



FREE

Football Research in
an Enlarged Europe

**Brussels
Committee of
the Regions
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Still a man's game?

**Summary of research findings
on women in football**

**Prof. Gertrud Pfister, Svenja-Maria Mintert
University of Copenhagen**

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Policy context (1): Traditionally, a man's game

A sport that was long forbidden to women

- ➊ A promising start between the 1880s and the beginning of the 1920s
- ➋ Decline and ban in the 1920s
- ➌ 1969: UEFA recommends national associations take charge of women's football
- ➍ Most national bans lifted (only) by 1972



Policy context (2): EU strategy for equality

EU Strategy 2010-2015 for equality between women and men

- ⑤ 5 thematic priorities – 3 are relevant to football
 - Equality in decision-making
 - Horizontal issues (gender mainstreaming)
 - Dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence
- ⑤ Key actions from the Commission include
 - Promote good practice on gender roles in youth, education, culture and sport

A combination of research methods

- ④ Quantitative CATI (telephone) survey, representative population samples (“general public”) in all 9 target countries (n=7 245)
- ④ Quantitative online survey of football fans (“attentive public”) across 6 countries: France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Turkey, UK (n=11 384)
- ④ Qualitative research with female supporters interviews and background research
- ④ The statements in the surveys provided insights into the “standing” of women’s football (also in comparison to the men’s game)

Women's football today: The Ups! 😊

The number of players is growing, e.g.

- 🌍 In Denmark 21% of all football players are girls and women

Increased support from national associations

- 🌍 Most European countries have a women's football league
- 🌍 Some countries have a comprehensive development plan (e.g. Germany and France)

Women's football's Champions League and the World Cup are becoming mega-events

- 🌍 Public attention and media coverage is on the increase for both events

Women's football today

The Downs ☹

Few top players are professionals

- ☉ Only a handful of women's teams have reached a professional status (Frankfurt, PSG...) in France and in Germany
- ☉ Most teams and players are at best semi-professionals

Budgets are tiny

- ☉ Only 3 European clubs have a budget over 1 million € for their women's team
- ☉ Some top clubs have a budget below 50 000 €

Obstacles to development (1): Media & Supporters

Media coverage remains overall limited

- ☉ ‘Our audience doesn’t want to see that’
(typical broadcaster response...)
- ☉ Sponsors don’t invest without media coverage and “stars”

Fundamentally: a lack of supporters

- ☉ Attendance figures rise but remain low
- ☉ ‘Life is too short for women’s football’ (statement of female fan!)
- ☉ 22,8% of European respondents are interested in women’s football
- ☉ 51,3% are interested in men’s football
- ☉ Gate receipts are the tiniest source of income for women’s teams

Obstacles to development (2): Football is a men's sport

The audience of the sport is mostly male

- ☉ Only 10% of the attentive public were women
- ☉ **66,8%** of men love or like football vs. **36,5%** of women (CATI survey)

Women are not interested in women's football

- ☉ And less so than the men!
 - 27,3% of men are interested or very interested in women's football
 - 18,6% of women are interested in women's football (CATI survey)

The football stadium is a male preserve

- ☉ Male fans reject women's fans
 - 'I don't think women should be in the stadium'
- ☉ Male fans are prejudiced against women
 - 'Women are incapable of understanding the rules'
- ☉ Female fans are subject to verbal abuse in fan chants
 - 'XXX, we are here. We screw your women and drink your beer'



Responses to male domination (1)

Internalising sexism

Female fans embrace the male fans' culture

- ☉ comply with habits and rules / act as 'companions'
- ☉ most female fans join existing groups with a male majority

Female fans embrace sexism

- ☉ 'It's part of the supporters' culture' / 'That's how it is...'

Female fans trivialize sexism

- ☉ 'Fan chants are fun' / 'not serious' / 'we don't mean it'
- ☉ 'When the cheerleaders come and they sing "Get your tits out for the lads", they don't sing about me. [...] I also sing along, by the way. Because it's not about me.'



Responses to male domination (2)

Opposing sexism – doing gender

Establishment of female-only fan groups

- Examples: ‘Pink Lions’ or ‘Female Vikings’ in Denmark

‘Feminine’ fan groups

- ‘We wanted to show that we are women, but also like football. [...] We wanted to make the logo as feminine as possible, so that there’s no doubt what this is about.’

Challenging/rejecting sexism in the stadium

- ‘Football is a chauvinist sport. [...] That’s why we want to say, “Hey, if you are chauvinists, we just do our own thing



Policy Recommendations (1)

Playing

- ④ Key Action from the European Commission: ‘promote good practice on gender roles in youth, education, culture and sport’.
- ④ In line with this objective, every Member State should implement a plan that ensures a girl or woman of any age who wants to play football is in a position to do so.
- ④ Encouragement through
 - Mapping clubs with female football teams in each Member State
 - Identifying gaps in the territories
 - Setting targets for the creation of female football teams, within existing clubs or within other institutions (school, university, ...)
 - Identifying and disseminating good practices for setting up women’s football clubs or teams at all levels

Policy Recommendations (2)

Governance

- ④ In line with the EU ‘Strategy for Equality’ thematic priority: ‘Equality in decision-making’ should be improved.
- ④ Taking inspiration from the French example, where
 - national sports associations must include women on their board, in proportion of the number of female licensed player, with a minimum of one seat (article L. 124-1 du Code du Sport)
 - the Ministry of Sports only recognises national sports associations which put into practice a plan for the feminisation of sport, which includes promoting inclusivity at every level (national, regional, local)
- ④ Demanding that
 - the board of every football association (continental or national) and the board of every professional football club must include at least one woman, and a representation of women that is consistent with the proportion of female licensees in football for the country.
- ④ Encouraging
 - the training and promotion of female referees; female coaches;
 - the appointment of women in leadership positions at all levels.

Policy Recommendations (3)

Media

- ④ The European Union should encourage media coverage of women's football by
- ④ Encouraging every Member State, under the review of the European Institute for Gender Equality, to
 - Review the place and tone dedicated to the coverage of women's football
 - Take action to encourage women's football/sports being broadcast on a par with men's sports especially on public channels paid through taxes
 - Take action (“naming and shaming”) against any form of sexist abuse levelled at women in football in the media (esp. on television)
- ④ Endorsing initiatives like the *Journée Internationale du Sport Féminin (International Women Sports Day)*: 24 hours dedicated to women's sports
- ④ Creating a fund (abounded by a percentage of TV rights on men's football) to help finance the coverage of women's football by television

Policy Recommendations (4) Monitoring

- ④ In line with the ‘Strategy for Equality’ thematic priority ‘dignity, integrity and an end to gender violence’, the EU should
 - Assign the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) the duty to monitor and publish a yearly report on sexist abuse received by women’s fans in the stadiums
 - Take part in anti-discrimination action at European level (UEFA) and within Member States in order to ensure that sexism is not trivialised but seen as equally important as other forms of discriminations





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Roundtable

Marie-Luise Klein (Ruhr Universität Bochum)

Alexandre Mestre (Sport and Citizenship)

Gertrud Pfister (University of Copenhagen)

Stacey Pope (Durham University)

Sandra Schwedler (FC Sankt Pauli)

moderated by

David Ranc (ESSCA School of Management, Angers)

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