to our lives.

### What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The challenge I have as a woman in this sport is actually listening to my wishes and dreams because I know that my friends, colleagues, colleagues will say yes to anything that I say something, request or suggest. So actually

stopping myself... Because as a woman, I know that I really see a lot of value in our own sport, and I feel it at every opportunity.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

Recently, it is possible to see women in every field, in every field of sport, life and art. But I still think we are few in number. Although I attribute the reason for this to the opportunities given, instead of putting a consciousness such as getting away or getting closer as a result of the treatment we see in the areas we are in, I think like this. I think we may need to be more willing to act more possessive and more responsible as women. At the same time, of course, creating opportunities here is based on the fact that female administrators are in the administration and the difficulties and conveniences experienced by women here, namely women in the community, or the areas that need to be developed, are read and analysed very well. As motor sport, I can say that I mentioned the women's commission a little while ago, but when we think about our athletes and actually our supervisors, our numbers as women are perhaps above Turkey's average and cannot be denied. For a person who does not really know motor sport and looks from the outside, it can be considered as the hegemony of men. Automobile sport is a sport that actually eliminates the distinction between boys playing cars and girls playing with dolls, which is dictated to us from the moment we are born. And of course, it may come as a surprise, but for example, the number of male athletes among our licensed athletes is 877, and the number of female athletes is 98. In other words, if we consider that Turkey's average is 7%, men and women reach 11%-12% in our Federation, in automobile sport. Likewise, as of 2021, the number of our observers is around 2570 male observers (i.e., I am talking about the people who are assigned to manage and manage each race and to conduct all branches), while the number of female observers are 648. In other words, we have 25% of our supervisor women. I think this is a very very good ratio. But of course not staying at this rate... we think about how we can adapt more athletes and more women into our sport. Of course, I feel like saying this, if your question is administrative... of course, if there are more female athletes and supervisors, the more managers and

managers who represent them in a sport increase. Therefore, although the proportion of women in automobile sport is not enough for us, it is at a satisfactory level, and we are constantly thinking about what we can and should do to train female athletes and to increase the number of supervisors.

**In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?**

Apart from being the only woman on the board of directors, I also represent the women's commission. Our women's commission actually consists of 16 people. We may be one or two women with a President and again due to the number of boards of directors. But in fact, there is an army behind us that we work as women. When we look at it, we see that our friends who take an active role in all critical units and all our commissions (commission for the disabled, women's commission, and environmental commission) are women. So maybe I can make a distinction. While men are working more effectively in our sport commissions... because we have competitions and races in all provinces of Turkey. So it's actually a bit of a mobile business. Being in the management and taking part in the commissions requires being mobile. While men are much more active here (we are going, of course), we see that women are more involved in awareness projects, education on environmental issues, raising awareness of the youth, traffic training, training athletes, and in branches and carting. That's why we continue in the same way, and since we have seen and are sure that the projects developed within the Federation's own body can work with women, we cannot reduce this number of women, but to We intend increase the number of women by producing more projects, to increase social responsibilities in more life, and to increase the number of our supervisors and athletes. We want take it further and not to waste time. In the coming periods, we will continue actively as women's commission and women in the management with the women's cup and the projects that we will adapt as a social responsibility – we are still at the stage of thinning and action in which women are involved.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Existing as a woman in automobile sport... for the last 20-21 years, I have felt that in every environment I have been in, in every meeting I have made, and as a facet of the field represent, it reflects gender equality in every sense. As I said, our sport is more about cars, so the management is the same. In fact, at first, I found out that was very strange, that was not believed in the environments I entered, or rather, like me, maybe at the beginning stage, with astonished looks like when I had no idea. However, of course, to the extent that we can convey the knowledge, equipment and experience there, to the extent that we feel, it has always made me feel that I am welcomed with respect and appreciation. When we say automobile and woman, two opposite things come together. It seems to reinforce the issue of equality even more. Many sport, equality in sport can be talked about, but being able to talk about equality in sport played with an instrument that is completely in contradiction to the structure and nature, doubles the multiplier of this. Being a woman in motorsport... We can always talk about equality, but it always gave me the feeling that it's not talking about equality anymore, it's going somewhere beyond that. For this reason, in fact, beyond equality, it is possible for women to do all the sport that women do, that is, men as men and women. But I think being able to exist in automobile sport takes the perspective beyond equality in this way. One of our specialties is that in motor sport, men and women can do it on the same platform, on the same track, on the same track, with the same instrument, the same material, the same equipment, without giving any different ultimatums to women, giving an advantage to women or foreseeing a disadvantage... we get in the same car, we look at the same gloves, our helmet, our attitude is the same as our other boyfriends competing, and we go through the tracks they pass. When our car's tire is flat, we have to get down and change it in the same way. Our boyfriends have to change in the same way. In other words, we are talking about a sport where there is a lot of equality. So are our rules, so are our scores... and our equipment does not change in this way, depending on the branches. We're making women's cups. In some branches, we also

give points to women. This is purely to encourage and to ensure that more women take part in this sport. So these are the requirements we have made. But apart from that, we are one of the few sport that men and women really practise equally. In other sport (in other words, in volleyball, in bas etball, you now, women s champions are di erent competitions are held for men at di erent times in di erent elds. This is not true in our sport. We all, men and women, compete on equal terms, on equal terms.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

There is somethin always believe in. person must rst now herself himself. The person who knows herself/himself, the person who knows what she/he can do, her/his potential, her/his limits also knows where she/he will be, where she/he will contribute and be useful. Therefore, I consider it my obligation to give back what I have given in this sport and what sport has given me over the years. In fact, I can say this without distinguishing between men and women. I would like to say this especially for women. Because women really know that they are very successful in everything they do, very talented, very meticulous, and by ta in a much ner wor structurally. First of all, we can think multi-dimensionally. We have a very multifunctional creation. We are all mothers, we are all athletes, we are all equal, we are all managers, and of course, there are extra responsibilities we take while existing in all areas of life, and of course, these also have gains. And that's a huge collection. In order to reveal this accumulation, one must know herself/himself. In this sense, I want everyone to think rst of where and what they can do, what they can ima ine and reali e. We started with dreams. In fact, as the women's commission, I should de nitely remember my female friends here. To train athletes, to deal with the problems of the athletes or to listen to their demands, in our 16-person commission consisting of volunteer women... What more can we do besides listen to their suggestions? Because we have this much... women may not stay with that much. When we think about what we can do, we should do something for children. What should we do something

for young people? There is climate change, we must do something for the environment. Well, then, are there any disadvantages that our sport has given to living spaces? We constantly renew ourselves with thoughts such as zero and we can neutralize this, and then we have a project that includes probably three or four very main topics. One of them is the "parent's report card" for 5 years, and we actually call it the "Parent's Report Card Education Movement". So the source of this was this: of course, let's play great sport, but eventually we go out into traffic. Our sport is a sport with cars. The basketball player leaves the ball on the field and goes. It is the same for playing tennis, and for a person who rides a horse... But at the same time, our sport equipment is in life. In other words, a child who has reached the age of 17-18 will eventually go out on the street. She/he will step on the gas without knowing herself/himself, without recognizing the car under her/him, and we are experiencing examples of these. When we think as women, as mothers, as sisters and we said what we can do about it. And this education movement in 6 years, with a wide range of presentations such as public schools, private schools, schools for the disabled, nurseries with special needs... Our presentation brochures from Istanbul to Aram in Turkey, our lifts for our children, a racing car, our two pilots... In other words, we set out as a women's commission with such a project by thinking about things that will color them and add some animation to that education. And now this is a project that is supported by the ministry and we are now recycling...in fact, the first children we went to are growing up slowly, and it was a project that we felt we raised awareness about afterwards. And now we are working on making the second phase of it. It is to raise awareness of 17-year-old high school children about traffic and driving in detail and to prepare them for traffic. The reason for this is, of course, to reduce the number of accidents and accidents occurring in traffic. This is actually our sport that affects life every sport has areas that affect life. There are elements that affect life. Based on the idea of what role we can play in order to minimize these, to eliminate the disadvantages here, or to reduce them as much as possible, what we did again were projects that could be achieved with the synergy and dreams of women. In addition, this year, our simulation tool (what we call mobile simulation, in fact) is again in Turkey with a mobile car called "Simulation on the Road" (here we put two simulations) that



we offer them in partnership with the ... and accepted by the ... in other words, it is an awareness-raising project that we have done in the ... first stage, maybe ... provinces, but in the long term, to visit many cities and to include the children there a ... in traffic, driving in traffic, and even more so their families. That was her/his parents' report card. In the parent's report card, we actually asked the children. It was a project in which we cheered and entertained them a little by saying, "Ok, alright... you've learned these now, but go home, evaluate your mother, father, and whoever is your parent who drives the car at home, and in the light of these truths you have learned". In addition, climate change is one of our issues, and the women's commission is related to the environment. What should be our rules in order to always protect our environment and always respect green in the organizations we do? "What are the prerequisites we have to do in these organizations?" We started by asking them. And as the women's commission, we held one stage of the World Championship in Marmaris, which is the highest score in our organization last year by getting three stars from the FIA in terms of our environment-oriented work and sustainability. In other words, considering the ecological balances and the cultural richness of the areas where our races take place, and thinking about the environmental factors and environmental protection issues, whatever the protection elements are in the works we do on the tracks we set up... thinking broadly like this always comes from the colorful personalities of women, I think. As the women's commission, we actually feel like there is a whole army, even though I sit alone in the chair of the vice chairman of the board of directors. Because I also represent a women's commission that supports each other and works in harmony.



