

# **Women at the Top**

**- on women, sport and management**

**Third sub-report: the first results**

**Gertrud Pfister in cooperation with Laila Ottesen  
and Ulla Habermann**

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**Institute for Exercise and Sport Sciences**  
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**Third sub-report: The First Results**  
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# 1. Introduction

The basis of this project is the lack of female leaders in sports associations, a global phenomenon which also exists in Denmark (cf. “Women at the Top” – on Women, Sport and Management. *First sub-report: Mapping*”).

Danish women are as active athletes as men, but women participate to a very little degree in the decision-making processes in sport. It ought to be possible to make better use of women’s experience and skills so as to give women better opportunities for influence and codetermination within sports associations. A more balanced representation of women and men at all levels would on the one hand make the sports associations more democratic and on the other hand improve the variations in political decisions made in these organisations. Participation by women as well as men in all jobs and at all levels does not only live up to the organisation culture of the future and the demand for inclusion and democracy, but fulfils also national and international intentions of gender equality (cf. “Women at the Top – on Women, Sport and Management. *Second sub-report: Women in Sports Management – a comparative analysis of international trends*”). In countries such as Denmark and Germany where the sports organisations – from associations to confederations – are founded upon the principles of democracy, self-determination, voluntariness and reciprocity, there is an on-going discussion whether it will still be possible to attract volunteers to participate in sports administration and leadership. Today, there is no lack of volunteers, but the question is whether in the future Denmark will be able to maintain the high level of commitment to voluntary work despite changes in society, globalization processes in particular. A way to meet future problems of recruiting voluntary leaders is to motivate women, who today make up an unexploited potential, to take on leadership positions at different levels and within different fields. Part of this study focuses therefore upon the opportunities and problems which current and potential female leaders encounter. In order to recruit new voluntary leaders and keep the current leaders, it is very important to acquire knowledge about present sports leaders’ positive and negative experiences, their wishes, opinions and their evaluations of the working conditions within the decision-making bodies of Danish sports associations.

The results of this study provide knowledge of the situation for both male and female leaders, who have also been asked to describe their careers and comment on subject such as: voluntary work, their tasks, the sports structure in general as well as their own association specifically. Thus, the results of this study can be used as basis for discussions on the future of voluntary leadership and as an instrument to develop new perspectives.

Women’s studies usually include men and gender relations. In this study, however, we have not only included men as control group, we have also wanted to draw a general picture of leaders in Danish sports associations – independent of their gender.

## 2. Overall Objectives

The overall objectives of this study are to:

- map the extent of women's representation in boards and committees
- reconstruct/explore the female leaders' careers as well as their positive and negative experiences in this role
- analyse the reasons for women's under-representation in management positions
- collect information on male and female leaders' life stories/biographies, living condition, opinions, behavioural patterns, as well as their experience, motivation and evaluation of being leaders within a sports association

As first step we have studied gender relations within Danish sports associations at national and regional levels and made a report on these results (cf. "Women at the Top" – on Women, Sport and Management. *First sub-report: Mapping*"). Besides, we have collected data on women's leadership positions in international sports federations and national sports associations in other Scandinavian countries, Germany, the USA and Australia. Even though the over-representation/dominance of men in the decision-making bodies is a phenomenon common to all the countries studied, it is possible to prove crucial differences in the representation of women in leadership positions, which is the result of the countries' sports political development, sports structures, systems and policies. For example, a higher share of women in the decision-making bodies of Norwegian sports associations is the consequence of a quota system introduced in 1987. An overview of these results is published in our second report (cf. "Women at the Top – on Women, Sport and Management. *Second sub-report: Women in Sports Management – a comparative analysis of international trends*").

### 3. Theoretical Considerations

The theoretical part of the project is based upon different concepts and perspectives: an organisation theory approach, where gender is considered an important factor for the culture and the structure of the organisation; an individual approach where focus is on women's and men's motives and reasons for (voluntary) leadership, and finally a social approach where the notions of social and cultural capital are included in the analysis of a participant profile in the democratic organisations and in the network structures of civil society (cf. biography). This report provides an overview of the first results of the questionnaire and contains a general description of the sports leaders' statements with specific focus on gender differences. The interpretation of the results in this report will focus on certain important problems. In-depth and differentiated analyses and studies focusing on several different aspects will be published at a later date.



## 4. Study Design

We have chosen a quantitative approach and to do a survey through a questionnaire containing mainly closed questions. The choice of survey as method has made it possible to include all female leaders and approximately half of the male leaders in the three main organisations: the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF), the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI), the Danish Workers' Sports Federation (DFIF). The questionnaire has been developed on the basis of the objective of the study, the theoretical approaches and the research group's experience in cooperation with the sports leaders in our "back-up group". Besides, we have included questions from a questionnaire developed for a similar project in Germany, which has provided us with the possibility of conducting an international comparison.

The questions asked touch upon life stories, opportunities and barriers on the way to – on in – a leadership position, requirements and qualifications/education, tasks, reactions (formal and informal), attitude towards the sports organisation, evaluations, plans for the future etc.

The questionnaire was sent to more than 2000 female leaders at regional and national levels above local associations and to a selection of male leaders. We have sent out a total of 3613 questionnaires and two reminders. 126 questionnaires were returned due to wrong addresses. 1882 questionnaires were returned by respondents, providing a reply rate of 54 per cent. Of these, 12 per cent had to be left out of the study for different reasons, among other things lack of core information. In total, we have had 1656 viable and completed questionnaires at our disposal. In view of the quite comprehensive questionnaire, the replay rate is acceptable for this type of study.

## 5. Results

In the first part of the report we will provide an overview of the respondents' socio-demographic background, their experience, opinions and evaluations in relation to their leadership positions. In the second part of the report we will present the respondents' statements on gender relations, and the third part of the report will focus on the differences between male and female leaders.

