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THE BRIGHTON DECLARATION – accelerating national policies on gender equality in sport: A case report from Finland

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The International Working group on Women and Sport (IWG) was established in 1994 at the first World Conference on Women and Sport held in Brighton, England. The legacy of the conference was the Brighton Declaration (on Women and Sport) adopted by the 280 participants from eighty-two countries, and the rationale for establishing the IWG was to ensure that the legacy of the conference was sustained. IWG is today still an active independent body with the objective of promoting and facilitating the developments of opportunities for girls and women in sport and physical activity throughout the world. The 6th IWG World conference will be organized in Helsinki, Finland in 2014.

One key message of the declaration is that despite growing participation of women in sport and increased opportunities for women to participate in domestic and international arenas (although it varies between countries), increased representation of women in decision-making and leadership roles within sport has not followed. At the time of the Brighton conference, women were significantly under-represented in management, coaching and officiating, particularly at the higher levels and our analysis shows that they still are. The message of the declaration was that without women leaders, decision makers and role models, equal opportunities for women and girls will not be achieved.

The overriding aim of the declaration is to develop a sporting culture that enables and values the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport. The declaration includes ten principles under the following titles.

Equality between women and men is a crucial part of the Finnish welfare state model, something which is significant with respect to the development of gender equality in the Finnish context. Today, Finnish women are actively involved in most societal sectors, but there are still areas where men hold a decidedly dominant position. Sport stands out as one sector within which, especially with respect to management and leadership positions, women are still under-represented despite some determined efforts.

My presentation today provides an overview of significant actions taken in Finland during the 1995-2010 period in response to this gender gap in sport-related fields. When considering the Finnish context as a whole – some significant aspects present themselves and can be summarized as follows:

The Brighton Declaration gave a boost to equality work in Finland. The first step was to intensify the work of the “Women on the Move” network, an open forum where women from various sports sectors could join, meet, share experiences, and learn from and support one another. This network very soon formed a consensus on the need for more gender-related knowledge and actions based on these insights. The networked turned to the minister of culture and sport, asking her to take action, which in turn resulted in the appointment of the “Spikes Committee”. Members of the committee came from different sectors of sporting life and expertise, representing both genders. According to the committee’s report, leadership dynamics within sport professions can be described as such:

- the more highly valued the positions are, the fewer the women
- the closer competitive sport the positions are, the fewer women
- the higher the positions are hierarchically, the fewer women.

The committee presented nine recommendations to facilitate the development of a more diverse and pluralistic sporting culture so that all girls and boys, women and men would have equal opportunities to participate, act and make decisions in sport.

One immediate consequence was that the Ministry of Education and Culture took up in cooperation with FSF the annual continuation of the Spikes Award, recognizing exceptional work in the field of equality. This monetary award recognizes women, men and organizations and also brings media visibility to the importance of equality in sports culture.

The next significant step was the drafting of the Common Goal Equality Programme by the Finnish Sport Federation, which was then launched in 1998. One of its objectives was that both genders would

comprise at least forty percent of the FSF board and other committees, thus setting forth concrete, objective and measurable aims in terms of the number of women included in decision-making bodies. With respect to the FSF board, this goal was attained in 2002 and has since varied, reaching up to forty-seven percent in 2005 and is currently thirty-nine percent. At the same time, it was in turn recommended to FSF member organizations that gender balance be taken into account in the nominations of their board and committee members there be at least forty percent of men and women on all decision-making bodies. Here much still remains to be accomplished.

As women's leadership was considered to be a particularly significant problem, a mentoring program was launched in 1995 with the support of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and ended in 2000. During these five years, fifty-three women took part the program. Out of the women who participated in the project, many now work in the area of sports management. Since then, some sports federations have launched their own mentoring programs.

Finnish sports law was revised in 1998 and was supplemented with basic values, which should be taken into account when applying sport legislation. In the revised law, it is stated that, "the law's purpose is to promote equality and tolerance through sport." This obligation in particular encouraged the government to promote equality in all of its own actions but also gave the public administration a tool to take gender issues into consideration in its actions related to sports policy. This was an important addition to sports legislation and its emphasis was brought to consideration at those tables where women and men come together to decide on sport policy priorities and practical actions.