# United Kingdom

Karen Tonge · Grace Clancey · Sandra Deaton · Bronagh Kennedy · Natasha Dangerfield · Julia Newtown · Kate O'Sullivan · Mandy Fisher · Katherine Knight · Annamarie Phelps



**Karen Tonge**  
Chair  
British Para Table Tennis

## What role does sport play in your life?

Wow. Good start. Sport has always been part of my life since I was a child. I lived in the countryside. And the thing that really got me into sport was when we had a television and there was a programme called Grandstand, in England. And I watched lots and lots of sport, started watching the Olympics. And it really gave me a passion for sport. And in school, when I went to secondary school, we were involved in trying lots and lots of sport. So much I had never heard of. So a few I didn't like, but most of them I did. And that's when I really developed a passion for sport. I developed a passion for football that I discovered as a girl I wasn't allowed to play it competitively in those days. So I went on to do other sport. Running, netball, a lot of things. Then I went to teacher training college and got involved in more sport and it was when I became a full-time youth leader—that's when I became qualified as a coach in various sports.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I got a phone call from an organization called Dr. Barnardos and they said that they had a young man who was interested in playing in the Paralympics in London, and I said, "Well, bring him along to the club" and that's when I realised that he's got potential as a Paralympic potential table tennis player. And from that... I realised that I had previously coached somebody way back in 1982 who got the silver medal at the Stoke Mandeville, New York para games. But nobody knew nationally about the Paralympics in those days. So it was through young Jack that I got involved, and we took him to a Rotary competition two years later, and he won the north-west region. So we saw this lad could really make it if we gave him extra practice and training and we then got him involved in an event that was going to take place in Liverpool, a para open event. And from that I got asked would I go on to a performance-monitoring committee for para table tennis in and that was how it all began.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Increasingly, women become more involved. Over the last ten years, UK Sport had a campaign to make the FTSE top 100 more aware. It was just as I'd become chairman of British Para table tennis. I went to the Tower of London for a conference and they were looking at how women could get more involved. So we were looking at roles in community groups, schools, becoming a school governor to give people a role in life and how they could become involved on a committee and juggle work and family life. So that has made a huge difference and increasingly with the governance in the UK. In sport we're looking for skill sets and some of the women now have those skills the boards are looking for, and that is increasing the number of board members, women and chairmen- lots of women.

As chair of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

British para table tennis had already been aware of having a gender split, a mix, and women were on some of the committees. We actively recruited women onto the committees and that was ahead of UK Sport and Sport England issuing new governance guidelines which asked you to look at gender mix. And we were already 50% in those terms of board members being women. So well, it's still, I don't want somebody on a board to be a token gesture they should be there because they've got the skill set that we're looking for and that can add value to the board. Well, diversity and equality is important and it's about encouraging the same on the stand and in our recruitment pathway and elite athletes trying to reach out and find people in the community that will become paralympians.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I am the accountable officer because we don't have a chief executive as we are one of the smaller governing bodies and we concentrate on elite and pathway athletes, not grassroots. So the responsibilities are quite great. We're a registered charity. We're a limited company, limited by accountancy, non profit making. So you have all the responsibilities and regulations from the Charity Commission in the UK. So all the directors have training and are made aware of their responsibilities. And I became acting chair in 2015, at the end of 2015. That was what UK Sport with the new governance required, a new chairperson, new chairman of the organization. The previous chairmen had been on a long time since about 1998 and they were looking at chairs in the future being on for eight or nine years maximum. So we have a four year term and then it's renewed for another four years or you finish after four years.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

There have been quite a few challenges along the way. Our funding, as every four years you have to renew it. And previously it was depending on your meeting your medal targets, the Paralympics. Now with Dame Catherine Granger as chair of UK Sport, they're looking at 8 to 12 year progression. So you can have the pathway and develop it and you wouldn't automatically lose your funding if you have to battle Paralympics or Olympics, which is really beneficial for the athletes. We've also changed our name. I didn't think we used to be called British Table Tennis for people with disabilities, and felt that didn't reflect what the current situation was. We have Channel 4 that do a lot of work around Paralympics time and it's about what an athlete can do, not what they can't do. So you focus on the ability of somebody to achieve more on the disability. We're dealing with elite athletes who all have a disability because it's what they can achieve as an athlete to the elite level. So that to me was really important. So I was invited. We just decided we were going to change the name. We're out

to work out what we were going to call it politically. So it became British Para Table Tennis and I was invited to the House of Lords for a committee meeting and then they asked us about our sport and developments. And that was the place we announced our new title of British Para Table Tennis. And we've gone from strength to strength since then.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think that there is a place for women around the table. They have a lot to offer and they think of things from a different perspective to some of the male board members. So I think you need both around the table. Sometimes they bring different things to the table and ask different questions. And that can be quite challenging, searching questions that they ask. And I think the days of the all-male boards have long since gone and the women are now welcome, certainly in the UK. And we're giving people the opportunities of training as they come on the board - members' induction process. And there's various courses they can go on. And every time we well, every year we do a skills set of the board. I mean, if we've got a vacancy with that and looking, who is the best person to fill the vacancy it's open, transparent advertising. And we will target certain professions or people to be online.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

We have to, we do adopt all the UK Sport governance that's issued, so that includes equality and diversity. We've got mental health and safeguarding of the athletes. We've got all the framework now we've just done in the last 12 months regarding the doping policies. So there's a large role to play at the moment, and it takes a lot of time, especially when you haven't got full time staff. That is often the biggest governing bodies that do this work because full time staff are all involved with the coaching of the world class athletes, not on the delivery of the governance. But for me, it's something I've grown to see over the years. It's important to be world class with your

athletes, but we've got to be world class in the boardroom and in the office. So we try to keep all our policies up to date. It's very difficult when everybody's a volunteer, but we spend a lot of time on it and we draw on all that expertise. And now quite a few governing bodies are working together. So we'll share things that we've done, a piece of work, we'll share it with somebody else if we know them, and they will use it, which is helpful.

**Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?**

I think if people see you in the role and I make sure I represent the sport. So lots of different functions and talking with schools and colleges. I recently spoke at the University of Chester, one of the graduations during the COVID and it was on a Zoom call, so recorded some of the things that we've done and my how life is a journey. So you can influence people and hopefully inspire people to look at different opportunities that come their way. And from that, it can send, you know, other people feeling like, she can do that. I can do that. And think that's how it should be in the future.

**What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?**

The first advice I would give is to make sure you know the articles of the constitution of the organization. If you know that, then people respect you, especially if you've got a secretary of the organization and get to know the finance and how the finance works and then get to know your board members. Have discussions with them, give them opportunities, grow yourself in the job or in the role, will help them to grow as well and give them different life experiences and find out how much time they've got to give to the organization. Try not to overstretch yourself at first and don't burn yourself and maintain your enthusiasm for the organization. But it's about caring about people, caring about yourself, caring about the board and the staff.





**Grace Clancey**

Senior Director  
Goalball UK

## What role does sport play in your life?

The role of sport plays a massive part in my life. I initially started off playing sport as a child, a young person. It became my career. It became something I've become really passionate about. I work in sport, I'm a board member in sport. I watch sport. I still play sport. So it's got a huge part in my life.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

It started before it really started, if you see what I mean. I went to the Paralympics in 2012. Watched Goalball and really kind of fell in love with the sport and saw the interactions that the players were having on court. Understood from the perspective of disability sport that people with a visual impairment quite often don't take part as much as people without. So my interest in goalball kind of grew from there. I then saw a board position advertised online. I applied for it and went through the interview process and the application process and sort of took it from there, really.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I'd like to think it's massively improved since the past, but I know that it varies from organization to organization. It's quite prevalent in the area that I work in, so lots of meetings that I go to, lots of women there on a day to day basis. In the boardroom I guess there's probably less representation, but it's still good and encouraging and I think there's lots more visible leaders now within the sport sector on boards and in senior leadership roles than we've noticed in the past.

As senior director of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Not specifically yet. We're working towards an inclusion diversity action plan, which is a requirement under the Sport Governance Code. But we've been very focused on equalities and diversity in different ways, but not specifically on a policy at this point.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

It's not wide range responsibilities. The first is to make sure that we're structured correctly so that we have a good structure in place, that our governance is clear and sound, and that we represent the people that take part in our sport and who want to take part in our sport. The second role is about people, so making sure that we've got the right people on the board to represent the people that play within the sport, making sure that we've got accountability to those people and to the organizations that fund us. There's a role around policies and procedures to make sure that we've got the correct policies and procedures in place, that we're managing risk, managing our finances and are communicating our decisions widely and transparently.

What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Not too many challenges, to be completely honest. I suppose the biggest one for me personally is time and the time that it takes to commit to a board level position and the responsibilities that you encounter if you want to do it properly. So time away from work, time that you may need to take as leave if you didn't have a sympathetic employer. And also just making sure that I do my utmost to look after the sport and to contribute

to strategy discussions and finance discussions, and sometimes sort of learning how to dig into the detail of things where you're not necessarily experienced or comfortable in those areas.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I guess it completely varies from sport to sport, and I can only speak for the sport that I've been involved in. But certainly the way our board is run, I feel like there's equality between the male and female people on the board. And the way that the board is chaired is a lot to do with that so the culture that we have is open, it's inclusive, it's welcoming, it's supportive. The chair is really proactive in opinion around the different board members to ask their opinion so it doesn't rely on one person speaking up more than others. It makes sure that everybody is involved and everybody has a unique role to play and their voice is heard. So I believe in the sport that I'm involved in there is gender diversity and there is gender parity between males and females.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

I think there are a range of different policies and measures that can be put in place. I guess it would depend from organization to organization, which is the right one for them. I think recruitment of individuals, your recruitment policies, the way you advertise posts and where you advertise posts to make sure that you're attracting a diverse audience is really important. I also think the retention policies say looking after the people you do have and helping to nurture them into higher roles within an organization, if that's something that they're looking to do, or support them to move upwards if they want to is important too. Flexibility in terms of where you have your meetings, when you have your meetings, what time of day to make sure that they fit in properly with people's lifestyles. I think training is another big factor, not just training of existing board members, but training of future leaders as well, to make sure that people have the confidence

and belief in themselves to actually put themselves forward in the first place. I think the Equalities and Diversity Action plans that are coming in through the code for sport governance in the UK are really fundamental. They really challenge boards and senior leadership teams to think about the diversity of their organizations, who's represented, who's not. And I guess there's some issues around intersectionality there, not just about females, but females from different sectors of the population. In terms of other policies and procedures. I think just having regular review periods is quite a good thing as well, so that you're evaluating your progress, that you're not getting stale and that your board members are refreshed and reviewed on a regular basis.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

So that's an interesting question, I guess I never really thought about it like that. I'd like to think so. I'd like to think that within the community that we serve, within the society that we serve-visually impaired people and people interested in Goalball and sport more generally- if they see female representation on the board, that they think- they know- that there's representation from both genders and that different viewpoints are coming across.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

A few different pieces of advice, I guess. First one would be to believe in yourself, to have the confidence, to do what you want to do, to follow your passion, and to get involved. Go through an application process, speak to other people who are doing it or have done it. Find a good mentor if you feel like you need one. Look for allies within the board to have conversations with in a supportive way. In terms of other advice, I think don't be afraid to speak up when you're involved in the governance of an organization. There's probably no question that's a stupid question. We

have a role and responsibility and duty of care for that organization. So ask probing questions and I guess don't feel like you're being overly assertive or could be construed as aggressive. I think some people are conscious of behaviours, but I think just be yourself, be measured, get involved in the conversations. If you see other women around you who you feel like might need your support, then offer your support to them and just get involved and bring your whole self to the board really.