### 5.1. Who are they, the Voluntary Leaders of Danish Sports?

#### *Demography*

With a very few exceptions, Danish sports leaders are Danish nationals. Less than 1 per cent of the leaders did not hold a Danish passport.<sup>1</sup>

The career as a leader is often based upon a long-time commitment, consisting of several steps. As can be seen from table 1, the majority of present (asked) leaders in the Danish sports associations are therefore middle aged<sup>2</sup>: 84 per cent of the respondents are aged 30 and above, and more than half of voluntary leaders (52 per cent) are between 40 and 60 years, only 16 per cent are under 30 years, and 16 per cent are above 60. When Danish sports leaders reach retirement, they also end their careers as voluntary leaders in sport.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Distribution of leaders by age**

Age	Number	Percentage
Below 30 years	263	15.9 per cent
30-39 years	269	16.2 per cent
40-49 years	421	25.4 per cent
50-59 years	447	27.0 per cent
Above 60 years	256	15.5 per cent
Total	1656	100.0 per cent

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<sup>1</sup> The following principles are used for calculating percentages: "no answers" are not included. When the basis is all respondents (N=1656), reference is made as "all the leaders in the survey" if this is not clear from the context. In certain cases it is relevant to study part of the group in which case this will be mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> Please note our limitation of leadership level as described in chapter 4 as we only include leaders at regional and national levels – not local level.

<sup>3</sup> Studies indicate however, that voluntary sports leaders continue participating in voluntary work, for example within welfare (Habermann 2001).

With regard to marital status and family relations it seems that the respondents differ from the Danish population in general: 75 per cent are married or living with a partner, 18 per cent are single, 5 per cent are divorced, and 2 per cent are widows/widowers. The most recent numbers from Statistics Denmark show 37 per cent single (including divorcees, widows/widowers) and 68 per cent married or living with a partner<sup>4</sup>. There is a small over-representation of married couples or other couples among the leaders of our survey, which could indicate that having a family does not keep them from being voluntary leaders. However, this difference can also be explained – partly – by differences in age groups. A relatively high share (37 per cent) of the respondents has children living at home, and 85 per cent of the respondents who is in a relationship have a working partner.

### *Socio-economic background*

Danish sports leaders are mainly recruited from the upper middle class. This can be seen by the leaders' housing conditions: 57 per cent live in privately owned one-family houses, 10 per cent in privately owned farmhouses and 5 per cent in privately owned flats. Only 28 per cent live in a rented house or flat, this share of the Danish population being in general 47 per cent (Statistical Yearbook 2004, 324).

The sports leaders' social background is reflected by their educational levels which is well above average for the respondents: table 2 shows that 58 per cent has a university degree and only 12 per cent has no other education than basic school. For comparison, only 20 per cent of the Danish population in general has finished medium-cycle or long-cycle higher education (Statistical Yearbook 2004, 105).

**Table 2: Leaders' educational level**

Educational level	Number	Percentage
Basic school (7 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> grade)	193	12.8 per cent
General upper secondary education	177	11.8 per cent
Vocational education and training	258	17.2 per cent
Medium-cycle higher education (3 years)	387	25.8 per cent
Long-cycle higher education (3 years+)	487	32.4 per cent
Total	1502	100.0 per cent

The respondents' employment can also be seen as an indicator of their high social status and their wide variety of skills: 5 per cent are self-employed, 52 per cent salaried employees/civil servants, 10 per cent skilled workers, and 10 per cent students. Only 6 per cent are unskilled workers and 2 per cent are unemployed. 13 per cent are retired. 29 per cent of the respondents had a management position with subordinate staff, but almost half of these had less than six subordinates.

<sup>4</sup> News from Statistics Denmark. Subject: Population and elections. Households and families. 1 Januar 2005. No. 89, 25. February 2005.

**Table 3: Leaders' main job**

Main job	Number	Percentage
Self-employed	85	5.5 per cent
Salaried employee/civil servant	806	52.5 per cent
Skilled worker	160	10.4 per cent
Unskilled worker	89	5.8 per cent
Student	154	10.0 per cent
Pensioner/early retirement-pay	198	12.9 per cent
Unemployed incl. social assistance recipients	30	2.0 per cent
Others (on leave/working at home)	13	0.8 per cent
Total	1535	100.0 per cent

In general, the respondents express great satisfaction with all aspects of their (paid) jobs. Between 85 and 95 per cent answer that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the contents of their job: the prestige, the freedom to plan their own work, the responsibility and the relations to their colleagues. The hypothesis that voluntary leaders compensate for disappointments or dissatisfaction at work through their involvement in voluntary organisations cannot be confirmed when it comes to leaders in sports associations. The impression that Danish sports leaders have a fairly high social status is supported by their own information on income: 86 per cent of the respondents have a family income of more than DKK 400,000, 24 per cent even more than DKK 600,000. In the Danish population as a whole only 30 per cent of Danish households have a family income of more than DKK 400,000, and the average family income is DKK 329,000 (Statistical Yearbook 2004, 218).

The respondents' educational levels, which are above average, and their high social status can be explained by the sports associations' attempts to recruit competent volunteers. It can also be assumed that there is a connection between education, job, work as voluntary leader as well as social and cultural capital (among others Putnam 2000; Ottesen 2004, Habermann 2001).

The Danes' average weekly hours of work are 36 in their main job (Statistical Yearbook 2004, 154). The majority of participants in this study have a full-time job with a work week of 36 hours and above. Only 12 per cent of the respondents work half-time or less and 20 per cent work more than 40 hours per week. Besides, the leaders in this study are also involved in other types of voluntary work than what they carry out for the sports associations. One third of the respondents work as volunteers in other organisations besides their leadership position in a sports association (cf. table 28). This is a large share when it is taken into consideration that they are already very much involved and spend a large amount of time on their voluntary work in sports associations (the majority spends more than ten hours a week). Add to this that 60 per cent say that they help others with different things on a regular basis, for example family members, relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbours. They spend approximately three hours per month on such tasks:

visiting, child caring, conversation, repairing, driving, cleaning, gardening etc. All in all we can conclude that the respondents have a high level of social responsibility and social involvement.

#### *Participation in sports activities*

For the vast majority of leaders, their strong involvement in sports was developed in their childhood as 94 per cent were already active athletes as children or teenagers. 88 per cent of the respondents are active today, 5 per cent plan to be active again, and only 7 per cent do not participate in physical activities.

**Table 4: Sports activity today**

Participates in sports today	Number	Percentage
Yes	1442	88.8 per cent
No	109	6.7 per cent
Not at the moment	88	5.4 per cent
Total	1639	100.0 per cent

75 per cent of all leaders are active athletes in a sports associations, 39 per cent also – or only – participate in unorganised sports and 13 per cent go to the gym. For comparison the numbers for the Danish population as a whole show that the most popular sports activity is “everyday exercise” in which 64 per cent of the population take part. 41 per cent participate in unorganised sports and 34 per cent are members of a sports club (Larsen 2003, 32; 69 ff.). 17 per cent of the Danish population never participate in sports or exercise activities (Larsen 2003, 31).