Although gender equality work in the field of physical activity had been carried out for a relatively long time, it was noticed in 2004 that gender impact assessment should be applied as a new approach to promote gender equality. The Ministry of Education and Culture instated a working group to submit a proposal for gender impact assessment procedures for physical activity. Some of the key recommendations include the following.

Interestingly, a link was established between gender equality and resource allocation with respect to sport, and it was emphasized that the gender equality aspect be assessed in the government's budget preparation, namely in areas such as sports bodies, sports facility construction, local sport services, sport research, education and training. One very important recommendation was that the Ministry of Education should take gender equality into account in new criteria for performance-based resource allocation in line with the principle of mainstreaming. The overall aim was to include gender aspects in the preparation of all sports matters and relevant decision-making. It was also emphasized that all statistics be systematically broken down according to gender and that statistical reports published regularly. As a result monitoring of this gender perspective was incorporated into a periodic Gallup-poll concerning regular participation in sport and physical activity. Many of the recommendations are implemented but, for example, budget preparation still needs to be developed further.

In 2004 FSF adopted the document, "Fair Play – the ethical principles of sport." The document takes a broad-based approach to equality that considers gender equality cross-sectionally as a part of all equality discussions. This was certainly a well-founded outlook but its result was that in operational work, the promotion of gender equality did not receive targeted attention.

Towards the end of the first decade of 2000, a renewal of coach and manager training was initiated. At the Ministry of Education and Culture's initiative, the project was one of the governments's pilot projects in political mainstreaming, and it received particular public support as part of the government's overall policy measures in relation to gender equality. The training program is under preparation and strives to take into consideration a gender perspective. In addition, next autumn a women's training center is scheduled to be established. Also sport federations such as the Finnish Athletics Association have strengthened their programming in the area of training for women.

On the subject of research, FSF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture, has recently committed to a research study to assess the role of men and women in sports culture. During this year we expect to receive a renewed basis of knowledge for further development.

Work on the national level has been the main focus, however, influencing international activities and thereby gaining new enthusiasm for work on the domestic front was also strived for. Finland was elected to chair the European Women and Sport Network in 1998-2000. EWS membership rose significantly, and a successful conference, "Women, Sport and Culture – How to Change Sports Culture," was organized with a total of two hundred and fifty participants from forty-seven countries. The preparation of the EWS conference and, of course, the conference itself along with the Finnish president's conference

speech brought the situation of girls and women to a wider consciousness. Jacques Rogge's participation in one of the conference's panel discussions also drew men to the conference, which was seen as important.

The next international effort was to organize a European seminar on Sexual Harassment in Sports in 2001 as part of the Council of Europe's program. The focus was to raise awareness of the protection of children, young people and women from sexual abuse and harassment within the context of sport. One of the concrete results was the FSF "Allowed to care – allowed to intervene" guidebook on how to prevent sexual harassment in sports. This publication has been since used in the education and training of professionals, volunteers and parents.

In 2008 the annual meeting of the International Working Group on Women and Sport along with an international seminar was organized in Anttola, Finland, where the Anttola Declaration was adopted. Alongside five other applicants, the Finnish Sports Federation applied for and was eventually selected to host the IWG Co-Chairpersonship and Secretariat and act as steward of the 6th World Conference on Women and Sport. We believe that this work ushers in a new phase of national equality efforts and represents an opportunity to further strengthen cooperation between women and men, domestically and internationally.

In conclusion:

- Equality work requires constant, active monitoring, considerable effort and inspiration. Only through cooperation with men can results be achieved. However, there is the need for networking amongst women in order to support one another.
- Through legislation, rules and norms the promotion of equality can be included in the long-term agenda and be taken into consideration in development activities.
- The basis of knowledge must be sound in order to demonstrate the state of affairs and to justify measures to rectify the situation.
- Resources – financial and human – need to be allocated for the promotion of gender equality and its related activities.
- The promotion gender equality needs to be approached as a specific aim and pursuing activities that are simply related to gender are not on their own sufficient. More knowledge, insight and targeted measures focused specifically on gender issues are needed.
- International projects can also spur action at the domestic level and incorporate new people from various sectors of society.
- Through the granting of awards we can recognize the valuable work being done to promote gender equality in physical activity.