**Sandra Deaton**  
Chair  
Table Tennis England

## What role does sport play in your life?

That's a really good question. Thank you for asking me that. It's probably the most -no, it's not entirely true to say it's the most important, my grandchildren and my daughter are the most important people in my life. But outside of my family, it's the most important part of my life. It takes up tremendous time within my life and requires a tremendous amount of time management. And I prioritize my family, my daughter and my three grandchildren always. After that then comes the sport. Then third on the list comes myself.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

I started my relationship with table tennis when I was a young girl, as a teenager. I qualified as a physical education teacher in 1968, but before that, I played table tennis in a youth club, in my church youth club. I was very involved with the church, in church youth club. So I played in a church league, but never serious league and never a seriously serious competitor in it. And then in 1970, at my first teaching post, which was in Derbyshire, and I was the second in the Physical Education Department, the second woman in the Physical Education Department. And as a result of that, I got the role of looking after the table tennis because the person, the number one in the department, the head of the Women's P.E., was doing netball and hockey. And so I got the role of table tennis and we had a table tennis coach who was fanatical on the sport. And as a result of that, we had a young girls team, an under 16 schools team that got to the national finals. So this would be in towards the end of 1971. And I was the person that went with the team with this coach for table tennis, for the, sorry, for the competition. And we won the national finals. So the school was at won the national finals, the under 16 national finals, and two years later married the coach. And then my life was then determined by table tennis because he was a person that if you cut him through the middle, it would



have said table tennis right through the middle. And my honeymoon was at the senior national closed championships in Crystal Palace. So I think the writing was on the wall then for our lives to be involved in table tennis to the level. That's what's happened. That's what happened over the next 50 years. That's 50 years ago since I was introduced to the sport, at a high level and just under 50 years since I married my husband and table tennis become central to our lives.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that there is a lot more emphasis on women being involved today than there was years ago and certainly probably ten years ago. I think there is more concern and more emphasis on women being involved in sport, but it's not enough. And I think that there are more opportunities for women, both as participants and in an official capacity. Following back to my days in sport and taking part in sport at school, I've taken part in and as a PE teacher then. Boys have their sport and girls have their sport. And you didn't cross the line in any way, shape or form. And there was certainly no mixed sport. It didn't happen. Girls didn't do football. Boys didn't do hockey. Now there is and over the years has developed, the girls have more opportunity in a higher range of sport. Girls and women. Females have a greater opportunity and the higher range of sport. And there is a greater emphasis on women being involved at a higher level in an official capacity. But it is and is moving forward, certainly in England it's moving forward in a much more positive way. But it's taken a long time to get to this stage, and a lot more needs to be done. A lot more needs to be done for women to be able to feel that they are equal, have equal rights, to be involved in sport, to be able to earn a living out of sport as well, and look at my sport - table tennis. So for the men if you reach high ranking position, the men over in Europe, you can earn a really good salary, really high. You can earn a very good salary. For the women it's a lot more difficult. A lot more difficult for women to be able to continue in the career of table tennis, to be able to carry on playing into their thirties or even forties and make a living at it. Whereas for men, it's much easier for them. And the reason being that there are not so many women that play either. So therefore, there are not

the opportunities for the women to be able to play in clubs and be able to get paid, financially remunerated, for that in part. But I think it's moving in the right direction. I think, you know, ten years down the line, we'll be having a completely different conversation. Now we look at certainly look at women's football. Women's football undoubtedly has come on in leaps and bounds and is getting, you know, top television coverage, so it should be. Women's cricket. I was having a conversation this weekend with someone over women's cricket and women's cricket is really beginning to take off. But I think it's, I think, you know, we have to as an organization, we have to concentrate on what we can offer for women to be able to take part and be able to be considered equally as valuable within the sporting environment.

As chair of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Thank you. Yes. I mean, in everything that happens in table tennis, as the chairperson of table tennis and I don't say chairman, I say chairperson. As chairperson you're involved in everything. Obviously, they, the executives, the people that work on a daily basis are the people that put the concepts together. Gender equality. Yes. We were all involved in, the whole of the board was involved and it was something that was introduced in my time since I've been on the board. It wasn't, it didn't exist before then at all, so there was no consideration of whether or not there should be gender equality across the board for the sport. And one of the biggest problems with it was certainly the prize money for the women. So when we were looking at national competitions and for the men and women when they were segregated, as far as competing against, in a competition, when we were looking at those, there was far less prize money for the women than for the men. And one of the first things that we did with the gender equality policy was to make it equal prize money. And we were one of the first sport that did that. And table tennis is always on a financial squeeze. We're not a massively wealthy sport, but what happened was we only have

a certain amount of money that we could get for prize money. So we put the prize money that was pulled together for the men and the women, and we split it down the middle. So we didn't try to make the women's prize money up to the men's. We actually reduce the prize money of the men's to the women's and made it equal for both. And that was really important. Since then there has been, there has been a tremendous amount of work that's been done on why we have less women playing our sport and we've just set our new women and girls officer, part of our report. Our submission was to investigate, get some insight into why few girls, I think it's something like 13% of our membership is female. Why? Why there are less that play? So we have, we have, did a lot of insight into that and we are now, our program, our development program. First and most important priority is our Women and Girls program. Why do we not get as many women and girls playing and what do we need to do in order to encourage them to play and then hopefully become officials in the long term. But certainly from the point of view of getting them initially involved, you can, we can, we can get a lot of little girls that want to play table tennis, but we don't keep them. We don't keep them in it. Why don't we keep them? What is it, what is it about the sport? When you get to the actual table tennis away from just the participation, initial participation that puts them on. And so we've done a lot of analysis on that and we're now addressing that in our clubs and in our leagues to try and keep the girls, keep girls participating, not always to be a high level, but to keep them involved and get them part of the table tennis family. So, yes, I was involved in it. Yes, I'm proud of it. The proudest moment for me was undoubtedly equal prize money was undoubtedly - that was the most important. And I haven't said this previously, but my daughter was an international player and was five times national champion, so she suffered immensely from not having the same prize money as the men. And she had to train and play and practise and take the stress of trying to win national championships just the same as the men did. And so it was important for me. She missed out on it. She never got it, she'd finished playing. But it was important for me that we gave equal prize money because I knew the level that the women had to do in order to get to the same level of performance as what the men do.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

Thank you. At the moment I've been in post for eight years. Next year, this is my last year. So from March this year to March next year is my last year. We are funded by Sport England, so therefore we have, we are set with time frames for you to be able to sit on the board and certainly to chair the board, but even for directors on the board, so we have a certain length of time. Normally it's eight years, but if you hold an international position, you can stay on for an extra year, which I do, and you can stay on after that for an extra term, which I'm not going to do that. And the reason I'm not going to do that is because I know that I've done what I can and it's time for somebody else to take over. So I will leave next year. So I would have done nine years when finished. The rules of the board are very clear, so the role of the board is strategic, very strategic. It's to set the vision, it's to set the strategic plan. It's to make sure, to check and challenge the executive so as to make sure that the executives are working in the same direction as the strategic plan and the direction that the board want them to, to work in and to work in within that to have priorities. So strategic priorities that we give to the executive, to the staff in order to be able to guide them with the operational plans. The second I'm not sure it's the second, the most important part that is probably equal part is the financial stability of the association. So the board has total responsibility for the financial stability. And which comes first does the strategic plan come before the financial stability or does the financial stability come first. That is a question we ask ourselves all the time on the board. You know, we certainly have the vision. So our vision and our strategic plan is centred around our vision that that has to be the first. But then, you know, like all sport and particularly sports that are not so financially viable as what some are. Then we have to consider our financial situation. And then where does our strategic priorities sit within that financial situation. So, for instance, for women and girls, let's use that as an example. So for women and girls, that's a strategic priority and our board have said to our executive, "Here you are, here's your strategic priority, can we afford a special officer to lead that particular project?" The answer is yes. Yes, we have done and we've made sure that that's going to happen. So it's a combination of both. But

the work of the board is strategic and is financial security. And then it's also important we're a member association also. So we have, we have lots of players, lots of people who play table tennis and aren't members. And something like well over 2 million who play at least once a month. We have close on 500 that play twice a month but we only have 27,000 members. But those 27,000 members are the core table tennis players. So we have the responsibility to them and make sure that we deliver in programs that help them to be able to continue within the sport. So that's the main roles of the board.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

My main challenges. When I first came into post, I didn't for one minute think that there would be, I would not be accepted as the chair of the organization. I didn't think of myself as a woman and a chair, so I thought of myself as being the chairperson of Table Tennis England and therefore the person that worked with the CEO to move the association forward. And when I came in in 2000 and initially towards late 2013 and then was elected in 2014, the hardest problem for the organization was the fact that we had to change our governance structure because the governance structure was set out by the sport associations, Sport England and UK Sport was completely to change and we needed to move from a voluntary-run organization to a professionally-run organization. We had a voluntary board with a set board, but the board not delivering. Previously what had happened was that there was a management board and the management board was made up of volunteers, and the volunteers then were heads of the department on a volunteer basis and were involved in the delivery, whereas we had to change then to a board structure where we had the executive staff and the executive staff with the deliveries on the strategic plan set by the board. And that meant that a lot of our volunteers were sidelined when it came to the position of decisions and power. And that was the hardest thing to try and take the membership with us in order to become the organization that our funding partners needed us to be and move away from the tradition of... we've just celebrated our centenary. So the tradition of 80 to 90 years moving away from that tradition to a

completely new set up was the hardest point. It was the hardest process. But it wasn't, it wasn't the fact that I was a woman, that that was the process, whoever had been in post would have had that hard process to deal with. And I think it was that that was the hardest challenge was probably initially the first three or four years with our CEO a man, our CEO was a woman, so the two women at the helm of this association. So but I don't think either of us felt that that was a problem. The problem was what we were introducing and whoever was going to introduce that would have had that problem. But the biggest carrot that we had, of course, was the fact that we needed funding, we needed to continue funding. Although and I really need to say here, it's absolutely right. What happened was absolutely right. The change of governance structure was needed, was, is, absolutely what should happen. But we had to use the fact that we needed money in order to get that through because it's like turkeys voting for Christmas. The change of articles had to be decided by people who didn't want it to happen. So the hardest thing was getting them to accept that. And it took us probably two or three or four years for us to settle into an organization that was that they could see was beneficial from certainly at the top. So from the stakeholder perspective, from the governance perspective that it was beneficial from the channel. Then in 2017, the government brought out another initiative which was that the chair of the association had to be appointed and not elected. So you can imagine that the membership had always selected the chair and I was overwhelmingly elected in 2014 and on, on experience and past achievements and, and the things I said and did and what I watched happened and, and my successes at local and regional level. So I was overwhelmingly elected then suddenly in 2018 - you can't elect your chair. The chair is appointed. And that was the biggest issue that we had. And we again, it had to be change of article. And we lost the vote just by a small margin because the membership could not accept the fact that they couldn't decide who was going to lead this organization, irrespective of who was giving us the money. You know, why? Why should we not still have the right to do that? And so, again, Sport England had to say, I'm sorry, unless you change that, you can't have your finances. And we had to have an extraordinary general meeting three weeks later to get it, okay so that we could carry on with our finances. Because although the membership want the democratic right to vote, who to bring in who