The close relation to participation in sports is also reflected by the high share of leaders who are or have been involved in tournaments or competitions. Leaders with this background bring knowledge, specific experience and a strong emotional commitment. Besides, athletes at national and international level are well-known to others, perhaps even famous, which makes them more visible and obvious targets for headhunting. If they accept a leadership position, it can be of benefit to both parties as a leadership position brings prestige to the athlete as well as to the organisation. As can be seen from table 5 below, 2 per cent of sports leaders are currently involved in elite sports at international level and 4 per cent used to earlier on in their careers. 4 per cent are currently involved in elite sports at national level while 14 per cent used to be earlier in their careers. 5 per cent are today members of a representation team and 18 per cent used to be earlier in their career. 14 per cent currently participate in other types of competitive sports and 36 per cent used to do so earlier in their careers.

**Table 5: Highest level of participation today and earlier in life**

Highest level	Today		Earlier	
	Number N=1656	Per cent	Number N=1656	Per cent
International elite	28	1.7%	61	3.7%
National elite	63	3.8%	237	14.3%
Representation team	75	4.5%	298	18.0%
Other competitive sports	223	13.5%	593	35.8%
Exercise with participation in tournaments, competitions etc.	784	74.3%	501	30.3%
Exercise without participation in tournaments, competitions etc.	542	32.7%	154	9.3%

The sports mentioned by the respondents reflect the general sports priorities in the Danish society: gymnastics/aerobics (47 per cent), badminton (39 per cent), handball (38 per cent) and soccer (34 per cent).

The number of hours spent on physical activity is quite high compared to the Danish population as a whole: 70 per cent of the sports leaders spend more than two hours per week on sports activities. About 44 per cent of the asked leaders come from active families and have parents who used to be active athletes in a sports association/club. 16 per cent of the mothers and 25 per cent of the fathers had themselves been voluntary coaches, instructors or leaders in a sports association.

The leaders' own families were also involved in sports: 79 per cent of their children are active athletes and 34 per cent are also coaches or leaders in a sports association (cf. table 24). 32 per cent of the respondents have developed an interest in voluntary work in a sports association as a result of their children's participation in sports. Furthermore, 24 per cent of the leaders' have a spouse/partner who is a volunteer in a sports association.

Our results clearly show that physical activity and voluntary work are part of the social heritage, and that both their childhood home and their own families play a very large part in the commitment of voluntary leaders. Because of the leaders' close relations to sport and sports clubs it is not surprising that 35 per cent the respondents, besides having a position at regional/national level also hold a position in a local association where they work as instructors/coaches. In addition to their leadership positions in a sports association, 33 per cent of the leaders are also involved in voluntary work in non-sports related organisations as mentioned above.

## 5.2. Leaders and their Voluntary Work

The vast majority of leaders in Danish sports associations have developed a long-term commitment to their association: 90 per cent have worked for more than five years in their organisation and 70 per cent have even worked as volunteers for more than ten years. On average they have held their current positions for seven years.

Most of the leaders in our survey did not themselves take the initiative to become leaders. According to their answers, 81 per cent were asked to or called upon to take on their current position. The leader biographies of the survey show some typical patterns: most leaders – 79 per cent – started their career by accepting some task or other in a sports association. 36 per cent were asked by board members, 26 per cent were asked by other members of the association and 5 per cent were supported by friends or family.

In general, the first position was at club level: 2029 “first positions” appear from the survey indicating that some of the respondents have had several positions at the same time. 78 per cent of the “first positions” mentioned were at club level. Only few of the Danish sports leaders started their careers at regional level or in a federation. The first job was often as instructor/coach: 45 per cent worked at the beginning of their careers as coaches, assistant coaches or team leaders, but also the position as board member or committee member is mentioned quite often as the starting point for a career as volunteer.

As already mentioned, almost one third of the leaders in the survey were involved in voluntary work, because their children were/are active participants in a club where the leaders then got involved in working with the children. And after the first position, a wide variety of jobs followed within the sports associations, and often more than one at a time – from instructor/coach (60 per cent) to committee member (50 per cent) and executive committee member (48 per cent).

Specific education or training is not a precondition to become a voluntary leader in a Danish sports association, but many of the leaders have such skills: 66 per cent of the leaders in our survey have participated in one or more leadership courses with different subjects and contents, varying from a general introduction to management to bookkeeping. Of these 66 per cent, almost half (48 per cent) have participated in more than five courses. The impression that sports leaders are well equipped for their different jobs is however weakened when you study the duration of the courses: of the respondents who have participated in leadership courses more than half (55 per cent) spent less than 20 days on their management education. 24 per cent spent 20 to 50 days and 21 per cent spent more than 50 days, cf. table 6 below.

**Table 6: Days spent on management courses**

Course days	Number	Percentage
1 to 5 days	141	15.0 per cent
5 to 10 days	184	19.6 per cent
10 to 20 days	192	20.4 per cent
20 to 50 days	225	24.0 per cent
More than 50 days	197	21.0 per cent
Total	939	100.0 per cent

When it comes to the education of sports leaders, the respondents in our survey show us a complex picture. The majority has participated in some kind of education though it was often of quite short duration, but approximately one third has never participated in any courses. Two reasons are decisive for the 508 respondents who have answered that they have not participated in any leadership courses: lack of time and the contents of the courses. 24 per cent criticize the courses for being too time-consuming, and another 24 per cent indicate that the courses are held in the evening or during weekends. 29 per cent explain their lack of interest in management courses by the contents of the courses which they do not find interesting/relevant. Besides, 18 per cent say they have not been asked to participate. To the sports associations it would be a challenge to adapt the time and the contents of the courses to the interests of potential participants and to invest in new ideas for recruiting course participants.

To the question of future plans, only a small part of the leaders (13 per cent) say directly that they do not intend to participate in any future courses: of this group, 86 per cent point out lack of time; 65 per cent point out that their families and children are more important; 58 per cent say that they do not feel like participating in the courses, 51 per cent do not find the courses offered interesting, and 20 per cent base their decision on the fact that they find the courses are not good enough.

