

Women taking the lead – Action plan for increasing the number of women in leadership positions in German sport organizations

The German top performance sports has always been very successful with female athletes, as at last demonstrated by the results of the Winter Olympics 2002 in Salt Lake City. But that is only half of the truth - mass sport for women is as well getting more and more important in Germany. More than 10 Million girls and women are organized by the German sports clubs, that are about 40 % of the members. But on the other site only about 10 % of the leading persons of the national sports federations are female. And this concerns especially the honorary functions. For example in the second biggest German professional federation, the German Gymnastic Federation (*Deutscher Turner-Bund*), 3,4 Million of the 4,8 Million members are female, which is a proportional part of nearly 71 %. In the leading positions of the German Gymnastic Federation such as the chairmanships the structure of gender participation is just the opposite: about 70 % are men, 30 % are women. This lack of women in leading positions of the German sports organizations caused the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth to support the project “Women taking the lead”, aiming to analyse the situation and the reasons for it on one hand and on the other to help women within the sports organizations with special programs to work for changes.

In 2001, the project “Women taking the lead” was initiated in Germany as a joint project involving the Free University of Berlin and the NOC for Germany. The general responsibility have the professors Dr. Gudrun Doll-Tepper and Dr. Dr. Gertrud Pfister. From December 2003 on, we cooperate with the German Sports Confederation (*Deutscher Sportbund*).

“Women taking the lead” has both scientific and practical components. The overall aims of the program are to:

- Increase the number of women in leadership positions in sport in Germany
- Offer equal access to women at the decision making level
- Benefit from the wealth of women’s experiences and competencies
- Reduce the deficit of persons available for leadership positions.

The general questions that should be answered by the results of the theoretical and empirical research are:

- What are the reasons of the lack of women in leading positions in German sports organizations? Is this gender difference more likely caused by special female and

masculine personality traits, especially by different motives or attitudes concerning a career in leadership positions, or by the organizational structure of the sports federations itself?

- What could be done for the training of new female recruits, and where, in the first place, could these recruits be found?

In order to gather information, the following studies have been undertaken and the fieldwork is completed:

- Meta-analysis of existing studies
- Structural analysis of selected sport federations
- Qualitative interviews with women in leading sports positions and female and masculine experts concerning the motives, attitudes, barriers and wishes of women and men in honorary leading functions of the sports federations
- Representative evaluation of all leaders in the chairmanships of all German sports federations concerning their careers in profession, sports and honorary functions (questionnaires sent to all persons in leadership positions in German sport organizations)
- Representative evaluation of female trainers in the German Gymnastic Federation.

The following studies are planned:

- Qualitative interviews with “drop-outs” (*Why did they quit their leadership position?*)
- Qualitative interviews with former female competitive athletes (*Are they interested to get a leadership position in a sports federation?*).

The practical work started with a meeting in December, 2001, where the representatives of 16 sports federations discussed:

- specific requirements for increased awareness in the boards and national federations,
- the development of a women’s network in the boards, and
- special programs such as mentoring and gender mainstreaming.

Each federation has since analysed its own situation and collected information about the women working within the organization. If desired, the national federations are assisting women in making career plans. Further information about mentoring as well as about gender mainstreaming has been given to the cooperating federations. One of the most important aspects

in this program to date has been to convince the leaders in the sports organizations of the necessity of this project by pointing out that all measures taken are just part of systematic personnel development and thus is a benefit of the whole sports organization. The project “Women taking the lead” helps to implement these ideas, to build up the network and to spread information about this work, especially by the internet (www.femtotop.de).

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