they want, they don't want to lose the finances either, because they know the financial support that is given to us by the government is what helps us to develop the sport. So when there's a threat that that's not going to happen, then they will agree to what's needed. And I think that I was then appointed. So in actual fact, it made very little difference over the next four years. We are coming up to four years now it made very little difference because it was the same person. When I finish next year, it will be an appointed chair, not an elected chair, and it will be a very big change for the membership because they will not have any input whatsoever into who the chair is. And so they are the hardest things, so to summarize, it's political, it's governance based. But, and taking the membership with you along with that is not easy and also getting the membership to realize that what we do with the... in order to develop the sport is not just about the membership. They are an important stakeholder, a massive stakeholder with 27,000 members, but with 450,000 people that play twice a month and 2 million that pay once a month. We have to provide those opportunities as well. So getting the 27,000 members who think that they're the only ones in the sport that matter. Getting them to realize that as a governing body, we have to fulfill the whole of the possibility of people being able to access table tennis. So they're the hardest things that challenged me over my period of time.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

There are by no means an equality, equality with men in the number of women that are in governance in the sport. Look at, you know, my experience is obviously in table tennis, but as a chair, I have experience in meeting lots of other people within lots of different sports. But if I look at table tennis and I look at the international body of table tennis the chair, the President is a female, just been elected. She was the President of Sweden. She was on the board of International Table Tennis Federation, and she's just been elected. She's the only female on that board, which is really sad. She's surrounded by ten men, I think it is. And there was no other one, there was one other woman but she was, she wasn't going to be elected, there was no other women put forward by any of the continents

or by any of the national associations to sit on the Executive Committee of the International Federation. I'm also on European Table Tennis Board - I am the vicepresident of finance on the European Table Tennis board, and we have an equal number of women. We have an equal number of women to men. There are eight of us- four women, and there are four men. But we are, the President is a male. The Vicepresident is a male. And the next senior person in line is vicepresident of finance. But there is more equality there. I'm on the nominations committee for the ITTF. So I look at all the committees and I look at the chairs of the committees, and I look at the members of the committees. And I've been on there now for two consecutive groups of four years- I believe it's two consecutive years of four years- and we are just now changing this last time we have changed the criteria that we try to encourage as many women. And we, if we've got that equal, equal male and female that's been put forward by member association, equal in skills, equal in opportunities, then we try to push for the women to be on the committee because they, they are bring in different dimensions. I always truly believe that in any, any level of governance, any level of committee, any level of organization, the first and most important thing is the skill. It has to be the skills of those persons, the skills the world of work skills and the skills within the sport. But if we can get women with those skills and they can, they can start to dilute the number of male officials within the sport, then that's what we should be encouraging. I'm a massive believer in targets, you see, and I know I'm probably a little bit out of sync with people on that. But I think if you've got targets there, if you target to 25% or 30% female, you actually look for them. And that's what I mean. That's what happens. That's what happened with Table Tennis England. Sport England brought a 25% target of females onto your governance structure. We had at the highest point- we haven't now because the CEO's a male - the highest point we had 50% females because we were looking for, we were looking for women that had those skills that we we needed. So I think targets concentrate your mind and then skills, then gender. So, yeah, it is nowhere near what it should be. But you know, I look at European committees all run by men. I look at the ITTF committee, all of them run by men. They have more women on them now. I mean, in the nominations committee, we have put targets in. We put targets to try and get 25% female representation



on those committees and for some of the committees we've managed that with the right skills. But it's not it's not what it should be. But, you know, we're changing something over a lifetime aren't we? You know, you're not going to change it overnight. It's been you know, it's been that like that for centuries. Well, a hundred years in table tennis it's been run. You know, local committees, league committees still have. We still have, you know, the same men always run by the men we can't get the women to put themselves forward to the same level as what the men do. Why? I don't know. Because they do equally as good a job, but it's not as good as it should be. But it's movin' in the right direction.

### In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Well, I think I think the most important policy is to if it's a policy, if we can say it's policy is to encourage both in participation and in an official way and in a initial encouragement and in a high level performance, is to concentrate and encourage other, encourage females to be able to take up the sport. That's the most important thing. That's not a policy. It's a strategic direction. It's a... it should be a priority. I said in my... in the previous question, one of the policies for me is targets was undoubtedly to have targets to have females involved in an official capacity. But then from the partition perspective, I think we have to realize that women and girls need different things than what boys and men need to be able to play sport or play some sport so certainly in terms of table tennis that is true. Men are very, men and boys the male concept are very happy to be competitive. They like to be competitive within it. So a lot of this, a lot of the structures that we have, our leagues, our county championships, the Grand Prix competitions attract a lot of male participation and male competing because they are our British league. Our British league is predominantly a male concept. Certainly our senior British League is male is all male concept. So they like to compete. Girls is different. When introduced before my time we introduced a women's British League and in other words, all the teams they play on a weekend, they play on two separate weekends and it's just teams, women teams. And they... the concept of the British League is club. So the clubs send a team and they

play in this competition. But what we found with the women that it was better if they had teams from their friends rather than from a club. So it wasn't necessarily going to be a club from just down the road. It could be a combination of two or three clubs in that area because their friends played in different areas and you put the team together, the women that were friends and that they could play together, compete together against other teams of friends. And the Women's British League is very much a social event. Okay, they compete. They won or they lose. And there's a winner and there's a team of the weekend, all the usual concepts that happen. But the biggest thing that puts them there is that they socialize together. And I think that's one of the biggest concepts that you have to, we as a sport have to understand for trying to attract girls and females into our sport. But we are, as I said, we are- one of our strategic priorities, women and girls. We've got to increase the number of females that play. Our women's national team is so depleted, it's not depleted in quality but is depleted in the accessibility of quality players, because we don't keep them, we don't keep them in the sport. 16. They leave us at 16. They think about going to university, doing A-levels. What is my career going to be? I'm not going to make a career of table tennis. So might play a little bit, a little bit in the club but I don't want to play high level competition that's going to improve my my standard to become an international player. And so we have a much smaller pool to choose from for our... from our women. And even that pool is part time. So our number one female player is doing a degree in Medicine at Nottingham University as well as being our number one female player. Our number one male player is full time has a house in Nottingham, lives in Germany, plays a league in Japan, trains in Denmark. It's his job, it's his livelihood and that's the difference between them. I think we have to recognize that there's a difference in what they want out of the sport is different. They want the friendship, they want the social side. They don't want to... they don't want to be as competitive as the men and they don't want to play hours and hours and hours and hours. They want to play in and sit down. And so any club certainly needs to have somewhere where they can have a cup of tea and sit down. It's really important. Social side is really important. So whether they are whether they are, they're not rules and regulations that we need. There they are concepts that we need to recognize and our sport. And I'm sure it's there for all sport. Our sport needs

to provide those facilities so that we can get more girls and more females play. From an official's perspective we need to encourage the women to realise that they are very capable of being an official of leading something. We need to make sure that they know they are - because they are, they are very capable and it's not easy. Remember when when I was first when I was spoken to about being, put myself forward for election and becoming chair, I just thought there's no way they will elect a woman they've never elected a woman but can I do that? I've a family. My husband had died but I've a family and I've got grandchildren. And, you know, have I got the real experience needed, you know, to take this line? I really had lots and lots of doubts about it. But then I thought, well, let's give it a try. You know, you've got to be a person that really even if you've got those doubts, you got to think, can I make a difference? Can I do something that can help to make a difference? And thought that thought, can I make a difference? Can the experience I've had make a difference? I'll give it a try. But it was just a try. You know, I'm the volunteer. If I'm really messing this up, I can always go to Spain on holiday. I can always do something different. Five years on, I'm still there. But I know. I know I've done everything I can, so I know the time has come to think about going, but I haven't thought about that the whole period of time. Haven't thought, can I make a difference all the way through? I've just gone on and done it. And I think women do that. I think they do it really well. I also think they're really good at time management, which I think is really important.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

That's a really good question. I think it does. But if we as the members of the board, they may not because I'm not sure how many members of the board see me as a woman in that sense, because it's - I'm the chair of the board. So but I think, I think we have in table tennis, certainly with myself and our CE is a female, I think when we first came in as two women leading the sport, that was immense to the board, to our Table Tennis England board, but certainly to the European Board and certainly to the