On the whole, the majority of the respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the different aspects of the courses: contents, instructor's qualifications, and the organisation. 80 per cent respectively 90 per cent answer that their expectations with regard to the different aspect have been fully or partly fulfilled.

When evaluating the interest for and the commitment to leadership training it is important to take into consideration that a large part of the sports leaders (37 per cent) have some kind of sports education which they have taken prior to or at the same time as the courses. 20 per cent of the leaders in this survey have attended folk high schools specialized in sports, 12 per cent teacher colleges and 5 per cent have a coach education. All in all it seems that sport competences are very high among Danish sports leaders.



*What does it require to be voluntary leader?*

The leadership positions in Danish sports associations are very time-consuming. Table 7 below shows that only 15 per cent of the leaders of the survey spend less than 5 hours per week whereas 62 per cent spend more than 10 hours per week. To 25 per cent it is more than a half-time job, and 12 per cent even spend more than 30 hours per week.

**Table 7: Time spent on voluntary work**

Time	Number	Percentage
Less than 5 hours	254	15.5 per cent
5 to 9 hours	374	22.9 per cent
10 to 15 hours	364	22.3 per cent
16 to 20 hours	231	14.1 per cent
21 to 25 hours	121	7.4 per cent
26 to 30 hours	86	5.3 per cent
More than 30 hours	204	12.5 per cent
Total	1635	100.0 per cent

Time spent on voluntary work is mainly time which would otherwise have been spent with family (61 per cent of all leaders), on other hobbies (44 per cent), or to meet with friends (35 per cent). To the question of distribution of time on different activities the respondents say that during an average week, they spend 30 per cent of their time on primary needs (sleeping, grooming, eating), 28 per cent on their main jobs, 12 per cent on housework, 10 per cent on spare-time activities “in town”, 13 per cent on spare-time activities “at home” and 9 per cent on their jobs as voluntary leaders (cf. table 8 below).

**Table 8: The leaders’ distribution of time in an average week**

Average time spent on:	Percentage N=1365
Primary needs (sleeping, grooming, eating)	30.3 per cent
Main job	27.8 per cent
Housework	12.6 per cent
Voluntary leadership	9.0 per cent
Spare-time activities “in town” (incl. meeting friends, sports, culture etc.)	10.1 per cent
Spare-time activities “at home” (meeting friends, IT, reading etc.)	13.2 per cent

Even though these specifications can be considered subjective estimates, it is clear that voluntary work requires much time and takes up much space in the everyday life of voluntary leaders. The vast majority (96 per cent) of the leaders of sports associations are unpaid. Only a very small share receives pay. 77 per cent of voluntary leaders receive some kind of payment, however. Most of them are compensated for travel costs and some receive compensation for other costs.

### 5.3. Problems or barriers

Approximately half of the leaders in our project have experienced barriers or problems in their work in one of the sports federations. The main problem is the time they spend on their management position in the sports association. 44 per cent of the respondents say they agree fully or partly that voluntary work takes up too much time. 23 per cent state that they do not have time enough left for their own sports activities and 19 per cent that they do not have time enough left for their families. 17 per cent are of the opinion that meetings in the evenings and during weekends pose a problem. 8 per cent say they feel the executive committee seems “closed” and 6 per cent state that they do not receive sufficient support from the paid staff of the association. Other problems mentioned in the survey such as limited financial support or the relationship to other leaders do not seem to pose a problem to the majority of the leaders (cf. table 17).

The time factor is also mentioned in another question regarding advantages and disadvantages for voluntary leaders with regard to their main job. Frictions or conflicts between the voluntary work and the main job may arise, which has an effect on the voluntary leaders’ situation. A majority of the respondents are convinced that the voluntary work has an influence upon their work/education (cf. table 9 below).

**Table 9: Has voluntary work implied advantages/disadvantages in relation to main job/education?**

Advantages/disadvantages	Number	Percentage
Yes	712	44.5 per cent
No	612	38.2 per cent
Both yes and no	229	14.3 per cent
Do not know	48	3.0 per cent
Total	1601	100.0 per cent

The following advantages are mentioned: useful experience (88 per cent of the 914 respondents, who experienced influence on their work/education), self-confidence (65 per cent), positive evaluations from their employer (37 per cent) and “points for education” (14 per cent). 28 per cent answered that they experience problems between their paid work and their voluntary work due to the large amount of time spent on the work in the sports federation (cf. table B5 in the annexes).

Potential conflicts between voluntary and paid work may arise when employees spend their (paid) work time on tasks for the sports federations. Only 43 per cent of the leaders do not find they carry out some of their voluntary work in their work time: 36 per cent make phone calls, 34 per cent send e-mails, 22 per cent do paper work and 16 per cent even have meetings now and then.

#### 5.4. How Important is the Work?

Leaders in Danish sports associations are generally of the opinion that most of their voluntary work is important or very important (cf. table B1 in annexes). There is broad consensus that meetings in boards and different committees are of great importance. 92 per cent of the respondents voice the opinion that preparation of and follow-up on meetings are (very) important. Other fields which are highly prioritized<sup>5</sup> are: education of leaders and coaches (85 per cent rate this “important” or “very important”), the organisation of sporting events (83 per cent), development of ideas and programmes (81 per cent), contact to sports clubs (81 per cent) and social activities (81 per cent). Between 59 per cent and 65 per cent of the respondents state that PR, administration, development of organisation culture and contact to other voluntary associations have (high) priority. Representation and sponsor activities are rated relatively low (45 per cent and 28 per cent).

#### 5.5. Satisfaction with the Leadership Position?

In general, the respondents express a high degree of satisfaction with their leadership position and the interhuman relations in their work as voluntary leaders. This is put into relief when we look at the number of leaders who have marked “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” in the questionnaire. The share of respondents *dissatisfied* with some aspect of their federation varies between 1 per cent and 7 per cent. The fields in which there is a rather high degree of dissatisfaction are: appreciation of one’s own efforts (7 per cent), pay and budget (6 per cent), influence in the organisation (6 per cent) and support from the executive committee (5 per cent). According to the survey the biggest source of satisfaction is the contents of the work, as 92 per cent of the leaders say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their tasks. They seem to be very enthusiastic for their sport and their association (cf. table B2 in annexes for detailed overview).

Between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of the respondents answer that they are (very) satisfied with: relationship to their colleagues, social climate within the organisation, their freedom to plan their own work and the support they get from the federation’s executive committee. Between 70 per cent and 80 per cent are (very) satisfied with: the possibilities of personal development, relations to the paid staff in the association, fulfilment of their ambitions and the appreciation of the work they carry out. Fields with lower grading are: level of information (69 per cent

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<sup>5</sup> I.e. 80 per cent find that these activities are important or very important.

satisfied/very satisfied), improvement of qualifications (65 per cent), influence in the organisation (59 per cent), and recognition and status (58 per cent).

A little more than half of the respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the financial conditions (pay and economy), but only a small minority is (very) dissatisfied. However, quite a big group (44 per cent) answers “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” to this particular question.

All in all it seems that the vast majority of leaders are very happy with their work in the sports federations and with the job they do. It should be stressed again that the majority of the respondents give a positive or very positive evaluation of the different aspects of their work as voluntary leaders within a sports association. The group of leaders expressing dissatisfaction with aspects of the work is very small. Certain problems can be identified, which are pay/economy and recognition/status (the number of dissatisfied and “neither/nor” answers total more than 40 per cent). Furthermore, quite a big group of leaders (25 per cent) does not express satisfaction with the appreciation of their work and the level of information. There is still room – and challenges connected thereto – for improvement of the conditions for voluntary leaders in the sports associations, which at the same time would strengthen their efforts and loyalty.

## 5.6. Attitudes to the Sports System in Denmark

The leaders in the Danish sports associations express a high degree of support to a sports system based upon voluntarism: 75 per cent of the respondents share (totally or partially) the view that the sports associations would lose their value if the voluntary work disappeared. To 67 per cent voluntariness is a guarantee for autonomy and independence, but there is also a certain consensus (totally or partially of 69 per cent) that it will prove difficult in the future to find people who are willing to be voluntary, unpaid leaders. And even though a large part of the respondents experience great appreciation of their work in the association (44 per cent partially and 32 per cent totally agree to this statement), the majority feel that their work is not sufficiently appreciated by society (43 per cent partially and 21 per cent totally agree) and therefore it does not provide status and recognition. (Cf. table B3 in annexes for a detailed overview).

## 5.7. The Future – Increased Involvement or Drop-out?

In the light of the above concern/hypothesis that in future there will be a threatening lack of volunteers, current leaders’ plans for the future are of great importance.

Table 10 shows that approximately half of the respondents plan to continue their work “as usual”: they are satisfied with the current situation. 14 per cent would like to increase their involvement whereas 18 per cent plan to decrease it. Only 10 per cent answer that they would prefer to leave their voluntary leadership position.

**Table 10: Thoughts on future voluntary involvement**

Future voluntary involvement	Number (N=1656)	Percentage
I would like to do more voluntary work	235	14.2 per cent
I would like to make a career within the federation/organisation	194	11.7 per cent
I am satisfied with the current situation	852	51.4 per cent
I would like to work less	296	17.9 per cent
I would like to stop	163	9.8 per cent
Does not know	55	3.3 per cent

As already mentioned, the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that it will not be easy to recruit the number of voluntary leaders required in the future. The fairly large share – 28 per cent or almost one third – of the leaders, who plan to leave their position or decrease their participation, should therefore be taken very seriously. Again, the most important factor is time. Approximately half of the people who would rather stop or work less state that they do not have time for voluntary work anymore. 11 per cent say that the reason for their complete or partial retirement from voluntary work is their efforts are not sufficiently appreciated. Other reasons such as the contents of the work or the conditions within the association seem to play only a marginal part.

To the question if they see themselves as voluntary leaders in five to ten years, 63 per cent answer that they plan to continue their voluntary leadership also in the long term.

## 5.8. Opinions and Statements on Equality

The basis for our project is the relative lack of female leaders and the main objective of our survey is to focus on identifying the reasons for the gender hierarchies in the executive bodies of the sports federations. Therefore, we have asked the leaders about their opinions on equality and their own explanations as to why there is a clear male dominance on leadership positions within Danish sports federations (cf. sub-report 1).

With regard to the question of equality the leaders in the Danish sports federations are divided into two groups: approximately half of the leaders consider equality a more or less important problem whereas the other half is not interested in the subject. These opposite opinions repeat themselves in several questions regarding gender.

**Table 11: Importance of equality within sports**

Opinion on equality	Yes		No		Does not know		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Important question for federation/association	776	47.5%	665	40.7%	191	11.7%	1632	100.0%
Important question for sport as a whole	960	59.1%	499	30.7%	165	10.2%	1624	100.0%

As can be seen from table 11 above almost half of the respondents (47 per cent) are of the opinion that gender equality is important to their sports association. A little more (54 per cent) find that equality is an important question for sport as a whole. There is also a relatively large group of more than 10 per cent who answered “do not know” to these questions.

In another question the respondents are asked to mark to what degree they agree with a number of questions relating to equality problems. The lack of female leaders is clearly perceived as a problem: 58 per cent of the leaders totally or partially agree to the statement that there should be more female leaders within sport. 37 per cent say they do not know and only a small minority of 5 per cent say they disagree. A larger share of the leaders (64 per cent) totally or partially agrees that women make a difference in the organisation and only 6 per cent disagree on this statement. Besides, 54 per cent of the respondents to our survey are of the opinion that men have more power than women in the sports world (cf. table B4 in annexes). When the respondents are asked specifically about gender relations, 40 per cent are of the opinion that the current distribution of men/women and the gender representation in the boards and committees of the sports associations are “good as it is”: but almost as many (37 per cent) find there should be more women involved. 23 per cent answer “do not know” which shows that there is a large part of the leaders who apparently have not formed an opinion on this matter – perhaps because they find the problem irrelevant.

**Table 12: Opinion on gender distribution in committees and boards of the sports associations**

Opinion on gender distribution	Total	
	Number	Percentage
Good as it is	643	39.9 per cent
Should be changed to obtain an equitable representation of women	591	36.7 per cent
Does not know	377	23.4 per cent
Total	1611	100.0 per cent

To the question of suggesting possible ways and strategies for changing the imbalance of women and men, 73 per cent find that women should *themselves* do an effort while 26 per cent ask for action plans. All other strategies – from quotas to mainstreaming – receive only little support: only 2 per cent of the leaders in the survey approve of quotas and only 5 per cent of mainstreaming. The numbers are shown in table 13 below.