ITTF board. We've just had a centenary gala dinner and the President of ITTF came to the dinner who I said is a female and she gave a speech and she said she couldn't remember seeing the expression on the member associations' faces when two women from England walked in to the first AGM in charge of English table tennis because it was just full of males. So from an ITTF perspective, it had a tremendous response. From an English table tennis board, we have a sufficient quantity quite a number of women anyway. We obviously had two - myself, the CEO and now Deputy Chair is a female as well. So three of us, although the Deputy Chair is less of a significant role, but with the three of us are female and then we had two more females. So we had five out of a board of eight that were females. So for the board it wasn't that different for them. And don't know whether they - the fact that I was leading and I was in charge in inverted commas, because I'm never sure whether how much you charge, you class it, but I was leading the board and I was leading the association with the CEO whether I was ever thought of as a woman, because I never actually asked that question to them because I, I, I'm not even sure I thought of myself as a woman. I thought of myself as being the person that needs to do this job. And whether male or female, that's exactly what we've got to do. Got to go with it and do the job. And you use your experiences over life and certainly within the sport, different experiences within the sport, you know, to be able to do that job. And as a female, I have probably more experiences and I say this very often, I probably have more experiences across the sport than any of the men that sit on the board because of my involvement in the sport over the years. So do they see me? How do they see me? The Table Tennis England board? Do they see me as a woman? Perhaps sometimes. Because I think sometimes I am more softer, a little bit softer. Whether that's because I'm a woman or not, I don't know. That's just me. So I like everybody. So from the board meeting, everybody must be able to have their say. I'm not a dictator in any way, shape or form. Is that because I'm a woman? I don't think so. Just because, it's just a person. You can have, we can have a male that's exactly the same. I'm not sure that there are any traits in me as chair and the board to signify that I'm a woman. From an international perspective, yes. Made a big difference. But without moving because I'm trying to influence as much as possible internationally, they are moving towards seeing more women involved

and therefore eventually they will see they're not men or women, they're just capable individuals.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Yeah, that's easy for me to answer that one because I think about it a lot. Don't be afraid. Believe in yourself. I think for every position, male or female, whoever you are, wherever you're going, you have to ask yourself have I got the experience and skills to do this? It's a really important question. Have I got the time, have I got the experience and have I got the skills? That's a really important question to ask yourself and when you've ticked those boxes don't be afraid to do it because you can do it. It's, it's not, it's not male or female it's you as a person it's what the qualities that you have as a person, whether you're male or female, if you have the time, if you have the skills, if you have the experience within whatever it is that you can use, then you don't have to have the experience of history experience, the experience of using, being able to use that. So if you're if you're going to sit on a board and they need marketing, for instance, if you've got experience in marketing and you've got, you have some connection with the sport, but you've got your work or your life's involved in marketing, well you, male or female, go for it because you've got the capabilities of being able to input into, into what they need because you have those skills, your gender is irrelevant. It's totally irrelevant to whether you, whether you can do it or not. But time is important. I think time is really important. You have to make sure you have the time to be able to do what you need to do and you have to believe in yourself. You have to have the confidence to know you can do that. So analyze yourself. Have I got the skills? Have I got the time to put in to it and then forget the fact you're a woman. It doesn't matter. I would say the same to a man. Forget the fact you are a man. It's you as a person, you. If you've got that, you've got to want to do it. You will be able to achieve- believe that you can because you will be able to. It's no different. No different whether it's male or female. It's your experience, the skills that you bring that's important.



## Bronagh Kennedy

Chair of British Candeing's HR  
and Remuneration Committee

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport very simply keeps me sane. I really enjoy participating in sport and I get a great deal of enjoyment also in watching sport, all kinds of sport. I am completely catholic in my tastes and I had a hip replacement several years ago and was determined that would not stop me from enjoying sport. So all I have to do is be careful not to do high impact. So I enjoy swimming and enjoy cycling and enjoy all kinds of watching other people play sport.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

So I began my relationship with British Canoeing probably just under seven years ago, I think. I was approached by a headhunter who specialized in recruiting people to act as directors on sporting bodies, and he asked me if I would be interested in helping to professionalize the board of British Canoeing, which is a non-government body that runs all kinds of sporting canoeing, sporting activity, paddle sport, we call it in the

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Well, if I look at the in particular, I would say that the representation of women in sport is very strong. We have the President of UK Sport is female and the chief exec. We've had a female chief executive who has been female. We have several female directors on the board of British Canoeing. And when I look at sport around me, I do see lots of very impressive women being directors on boards of sport bodies.

As chair of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

From the chair of our remuneration committee and as such, I have responsibility for helping to set all of the policies, including gender equality policies that we have in relation to our employees. And we do have a diversity and inclusion policy. And I think that's really important because we want to get everyone to feel, first of all, that they can bring themselves to work and to feel that their contribution is valued and is equal and will be respected and trusted. And I think women have a great deal of perspective to bring to all kinds of aspects of our sport and all kinds of aspects of how we run our business, and perhaps even more importantly, how we behave towards each other because I think women have a very good calming atmosphere in what sometimes can be tense situations.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

My overall responsibility is as a non executive independent director of British Canoeing, and I very much see my responsibility as being there to make sure that first and foremost, the organization is run properly, it has strong governance, it applies best practice in terms of corporate governance and that it has a sound financial footing. So it has good, healthy reserves, that the organization has a very strong sense of social purpose and that it has a very strong set of corporate values, and that those values are lived and embodied by its employees. I think it is a normal governing body in tandem with most organizations. It also has a really strong responsibility towards its stakeholders. And those are all the people who participate in the sport, members of our organization and wider stakeholders such as the Canals and Rivers Trust, other water bodies that really enable us to participate in the sport. And we have responsibility, I think, also towards the environment and making sure that we leave the environment in the good condition that we find it, if not better.



## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

I think the main challenge would be that as an independent director, you have a degree of detachment from perhaps some things that are very passionate, the held beliefs or desires that are close to people who are very, very closely involved, perhaps in some particular disciplines, because obviously within canoeing we have water, canoeing, water polo. We have sprint, we have slalom, we've para canoe and we have paddle, paddle boardin . o a hu e variety that sometimes have con ictin interests. nd as an independent director. I think my job is to stand back and say, actually, let's focus on the thin s that are really important and for the bene t of all of those sports, not just for one particular interest. I also think that I help challenge and encourage the organization to do better and to be really ambitious, not just about what it does day to day, but about what its strate ic focus is for the future.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

So I strongly believe that women make up 50% of the population, so why shouldn't they be equally represented on sport bodies? I think that having strong female role models in sport creates really that opportunity for children and perhaps younger people to say, well, that could be me. I could do that. I could take that role and I could help lead that sport. And I think it's there to be, we're there to be encouraging to bring on the next generation and really to encourage as many people as possible to want to aspire to be on the management boards of sport.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

o believe the rst thin that an or ani ation needs to do before it sets policies is to listen. To talk to the females that work in the organization

and understand what the barriers are for them or what are, perhaps the practices, the working practices that are not helping them to feel that they are making, being able to make, a contribution and feel that they want to stay with that organization. I think then having listened an organization should look at best practice, look at very successful organizations who have achieved great female representation and and say, what are they doing that we are not doing and build out into policies and working practices. I am a believer in targets because I do think that targets drive action because it's a call to action and it can be an ambition, doesn't have to be something that is, you know, death or die. But I think it does help to set a sense of mission and ambition and that setting targets is a is an important part of all of that package of things.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

So as I said, in answer to one of your earlier questions, I think that having female role models, particularly at middle management and senior management of any organization and particularly in sport, is really important so that people can see that women have an equal contribution to make, that their contribution is valued and to act as a role model for future directors and senior management for the future.

What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

I would say go for it. It's a great opportunity to understand how sport is governed in this country both from - if it's a performance sport side - from how funding is allocated how business cases are made and on the participant side, it's a great opportunity to learn about strategies to encourage that participation, whether that's digital marketing, social media. You can learn so much and bring that into other aspects of your life, whether that's at home or whether that's the other employers that you work for. I would definitely say it's a great opportunity and you should grab it on both hands.



**Natasha Dangerfield**  
Chair  
England Lacrosse

## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport is a glue. It holds my friends, particularly my family, together. As a head teacher, but also as part of the England Lacrosse set up. I watch my peers, I watch colleagues and I watch students from across England develop their skills, their interest but physically, mentally and socially really devise their own development pathway.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

Lacrosse arrived at school for me when I was eight years old. It was a bizarre game- a stick with a net made of wood played by the Native American Indians. It was an incredible magic spell that was weaved into my life that has stayed with me right the way through to this rather ripe middle age that I'm in now. So lacrosse came to me in school, very fortunately.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I see representation for women on the increase. We haven't the equity perhaps that we would like or we dream for, but we are definitely on the increase. There are a huge range of roles now available, respected and set out for women. So on the increase, which is what we want.

## As President of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

I'm a relatively new member of the Lacrosse Association board. I've started to be taking the role on. But I haven't been at the infancy of some of the policy making. That is not to say that I'm not part of that policy making now, nor of the review body. And indeed, we've been and will be setting

about reviewing all of our policies. I will absolutely be a part of those as a representative President. There is a great deal of empathy for all of those roles that we have here in, in lacrosse. And a significant board level is represented at that, both with female and male representatives on the board. es.

### What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I've been on the lacrosse board now for about 18 months, this year. Covid makes me forget the time, but about 18 months. I have an overarching responsibility to ensure that the board undertake their roles and responsibilities seriously. And we are deploying exactly our principles and our values for lacrosse across England and for both the male and female game.

### What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

The main challenge for me personally is time. It's... I have an honorary role, so I don't have dedicated time to give to the position. But having time and having the opportunity to see the fullest part of the game across that spread of England is my main challenge.

### What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think women deserve a place at the table for any board or any governance level as much as any male sport. But I think it's really important that we are

representative of the sport that we are there to be responsible for.

**In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?**

significant policy that we should all adopt no matter what we do, sport or otherwise, is to listen to the voices. We have a responsibility as a governance or as a board that runs a sport to make sure that we are representing the voices of the people that are participating. So that is our main role.

**Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?**

I think my representation on the board as far as society is concerned, we are a minority sport, lacrosse. We we represent a small number of players and therefore- do I contribute enough to society? One might question that. I'm a white female and therefore I hold a small corner of a voice for a group of players that play largely in either Manchester for the male game or in independent schools for, for females. So I'm not representative of a majority by any strength, but I should have an empathy and understanding of what I'm there for and who I represent and therefore be understanding of those that are not as well represented and have their voice.

**What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?**

So, yes, I think women should always say yes, I think we have a duty to ourselves and to one another to be representative where we possibly can. If you're given a voluntary role, if you are paid- take it and make yourself that person that can speak for others.



**Julia Newton**  
Chair  
British Taekwondo

## What role does sport play in your life?

So sport always played a really important role in my life. I remember watching sport with my father when I was a young girl, and I love watching almost all kinds of sport. I think that sport really defines who we are as human beings.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

So I started my relationship with taekwondo in 2017 when I was headhunted for the role of chair of the sport. And yes, I've been heavily involved for the sport ever since.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think a lot has been done in recent years to increase women's representation in sport organizations, but we're only at the start of that journey and a lot more could be done. I think if I'm honest, that some sports have done it as a box-ticking exercise, whilst others genuinely have women in leadership positions throughout the organization. So yes, it's a good start with a lot more work to be done.

## As chair of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

So across the board, all sports in the UK have gender policies. We all subscribe to the Code of Governance for Sport and GB Taekwondo is no different from that. I think actually it's one of the first things that I did when I came on board was to make sure that we had gender policies to ensure that women are given equal opportunities at every level in the organization.



And that's something as a woman, which I feel very passionate about and proud to have been associated with.

### What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

So I've been on the Taekwondo- GB Taekwondo- board since 2017, and the overall responsibilities of the board are to ensure good governance of the sport and the organization and to make sure that we are adequately assessing any risks to the organization and mitigating those risks in the best way we can.