**Table 13: How should the gender equality problem be addressed?**

Strategies	Number (N=1656)	Percentage
Action plans	433	26.1 per cent
Change of statutes	65	3.9 per cent
Quotas	37	2.2 per cent
Mainstreaming	77	4.6 per cent
Women should make an effort	1212	73.2 per cent
Other	139	8.4 per cent

The leaders in the sports associations should be considered experts in this field based upon their own experience and observations of opportunities and barriers in their own careers as voluntary leaders. Thus, we have asked them what – in their opinion – is the biggest obstacle for women to reach the very top within the sports federations. The results are shown in table 14 below. There is general agreement that the lack of women in the boards and executive bodies is caused by the women’s own decisions: 58 per cent see women’s prioritizing their families as “the biggest obstacle”. 28 per cent think women do not want to become leaders, 29 per cent that women have too little self-confidence, and 35 per cent believe that women “settle for” working as volunteers at club level. A minority of the respondents say the reason for lack of female leaders is to be found within the federations: 18 per cent of all leaders blame men and their opposition to give up their positions, 15 per cent believe there is not a tradition for female leaders and 14 per cent are of the opinion that women are not asked to be leaders. In this connection, 12 per cent mention that there is much prejudice that women do not make as good leaders as men, 6 per cent mention the hard competition with men, 5 per cent the lack of network among women and another 5 per cent mention the lack of support from the federation. A small share of the answers indicates that women do not have the necessary qualifications. Only very few of the respondents find (or say) that women are not qualified as leaders (2 per cent), that they do not have management education (3 per cent) or that women do not have sufficient leadership experience (2 per cent).

**Table 14: The biggest obstacles for equality**

Obstacles for gender equality within sports	Number (N=1656)	Percentage
Women do not want to be leaders	467	28.2 per cent
Women prioritize their families	955	57.7 per cent
Women do not have sufficient management experience	29	1.8 per cent
Women do not have sufficient self-confidence	475	28.7 per cent
Women are not considered qualified	33	2.0 per cent
There is no tradition for female leaders	247	14.9 per cent
Women do not have management education	46	2.8 per cent
Women are not asked to become leaders	225	13.6 per cent
There is prejudice that women are less qualified as leaders as men	202	12.2 per cent
Women do not have the right networks	76	4.6 per cent
Women lack support from federation/organisation	88	5.3 per cent
Competition with men is too hard	103	6.2 per cent
Men are unwilling to give up their positions	302	18.2 per cent
Most women settle for work at club level	577	34.8 per cent
The way board work is organised is outdated	147	8.9 per cent

There is wide acknowledgement that it is the women's own decisions and choices – and not the associations and their structures – which prevent larger female participation in the decision-making bodies. Correspondingly, 46 per cent of the respondents agree totally or partially that the associations do enough in the area of equality. Almost as many (42 per cent) “do not know” and only a small share of 11 per cent disagrees totally or partially. And only 14 per cent even express total or partial agreement with the statement that “The gender discrimination makes me angry”. A full 72 per cent are more or less convinced that their association is as committed to women as to men in terms of finances, material and coaching.

Only 14 per cent say they have the energy or the will to do something about the gender equality problem while more than half of the leaders in this survey answer “neither/nor” to this question. Half of them agree to the statement that women should be better at supporting other women while 14 per cent disagree.

There is a wide spread in the answers to the questions concerning gender equality within sport in general and media coverage: 42 per cent of the respondents share totally or partially the opinion that women and men have equal opportunities within sport while 34 per cent disagree. 34 per cent find that male and female athletes receive the same attention in the media whereas 45 per cent disagree and 21 per cent answer “neither/nor”. (Cf. table B4 in annexes for a detailed overview).



The views on gender equality, reasons for lack of female leaders, evaluation of the gender hierarchy and strategies show specific patterns. As mentioned, the respondents in our survey are divided: one group identifies the gender imbalance in sport, sports associations and their committees as a problem. And another group does not care, is not interested in this problem or is convinced that the gender distribution is all right.

A majority of the respondents – also many of the leaders open to the gender problem – explain the lack of female leaders by it being the women’s own decisions and their lack of interest in leadership positions. A small group of 10 per cent to 15 per cent also mention barriers within the federations as reason for the gender hierarchy, and these respondents seem to be willing to make an effort to achieve a more balanced gender distribution within their federation (cf. table B4 in annexes).

It should also be noticed that the group answering “neither/nor” to the questions on equality, is large. For some questions it is 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the respondents. How should we interpret this strategy of answering? Is it people who wish to be politically correct and who therefore do not wish to argue directly against gender equality? It is not possible to deduct whether we face a “pleasing strategy” as quite a large share answer the general question on the importance of gender equality within sports associations. Maybe we should look more closely at the fact that 73 per cent of the respondents find that women themselves should make an effort, because it is then possible to deduct that a majority of the leaders find that the question of gender equality is neither their nor the association’s responsibility.

In general we can conclude that a large part of Danish sports leaders see gender equality as important for sport and the sports associations. But at the same time, only a small group is willing to make an effort to change the current situation. The opinion that it is the women themselves – and not the associations – who should change makes strategies and activities for gender equality in the associations difficult. For reasons of comparison – and for thought – it should be stressed that studies of the (paid) labour market clearly show that organisational structures and cultures contribute to the “glass ceiling”, which invisibly – yet efficiently – prevents women from promotion (Pfister 2004).

## 5.9. Women’s and Men’s View upon Gender Equality

When we compare statements on gender equality in the sports associations from women and men it is clear that there is general agreement between men and women on almost all fields and all questions of our survey. There are, however, small but significant<sup>6</sup> differences between men and women in their general view on equality:

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<sup>6</sup> Often a Chi<sup>2</sup> test is used which tests if differences in one of the variables’ categories of the cross reference table leads to differences in the other (for example gender differences), i.e. if the distribution deviates from the expected distribution if the split into groups (for example gender) results in a difference. It is also possible to perform a correlation test between the two variables studied via a Gamma-test. It is usual procedure within social sciences to accept P values below 0.05 as significant why the same is done here. Significant values below 0.01 are considered highly significant.