### What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

So since I became chair, there have been many and varied challenges. I wanted to ensure that we had gender and diversity inclusion on our board. So that's been a challenge that I've faced. There's also ongoing challenges with funding. Funding is one of the biggest things that keeps me awake at night. We are funded through the lottery by UK Sport and ensuring a sustainable future for our organization is the most important thing that I can do. There's also a duty of care to athletes and so we're always working as an organization to ensure that we are at the cutting edge of putting athletes first and their welfare first whilst they are in the organization, but also as they leave us too.

### What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

In terms of governance at a board level, I think that we are again, we are working towards equality. UK Sport in the Code of Governance for Sport puts in a 30%. All boards must have 30% women and I think most of the sports have got or there or they are working towards that. Ideally it would be great to see that 50% or more than 50%. So that's only a start. And, and

really I think I'd like to see more women in governance and in senior roles in sport.

**In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?**

I think in order to foster equality, we have to look at what we can do to make the jobs genuinely equal and accessible for women as they are for men. And I think by that, you know, I'm talking about things like maternity policy and about how we can make it easier for women to work after they've had children and to balance the very many things that women are being asked to juggle in their lives week in and week out. And we're still a long way off achieving that.

**Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?**

Unfortunately, I don't think that I believe that having a female- myself -as a chair of GB Taekwondo contributes to society. I think you're going to have to have a vast number of us. mean, thin as a statistic, ne, but it needs a lot more to actually count. And I don't think personally one person alone can do, can do that much.

**What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?**

I would say feel confident. so many women have imposter syndrome, and I've experienced that in my life as well. And I would say, you know, really, we're all just making it up. So just be your best self and you will be able to do a good job.



**Kate O'Sullivan**

Deputy Chair  
British Rowing

## What role does sport play in your life?

So that's a tough question. It's just always been there. I've always been part of sport, it's completely inculcated into my life. Same as I said earlier, my father always used to say always married, you know, to my sport and my club. But then he introduced me to it. So probably his fault. But yeah, it's just always there. I can't really explain more than that.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

That's really interesting. So I've got two older brothers and my middle brother is five years older than me and he rowed, he rowed for his local grammar school, and they didn't have any money. And my mum used to drag me along to his rowing events to sell pin cushions, I've still got one of the pin cushions. And, and that's really how I got involved in it. To be honest, I hate water. You know, I love being on it, but I hate being in it as I nearly drowned as a child. So it's not my first passion but I just love being around it. And then because when I was at my school, they offered it as a sixth-form option, but then girls weren't allowed to do it. So I thought, well, I want to do it. And then I didn't do it for two years. And then I went to university. I actually broke my thumb in my first term and then ended up, I was quite skinny and at my university the women were looking for a cox and they said, "Would you come and get involved?" So. So it's been a really interesting aspect through that, really. My brother said, don't do it, don't take up coxing. So that's what I did. Yeah. Yeah. So that's how I got involved, really.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

Yeah, I think it's definitely an improving picture. I think that some of the processes and rituals still don't wed itself naturally for - not just women - from people from a whole range of society to get involved. I think I'd like to see more youngsters coming through. I'd like to see us sponsoring

more young women coming through a bit like, hey, someone supported me through really. But I think it is growing. If I think of the British rowing board we've got five women on our board now of five and yeah, and would say they are very assertive. They bring a whole range of experiences. But I think there's still quite a lot of stereotypes still. But I think it is a changing picture.

As deputy chair of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Yeah. So by the time I'm just thinking back now actually. So over my time I have been involved in discussions about gender policy, but it was never a really big discussion for us, to be honest. And now it is fascinating because it's moved on to the whole diversity, you know, equality and inclusion aspect as well. And yes, I am participating in those conversations. So an example would be in gender, but we're having a big discussion about transgender women in sport. And I found myself in the British University Championships recently as a coach, Teesside University rowing. So I got talking to my old university, Leeds University. I talked to the girls and just said, "What's your view in all of this?" And unbeknownst to me, their coach has gone and done a survey. So I'm just waiting to get results back now, actually. Oh, yes, I am involved in it.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

So in my current position, I've held since 2017, October 2017, the board overall, we're responsible for the governance of GB Rowing and rowing in England. So the home countries have their own boards as well. So that's always a bit controversial, that British Rowing is responsible for GB Rowing and also for English Rowing. So for me, very simply, I think we're responsible for ensuring we've got the policies and procedures in place, and culture that enable everyone just to enjoy our sport at any level in a

safe, enjoyable environment. Now I know it's more complex than that. We've got our articles, we've got our stakeholders to manage but for me it is as simple as that. But I also think we know we're responsible for making the decisions that are right for the sport, for the longevity of the sport as well. But then because we're a limited company, we've got everything that goes along with being a limited company as well. But I still think at the heart of it, for me it's about ensuring that now or in the future everyone can enjoy our sport, as I say- in a safe environment at whatever level they're participating at, whether it be international or just entry level.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Personally the first challenge that I faced was when I realised that in the sport I love the sport, I've been involved in sport for a long time, but the decisions I was now going to have to make were going to have to be the right decisions for the sport and not necessarily the decisions that my friends and longstanding colleagues wanted. So that was a lesson that I learned very early on. So that was my personal challenge. Obviously, as a board, we've gone through the Olympic performance. You know, everyone expects us to be the best. So we went through a lot of criticism. We are fighting for our position in the Olympic games, like a number of traditional sports. Covid obviously was a massive one because all of our unrestricted funding comes through people having a British rowing licence. Most people are going to have a licence if they want to race. And there were no races in two years. So, you know, bringing in the unrestricted funding and keeping the sport together as a community. I was on the the directors COVID recovery group. So, yeah, Boris Johnson would stand up within - 30 seconds was the shortest time- so rang up to say can we now row then. You know because we were hearing the announcements at exactly the same time as he was. But I think as well, the big challenges we have as a sport is just trying to change people's perception of what our sport is about. But it's not all Oxford, Cambridge, elite public schools, you know. And we are

work in really hard on that. Really hard on that.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think that there's an increasing participation level of women in sport governance. But I still think that women can be as bad at this as men are, that sometimes more weight is still put on the male voice than the female voice. And, but as I say, women can be as bad at that as men are as well, to be honest. But I think that one of the things I feel very strongly about, and we talk about wanting to have diverse boards, equitable boards, people with equal voice. But you've got to make it welcoming if that's the case and you've got to create the environment that enables people to feel like they have a voice. So that for me, it comes very strongly from the chair and the senior independent director and people like myself in the deputy chair roles to try and create that environment to allow people in. I've seen it the flip side as well, however, where women have come in incredibly talented themselves and they go in too hard, too fast. So I've seen it that way as well. They say, "In my experience..." I think you've already proven your experience by being there. So I found myself having to challenge myself sometimes when my shackles have gone up because a woman coming in is, is trying too hard, almost. And then you have alpha females, as you have alpha, alpha males. But I, I do think that it is changing. But I, I come back to, I think that in any diversity, whether it's women and I appreciate this study is about women, you need to create the right environment that allows someone to feel comfortable to use their voice.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

It's a really good question. What policies do we need to adopt? For me, I really struggle with separating out policies for women versus policies for men, because I just see we need to create a culture which is inclusive for everyone. So for me, there are elements around - of course there's code of conduct, those sorts of elements. I mean, if you want to go into the

type structure, you know, the hybrid working, that applies for everyone. I think, you know, where we hold the meetings applies for everyone. I do feel that... I do feel that sometimes for women it can be harder financially to do these roles. And I think one of the big challenges that in most sport, not all sport, but I would say the majority of sport, the board roles are volunteer roles. And if you want people to be able to step forward, women to step forward, then actually you might need to offer start to offer some low level fees because I think otherwise you just always going to end up with the people who can afford it, who aren't necessarily representative of the community that you want and need. I think, I think it's not a policy, but I do think having... I do think inviting people to do upward mentoring, for example, so that people have an understanding of what it's like to be. I know, I know this is about women in sport, so forgive me, but I don't care whether it's women in sport or transgender or whoever. But sometimes it's good to understand a walk in the shoes of the people who are trying to bring up or else you just end up cloning what you've got. So I think for me, trying to... the most important thing for me is, is genuinely trying to create the accessibility by ensuring you've got the right person coming through rather than the person who happens to be able to afford the time and the money to be there. And I know that's not a policy procedure, but personally, I feel that's really important. I mean, I'll give you an example. So I went for an interview. I won't say what it was but it was a sport organization. The chair of a sport organization. And the interview was in a beautiful office down in London. I live in the north east and as I was leaving, the chair said, "Would you seriously take this role? Would you seriously come down from the north east to here to do the role?" I was like, Well, of course I would. That's why I put myself forward and that's why I come for the interview. And I was fascinated thinking, Well, if that's your mindset, then you only ever going to have people who are from a certain or from the M25 region ever going into these roles. So, so I do come back to for me, the most important thing is it's ensuring that anyone who wants to and has the talent who can afford to do it. And then that's the bit which people don't recognize at the moment.



## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

So I'm really uncomfortable with the concept of that. Oh look I'm a huge believer in the see it to do it, see it to believe it, you know that you see around. One of the reasons you know people ask what's one motivation to staying on the board, and one of my big motivations is to prove to people in the Tees Valley area that if I can do this it's not being an Olympian. You know, I went to university, but I didn't go to Oxford or Cambridge and go to public school. You know that if people can see that I'm doing this, then, then surely anyone from that, they can do it. It's an interesting role for me because I came from an inner city area, I was the only female graduate where I worked. So for me, I think very early on I realized that you've just got to be authentic and true to who you are because everyone thinks you're a bit weird anyway, so you just kind of go with it really. But I, I hope look, I hope that, I hope that the junior girls that coach will have confidence and, and see me doing things then they will realize. Yeah, of course. You hope that you're helping to put another stepping stone in so that people will just do what they're good at. But again, it's something that sits really uncomfortably with me as a question, have to be honest. Yeah.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

For the advice I'd give to women who are taking up, you know, directorships and positions on boards is first and foremost, you've got to be authentic to who you are, you've got to really be true to... you want to make sure that you're rooted in your values and what you're going to bring. And you've got to remember that you're there because people have felt you're the right person for the role in the first place. And don't try and be someone that you're not, because by doing that, you're very, by its very nature, you're not going to bring the value that people are looking for from you for a board. But I would also say, you know, in those first few months, and no, not just

the first few months, first year, take as much training as you can get. You know, you're going to be curious. Just go out there and speak with people. And, but most importantly, I think you've got to be comfortable with your own skin and understand what the value is you're bringing and, and just be true to who you are. I think that, I think just give it the best job and but also accept that you're going to make mistakes and that sometimes you're not going to get on with everyone as well. But again, in my early days in UK Sport training. I remember the guy standing up and saying, "You're not coming on a board to make friends. If you want to be friends with everyone, go and get a dog". If you're not falling out with some people on the board, the board's not working effectively. And you're... they don't want someone who's going to come in and just say yes all the time. You've got to be prepared. Just be very strong. Stick to your viewpoint.