Compared to what we had expected, 6 per cent more men than women express willingness for equality in the associations. Likewise, 7 per cent more men than women find that women should be better represented in the committees of the sports federations, and 61 per cent of the men (but only 54 per cent of the women) find that in general there ought to be more women in executive positions. 34 per cent of the female and 24 per cent of the male leaders totally agree that women make a difference within a sports federation but this last gender difference disappears when the answers totally and partially agree are combined.

**Table 15: There should be more female leaders in sport**

Opinion on more female leaders	Woman		Man		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Totally disagree	19	2.4%	17	2.2%	36	2.3%
Disagree	24	3.0%	19	2.5%	43	2.7%
Neither/nor	326	40.4%	249	32.8%	575	36.7%
Partially agree	229	28.4%	232	30.6%	462	29.4%
Totally agree	209	25.9%	242	31.9%	451	28.8%
Total	807	100.0%	759	100.0%	1566	100.0%

High significance

**Table 16: Women make a difference in the federation/association**

Women make a difference	Woman		Man		Total	
	No.	per cent	No.	per cent	No.	per cent
Totally disagree	19	2.4%	17	2.2%	36	2.3%
Disagree	20	2.5%	32	4.2%	52	3.4%
Neither/nor	241	30.3%	238	31.4%	479	30.9%
Partially agree	243	30.6%	289	38.2%	532	34.3%
Totally agree	272	34.2%	181	23.9%	453	29.2%
Total	795	100.0%	757	100.0%	1566	100.0%

High significance

Only to the question on equality in sport in general and the representation of male and female athletes in the mass media, women are a little more sceptical than men. To a large extent, men and women agree on the ways to change the situation: both find that women should make a greater effort and all other strategies to achieve a more balanced gender representation do not have many supporters, neither among

men nor women. Also when it comes to obstacles and barriers, both women and men point out the fact that in general women prioritize their families over their careers (in the sports association). There are, however, a few areas in which the two genders' opinions differ: 9 per cent more women (33 per cent) than men (24 per cent) find that women do not have enough self-confidence to become leaders, and 10 per cent more women (40 per cent) than men (30 per cent) point out that women are often satisfied with working at club level.

Our hypothesis that women's and men's qualifications differ and make a difference to the organisation has not been confirmed. When it comes to an evaluation of their own qualifications and activities, women describe themselves as being fully as self-confident and qualified as the men and 9 per cent more women than men state that they like taking on work in the executive committee.<sup>7</sup> According to their own statements, they speak up at meetings and in crowd to the same extent as men.

**Table 17: Barriers in connection with a voluntary leadership position**

Barriers	Total	Woman	Man	Significance
YES	51.8%	49.6%	54.1%	Not sign.
What:				
Voluntary work takes too much time	19.2%	15.1%	23.7%	High sign.
Too much travelling	5.2%	4.4%	6.0%	Not sign.
Too little time for family and children	18.8%	15.4%	22.5%	Not sign.
My family does not support me	3.6%	3.2%	4.0%	Not sign.
Is not suggested for the "interesting" jobs	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%	Not sign.
Is not taken seriously	2.1%	2.8%	1.3%	Significant
Lack of own knowledge and skills	5.0%	7.1%	2.6%	High sign.
Too little support from staff in association	5.7%	5.3%	6.1%	Not sign.
Too little support from other male leaders	2.5%	3.0%	1.9%	Not sign.
Too little support from other female leaders	1.5%	1.9%	1.1%	Not sign.
There is no tradition for nominating women	2.0%	2.8%	1.1%	Significant
Too little time to participate in sports myself	22.7%	21.5%	24.0%	Not sign.
"Conflicts" with main job	7.7%	6.8%	8.8%	Not sign.
Does not receive financial compensation	4.6%	5.0%	4.3%	Not sign.
Meetings in the evenings/weekends	16.9%	14.9%	19.0%	Significant
Too many and too long meetings	12.1%	10.6%	13.6%	Not sign.
The committee/management seems "closed"	8.1%	8.5%	7.6%	Not sign.

<sup>7</sup> 50 per cent of the women and 41 per cent of the men totally agree to the statement that they like to take on work in the executive committee.

In conclusion we are able to note that one of the most important and most surprising results of this study is that men are (or claim to be) as open to gender equality as women, or put in another way: Women are not more – but rather less – oriented towards gender equality than men.

## 5.10. Female and Male Leaders – What are the Differences?

The last part of this report deals with the question whether female and male leaders differ – and if yes, how: do they have different backgrounds, different leadership careers, and have women encountered other barriers than men?

### 5.10.1 Demographic Information, Sports Participation and Voluntary Work

Female leaders are a little (but significantly) younger than their male colleagues. Half of the women but only 37 per cent of the men are younger than 45 years. There is only a slight difference in their marital status as 28 per cent of the women and only 22 per cent of the men are single. There are no gender differences when it comes to children: 37 per cent of male and female leaders have children living at home.

**Table 18: Marital status and gender**

Marital status and gender	Woman		Man		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Single/divorced/widow/widower	241	28.2%	178	22.4%	419	25.4%
Married/living with partner	615	71.8%	615	77.6%	1230	74.6%
Total	856	100.0%	793	100.0%	1649	100.0%

High significance

Due to the results of the German project “Frauen an der Spitze”, we assumed that also Danish women are more prone than men to be involved in voluntary work when they do not have children. But this hypothesis does not hold water when it comes to Danish sports leaders.

**Table 19: Average time consumption**

Average time spent on:	Percentage N=1365			Significance*
	All	Women	Men	
Primary needs (sleeping, grooming, eating)	30.3%	30.4%	30.3%	Not sign.
Main job	27.8%	27.4%	28.1%	Not sign.
Housework	12.6%	13.9%	11.3%	High sign.
Voluntary leadership	9.0%	8.5%	9.4%	Sign.
Spare-time activities “in town” (incl. meeting friends, sports, culture etc.)	10.1%	9.8%	10.4%	Not sign.
Spare-time activities “at home” (meeting friends, IT, reading etc.)	13.2%	12.4%	14.0%	High. Sign.

\*significance of gender differences by Anova test (P)

The question of who does the housework and takes care of the family also reveals typical gender differences. Women tend to do more housework than men, and there seems to be gender specific differences as to the share of housework done by men and women: 62 per cent of the men state to be sharing the housework, whereas only 47 per cent of the women state the same. 26 per cent of the women and only 5 per cent of the men say that they do most of the housework whereas 2 per cent of the women and 14 per cent of the men say that their partner takes care of all the housework. 20 per cent of the women and 15 per cent of the men do not have a partner with whom to share the housework.