**Mandy Fisher**

Director  
English Partnership for  
Snooker and Billiards

## What role does sport play in your life?

I've been involved with women's snooker for the last 40 years, trying to achieve recognition for the sport of women's snooker.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

When I was about 10, I used to go to a local snooker club, which is the British Rail Staff Association Club, because my dad worked on British Rail and it actually started by playing pool at that club because there was not much else to do. My parents were there at weekends and I began playing pool and they were short in the team one time and they asked me to play and I played and won the match. And from then on they asked me to be part of the team. And then I went on as the only female in the area to win the local pool singles, doubles and triples championships. And my dad offered to buy me a cue, took me to somewhere where there was a snooker table, which is - a snooker table is far, far bigger than a pool table. And at the time, I couldn't hit the white ball and hit another ball at the other end of the table, which was 12 foot away and it just intrigued me. And to me it seemed like a natural progression to progress from pool to snooker. And that's how it started.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think it's improving. I think there's still a long way to go in certain sports. Others have complete monopoly. Some. Some are even more popular than playing than the men playing the same sport. But I would like to see that unity across all women's sport all over the world, and especially snooker, because it's been my passion for the past 40 years.

As director of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

Yes, I was. I am active as are all directors of the board in implementing policies. And basically we try and follow all the IOC rules and policies. We adopt them and are happy to do so in all aspects of the game.

What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

I've been on the English Partnership for snooker and billiards for the past three years, since it was formed before COVID. And our aim is to promote snooker for young women, boys, men in England in the English Partnership. But obviously, I also am a director. Tournament director and President of World Women's Snooker, which is how I obtained the role, the role in the English Partnership, which is also along the same lines.

What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

Obviously we've been through COVID, which has been probably the main challenge, but it makes you realise how difficult it is to encourage the players to play. As far as women are concerned, to get women involved. We've had a good response since COVID and it's now building up more and more, but it's still difficult. We need to run more tournaments and get more women involved in that aspect all around the country. But it is very difficult because each tournament is perhaps such a long way away and very often women don't think they're good enough. And that is sometimes, from a personal point of view, the most difficult thing whereas we welcome women of all ages and all standards. And that's what's so brilliant about the sport. You can play it from a very, very young age and stand on a box and pop the balls. Or we have had eighty year olds that are still playing and

enjoy playing the game. So that's why it's such a lovely sport.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think it's essential. I think we need to have a voice. I think for too many years, women in sport haven't had a strong enough voice. So I think it's an absolutely essential part of the process of moving forward and encouraging women into sport.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

I think that you - fairness is a really important thing. You have to have gender equality, you have to have fairness. And each sport has to be taken by its own merit because some sports are more physical than others. So I do think you have to consider the sport in question and then consider the equalities and the fairness to apply whatever rules is necessary.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I'd like to think so, because wherever I go, I promote women's snooker and speak to people that don't even know that women play snooker. So I have an opinion and I'm quite happy to voice my opinion. And having played for a number of years in my life, as well as being at the forefront of running and promoting women's snooker, I think I have a big voice in terms of getting the word out there that women should be equal. And there's no - especially in snooker, there is no physical reason why a woman should not play snooker as good as a man. That might just be my opinion and not everybody's. But personally, I can't see why not. I just think we've got a lot of catching up to do from past, past problems of women not being able to access clubs or not being not feeling comfortable going in clubs and

snooker centres and academies to play. But I think that's all changing. And I think that snooker is going to be very big for women, for women in the future.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

If you have an ability and a passion for any sport, then I feel as with anything, you really should put your hand up, as in voting for something. If you're passionate about something and you really believe in something, and I really think you have to get on board with it and join the board and get your point across. And I think that is really, really important. It's no good moaning behind the scenes or having an opinion that you can't put out there. I think you need to be on the boards to express that and try and try to take it forward.



**Katherine Knight**  
Chair  
Rounders England



## What role does sport play in your life?

Sport has been an ever-present in my life and from primary school I was in a very small school where there was only nine in the year, boys and girls. So we did everything- all sport together. Boys, traditional male or female sport. Primary, secondary. I was banned from playing football, so that really drove me on. That inequality has been a fundamental reason why I went into sport. So as soon as I went to university, I started playing football and was lucky enough to then have a career in football. I was the first person, first woman to do the sport diploma at the sport and science in football at Liverpool John Moores then got a career in the FA. Now I'm working with Rounders England and on physical activity, especially for women through walking and cycling. So everything I've done, whether for fun or for work, has really involved me in sport.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

So I started my relationship with rounders as I was approached out of the blue by an organization asking me to apply for the post of chair. I'd been out of football for a few years, working in walking and cycling, and I absolutely love that. And it was a real seismic moment in my career moving, realizing that sport just doesn't appeal to lots of people. But actually we really need to try and make people more physically active and that should be done through daily habits, walking or cycling. But I really love sport as well. So I was missing the enjoyment and the competition and the being involved in work with an organization. When I was approached it suddenly fitted and made sense and so I was delighted to apply and, and I'm really pleased, proud of the fact I'm able to bring different skill sets to the table. I have knowledge of the sport sector, but also the importance of trying to make a sport relevant for wider groups and typically sporty people and rounders fits that absolutely perfectly. It's a really easy entry level access into sport but then can have a career pathway as well. So, so yes - out of the blue I seized the opportunity and three years in I'm really pleased and I think I made the right decision.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

So I started my career in the sport sector in 1996. In football and in... the FA had taken over the running of the women's game in 1993. Then I'd say there was very little involvement, certainly at a strategic level of females, females in sport. Moved 25 years on working with Sport England, working with the chairs for and with the Sport Development Coalition. You can see that there now are visibly more females. But I think it really does depend on the sport. So if you look at netball or some of the sort of more female-orientated sport, they've done really well increasing, you know, having really strong representation at a senior level. If you look at some of the more traditional male sports, they've progressed less. So I'd say it's improved hugely. But still, there's certain areas where they just haven't realized the potential. I'd say they're missing out because they're not really representing the whole population. So I think there's still some way to go, at some level.

As chair of the board, did you participate in the definition and implementation of gender equality policies? If yes, what were those policies? Why do you think they are useful? If not, why not?

And so we do have an equality policy at founders England. But one of our challenges is slightly different. We have a high female representation on our board. So actually we didn't have any male representation on our board when I joined. So we tackled that. So our issue wasn't that we didn't have enough women it's that we didn't have any men on the board. So. So we have, we recruited one male member of the team and we actively sourced to do that.

## What are your duties in your sport corporate board? And how long have you held your position on the board?

So I started on the board in January 2019, and I believe the main responsibility of the board is to set the strategic direction and to ensure the management of the leadership team and work together. We are a very small organization. So we've recruited we've looked at the skill set and the skills matrix for the board and really made sure that we've got an incredible team who can really support the senior leadership team and the exec directors because we think that we're going to do something together.

So it's slightly different from maybe a larger board where you really are just checking in the finances and things. This is more collaborative whilst ensuring we remain good, critical friends and that and that separation. But we really see that the people that have come along and want to make a difference and want to support and use the knowledge and skill set that they've got from wider industry knowledge in order to help drive forward the board. But we're not running it on a day to day basis. We have to enable them and empower them to be able to do that. So I think that's a really important thing. And I also think the relationship between the chair and the chief executive is really critical. And, and I've spent quite a bit of time forging that relationship, making sure that they really feel that there is an opportunity to discuss and, and look at look at wider things across the sport sector and understand how they can, how they can grow and develop. Because in a small organization, that can be a challenge.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

I think it's the biggest challenge since being on the board is managing expectations and hopes for what we can realistically achieve within the budget and the capacity. And I think one of the... I'm fortunate when I started because I started my journey with the Football Association in 96, we were at a similar point. There wasn't much funding in the women's game and we, we really needed to... we were starting with a blank sheet of paper in terms of where we wanted to go from a development point

of view. Rounders is in a similar position. It's been going for a long time, but the structure and the real development growth is quite early on in its journey, so we've got to be realistic in what we can do. So it's managing those expectations, my own included, really been to make a difference and make a big transformation. But actually you can't do that. You've got to build the pathways, you've got to build the coaching workforce, you've got to make small steps, you've got to work in partnership and all that takes time. And that's why we've created a ten-year strategy 'Rounders Reconnected' rather than trying to do something in three years and expect it all to be done. We know we're on a journey and we want to set the right foundations, so I think that's the biggest challenge. Gender hasn't been an issue and understanding the wider remit of rounders and things - none of that's been an issue. It's managing those expectations because we want to make a real impact. But you can't do that overnight. You've got to, you've got to plan it.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I think that's a great question. I don't have the stats to be able to say definitely whether there is equality. Now, I feel that there is ... there are women when I'm on a chairs' meeting, there are numerous women that say there's still more men, but I haven't got the data to be able to say that there's a big disparity. Years ago I worked with an amazing woman from Norway called Karen Espelund, who is now on the FIFA executive. And she always said, what you can't do is just have a woman on a board, you've got to have a few and you've got to be able to work across all of the different areas, not just on gender equality. And women have got to be taken seriously in their own right rather than "they are there as the woman", so there's a large work to do. So I would say based on that sort of comment, we don't have gender parity. So we're not there. But I do feel that there is a difference in how it used to be from 10 years ago. I would say I think that depends on the sport. I think maybe in some of the smaller sports, some of the more male dominated sports, you still see a very high male dominated board even with the processes that are being put in place by Sport England and I still say there's some way to go.

## In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

I think it's a really good question. I think it's a few things. One, I do believe in quotas on boards to try and start to make a difference. Now there's some controversy over them, but I do think you have to have that sort of stick sometimes to try and make it happen and prove the impact that it works. I think at the same time, you also need to have awareness and training. And that's equality, equity across all manner not just gender. I don't think you can just force it. You've then got to make sure you support those people who were coming onto the board to understand the roles, to be able to have that wider thing and also understand from the incumbents in the board for them to understand why it makes a difference and how you need people like me represented and whoever that person is, you need to have that wider view on how it actually benefits a board and benefits an organization to have a more wide-ranging world view rather than just a 'male, pale, stale' as there has been for a few, decades, if not more, in some of the boards. And so you need to make the case. So you need the policies you need the case and you need the training. I don't think you can just have one without the other. Otherwise it doesn't, it doesn't have enough substance to to really make an impact.

## Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

I wouldn't say my, the profile of the chair of founders England is going to make a massive impact. But I think across society you need everybody doing their bit. My area is sport. I'm really passionate. I'm really passionate about my daughter's opportunities to be able to play sport. And I think it's important that at whatever level there's opportunity there and then so that people can see there is a career. When I wanted to do a career in sport, in football, there wasn't anybody to look up to. There wasn't anybody I could see in those roles. Now, if someone wanted to move into it, they are there.

So a small part I might be able to play. I wouldn't say that, you know, I'd say that the chair of the Football Association is probably going to have a wider remit, but everybody together, the whole of society changing makes it make a difference. So yeah, I'm very committed to trying to make a difference where I can.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today?

Go for it. Make sure you learn to have an open mind to how to be interested. Make sure you're doing something you care about. And then I think if you care about something, you're going to invest time and energy in it. And I mean, I still think you need to be able to prove yourself that you know what you're talking about. So do your homework. And I think, yeah, then you're in a good position and enjoy it. I think it's such a privilege to be able to be part of any sport. You know, if you talk to anybody in the sport sector they talk about how lucky they are. And I think that really does feel it so if you're there, go for it. It's a wonderful thing to do. But I would always say make sure you do your homework and have that background of knowledge to show your validity and why you should be there.



## Annamarie Phelps

Vice-Chair British Olympic Committee and  
Former Chair, British Horseracing Authority

## What role does sport play in your life?

o suppose sport has been quite transformative in my life. I started working in the art world and sport was my hobby as an athlete. And slowly, sport and sport administration took over. Now I work and my career is in sport administration and the art world is my hobby.

## When and how did you first get involved in the sport you currently represent?

So prior to being appointed as chair of the British Horseracing Authority, I was a regular but not frequent visitor to horse races. I had a very good friend who- his father had horses, and we would go regularly during our teenage and early twenties years. And then from then, not very often, but having been through the appointment process, obviously my three years as chairman were very intensely involved.

## What is your opinion on the current level of female participation in sport organizations?

I think that there are a surprising number of very strong female representatives in sport. But I would say that in general, there isn't a high enough percentage compared to the population and compared to the number of women involved in sport generally. And I think that there are some inconsistencies in the way that they're appointed and the sorts of roles that they get appointed to. Depending on whether we're talking about governance type roles or executive functions.





that's... times on average, we've got six races in this country. And really trying to... and also the... list, obviously, quite simply, you now, to put together the list of... and there are more detailed nuances about which types of races and and, you know, dividing up between different surfaces. But in general, the same, the same as most but most sport governing bodies, but complicated by the fact we've got two sets of athletes.

## What are the main challenges you have faced since taking on your current role?

I would say that some of the main challenges for horse racing as a sport rather than necessarily the British Horseracing Authority as an organization, are the, it is what's called the tripartite governance structure. So the British Horseracing Association, the BHA is one third of the decision making on quite a few quite big decisions. And then the other two parties to that one, are the participants, what's called the thoroughbred group, but the, the jockeys, the trainers, the owners who will sit on one bit and then the racecourses who are the commercial organizations who own the media rights and who, where most of the money comes in and trying to balance the interests of those three groups of people and ensure the long term interests of the sport, you know, are cared for so that we still have horse racing in 20 years time, can be quite challenging.

## What is your opinion on the participation of women in the management of a Federation?

I would say that, yes, in general, on a governance perspective, those women that are involved in that aspect of sport is listened to and taken seriously. I would say that probably other aspects of the sport is less balanced. So coaching, commercial side of things- it tends to be an over balance of females on welfare and wellbeing type issues. And then, you know, sort of corporate governance is somewhere, somewhere in the middle of that.

In your opinion, what other measures could be taken to promote gender equality in the governing bodies of sport?

Oh gosh, I have always been rather against quotas and targets and things, because I always felt that nobody would want to be that woman that didn't win an election or wasn't considered the best, but got in because of their gender. However, recent experience has shown me that actually it can make a big difference to the way that people look for candidates for roles. So I think that my experience is that you don't get anybody who is not experienced enough, but actually it makes people think much more broadly about the skills that are needed. And perhaps we really ought to be using this to try and force the issue. In general, though, I'm of the view that these sorts of roles shouldn't be those sorts of policies shouldn't be about helping women to get onto boards. Actually, what we need is we need to change the culture of boards and change the culture of organizations, so that they're much more welcoming and that they value the things that women bring to them, to those organizations, rather than trying to change the women so that they can fit into the board.

Do you think your role in the Federation helps to promote gender equality in society in general? If yes, how and if not, why not?

Goodness. I wouldn't begin to think that my role in sport is going to change society in any way. But I do hope that it helps other women who aspire to be involved in sport to see that it is possible for women, a woman, to lead an organization or to be at the helm of it.

## What advice would you give to other women taking on a role like yours today

If it was their first position on a board in a sport or organization, I would suggest that they really try and spend quite a bit of time understanding the full breadth of that sport. Quite often when women come into sport, they'll- they'll be brought in some because they're a former athlete, for example, and they may not have quite such good knowledge of grassroots sport or of the club part of the sport or whatever else, depending on what their experience is. So I would say be sure to really understand as best you can, all the aspects you need to do, but be confident and always listen. Never speak first. And if you feel very strongly about something, then you have to sort of really make your point and press on it until and make sure that it's minuted. Always make sure everything you say is minuted because you want to be sure that your point is put across and you can go back to them later.



Conclusions

## Conclusions

This guide is one of the main results of the GESPORT Project. It seeks to strengthen equality between men and women in decision-making in sports organizations across Europe. The primary aim is to improve women's access to the governing board of all sports Federations under Erasmus+ sports actions. The guide explores some thoughts about the impact that the GESPORT team hope to produce by sharing this set of different narratives of women directors in sports. The interviews will allow us to compare the experiences of women sports directors and identify their difficulties in becoming and maintaining their leadership positions on the sports boards. These women also identified measures and policies to promote gender equality in sports governing bodies. Moreover, by taking into account the experiences of female directors who have overcome the glass ceiling, i.e., the barriers that women face in their attempt to scale the hierarchy of organizations (Thornton & Etbarria, 2014) or the glass cliff, that is to say, gender discrimination which female executives face when they achieve leadership positions (Ahn & Cunningham, 2020), this project aims to empower other women in their career advancement. The guide will help women who currently hold positions of responsibility in the NSFs by sharing their experiences and visions on the sports boards. Moreover, it will benefit sportswomen who want to get involved in the governance of sports organizations. The experiences of female directors can help other women to focus more directly on their professional careers. Additionally, the guide will benefit other stakeholders involved in the sports field by allowing them to become aware of the limited presence of women in the processes of strategic decision-making, especially politicians. Sports organizations may adopt the results of the interviews to inform action towards advancing gender equality. Further, raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and the inclusion of gender diversity issues may increase the efficiency of boards of directors. Driane & Claringbould (2014, p. 28) indicated that "gender equality in sport leadership will benefit women, men and sport organizations".

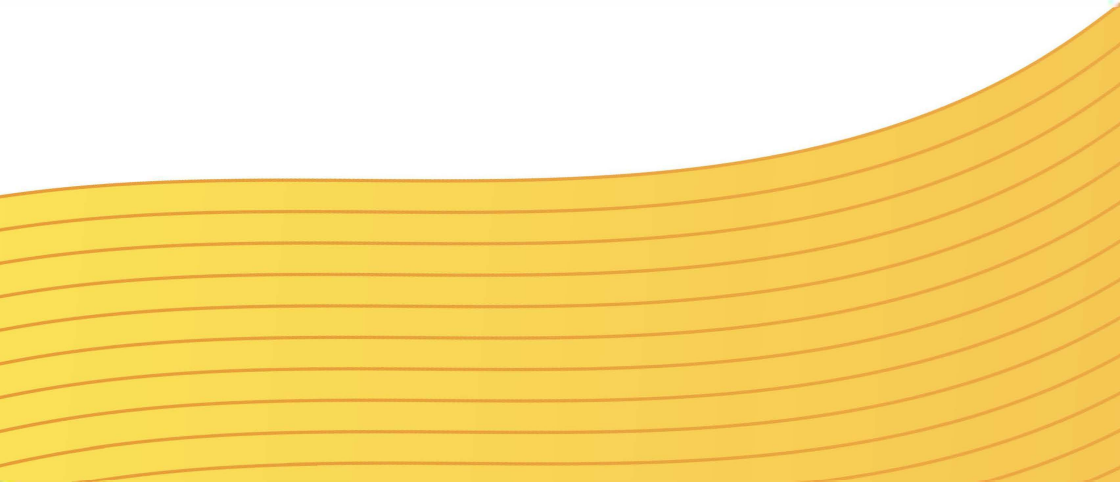
The experiences of the women interviewed will support other women who want to advance their careers to positions of responsibility. Moreover, diversity has other advantages. In addition to promoting equality between men and women, it can also impact board governance by bringing new ideas and perspectives to those boards (Adams & Ferreira, 2009) and allow an expanding diversity and inclusion culture on the board. The methodology of this book offers women in responsible positions in sports the opportunity to share their experience with those interested in the field of gender diversity and good governance in sports, as well as spreading their valuable knowledge. A better understanding of the representation of women on the boards of directors in European sporting organizations could identify which gender policies can be proposed and improved, both by the EU and by individual member countries, to increase women's participation in leadership positions. Making visible the experiences of women in the field of sport, their roles on the boards of directors, the problems and limitations they face in their daily professional lives, can help other women to better manage their careers in the contexts where the decision-making process is driven, especially on the boards of directors. By sharing the experiences of these women directors, we hope that visibility and recognition of their diverse experiences will result, helping to deconstruct the gender stereotypes of women in power or related to feminine leadership. We hope that these women may be role models to future generations. Given the responses of the participating women presidents, vice-presidents and members of boards of NSFs, we believe that the interviews have a tangible effect on people's minds and have managed to create change. The videos of women in positions of responsibility for sports governance will help to promote tolerance, inclusion and diversity in European NSFs. We believe the content of the interviews presented in this guide will inspire new project proposals focusing on the relationship between gender equality, diversity and sports boards in other countries. This project may well open the doors for more women to be on the boards of sports organizations across Europe in the future.

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