**Table 20: Work distribution within the family**

Work distribution	Woman		Man		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
We share housework and child care	382	47.3%	466	61.9%	848	54.3%
I do most of the housework	214	26.5%	37	4.9%	251	16.1%
My partner does everything	14	1.7%	107	14.2%	121	7.8%
Most is done by a third person	10	1.2%	4	0.5%	14	0.9%
The children have specific jobs	25	3.1%	25	3.3%	50	3.2%
I have no-one to share the work with	163	20.2%	114	15.1%	277	17.7%
Total	808	100.0%	753	100.0%	1561	100.0%

Also when it comes to education there are gender specific patterns. 32 per cent of the women and 19 per cent of the men have a medium-cycle higher education, and more than twice as many men (24 per cent) as women (11 per cent) have a vocational education. Almost the same share of men and women (32 per cent) has a

university degree. This result shows that male and female leaders have a comparable and relatively high educational level, but their educations are directed at typical “male and female educations” (cf. Statistical Yearbook 2004, 132).

These significant gender differences with regard to occupation reflect the gender segregated labour market. 21 per cent of the women, but 38 per cent of the men, have a management position, but compared to the female population in general, the women in our study make up a special group as they are over-represented in management positions in the labour market (Borchorst & Siim 2002). The pattern of typical male and female occupations can also be seen from the number of work hours as men tend to work more hours outside the home: 7 per cent of the men and 21 per cent of the women work between 21 and 35 hours per week; 13 per cent of the women and 26 per cent of the men have a work week of more than 40 hours.

**Table 21: Weekly hours of work**

Weekly hours of work	Woman		Man		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0-20 hours	78	10.7%	91	12.6%	169	11.6%
21-35 hours	154	21.1%	48	6.6%	202	13.9%
36-40 hours	401	54.9%	397	54.9%	798	54.9%
41-50 hours	81	11.1%	149	20.6%	230	15.8%
More than 50 hours	17	2.3%	38	5.3%	55	3.8%
Total	731	100.0%	723	100.0%	1454	100.0%

High significance

Men seem to have gained more management experience through their main job, but more female leaders (43 per cent) than male leaders (31 per cent) have sports educations. If we look closer at this sports education, 28 per cent of the women and 12 per cent of the men have attended a folk high school specialized in sport, 4 per cent of the women and 1 per cent of the men are trained physiotherapists whereas 7 per cent of the men and 3 per cent of the women have a coach education.

Female and male sports leaders within the sports associations share the same strong involvement in sport. However, there are gender differences when it comes to the leaders’ choice of sport (former as well as current). The involvement reflects the typical pattern for male and female sports. Women were/are mainly involved in gymnastics/aerobics, handball and swimming whereas men form the majority of athletes in football and badminton (cf. also Larsen 2003, 55). Both men and women are involved to the same (high) degree in sport at national as well as international elite level. Our respondents’ gender specific participation in sport also reflects the leaders’ participation in competitions or sporting events at a lower level. When they were younger, men participated much more in competitive sports (44 per cent versus 28 per cent) whereas more women (35 per cent) than men (25 per cent) have been active in sports for exercise purposes with participation in tournaments and shows. This result can be explained through the “typical” sports for men and

women: male sports focus on competitions whereas women are often active in gymnastics, which is organised as shows and events.

47 per cent of the sports leaders in the survey – independent of gender – are today active within “exercise with participation in events, tournaments etc.“. If we compare the female leaders’ sports participation (90 per cent are active athletes) with the female Danish population as a whole, this very high degree of sports participation among our respondents is conspicuous.

**Table 22: Current sports activity**

Participates in sports today	Woman		Man		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	765	90.1%	677	85.7%	1442	88.0%
No	42	4.9%	67	8.5%	109	6.7%
Not at the moment	42	4.9%	46	5.8%	88	5.4%
Total	849	100.0%	790	100.0%	1639	100.0%

The share of female members of associations (75 per cent) among the respondents is also worth noting. In the Danish population as a whole (aged 16 and above), 36 per cent of the men, but only 32 per cent of the women are members of a sports association (Larsen 2003, 69).

The results of our survey confirm the thesis of sports involvement as a social heritage (as mentioned above). First, the sports leaders’ parents are very often also members of a sports club – or they have been. This trend is significantly stronger among women than men. Besides, mothers of female sports leaders are more inclined to do/have done voluntary work than the mothers of male sports leaders. However, it is necessary to take the age difference between male and female sports leaders into consideration as male leaders’ average age is higher than that of the female leaders so a larger part of their mothers can be assumed to belong to a generation with more traditional gender roles.

**Table 23: Parents’ sports activity**

Parents have participated/ participate in local sports club		Woman		Man		Total	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Mother (high significance)	Yes	415	51.1%	257	34.2%	672	43.1%
	No	391	48.5%	495	65.8%	886	56.9%
	Total	806	100.0%	752	100.0%	1558	100.0%
Father (high significance)	Yes	386	48.8%	292	39.5%	678	44.3%
	No	405	51.2%	447	60.5%	852	55.7%
	Total	791	100,0%	739	100.0%	1530	100.0%

In conclusion we are able to show that the women in our survey often come from families very active in sports and that they have often had their mother as role model for their own sports participation and their work as volunteers. A fairly high share of women (40 per cent) compared to men (30 per cent) have children who are also involved in voluntary work. This way, the environment of the female voluntary leaders is very sports oriented, which seems to be of benefit to their careers.

**Table 24: Voluntary work among the leaders' children**

Are your children voluntary leaders/coaches?	Woman		Man		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Yes	255	39.5%	201	29.6%	456	34.4%
No	391	60.5%	477	70.4%	868	65.5%
Total	646	100.0%	678	100.0%	1324	100.0%

High significance

In general, we can see that female role models is an important factor and an environment which is positive towards sport and voluntariness is conducive to women's motivation – and possibility – to become sports leader.

### 5.10.2 Posts in the Sports Associations

A comparison of the posts held by men and women in boards and committees within sports associations show significant differences: approximately half of the sports leaders are members of an executive committee of which 30 per cent of the women and 40 per cent of the men have a post as president while 11 per cent of the women and 3 per cent of the men are secretaries. Table 25 shows the gender distribution of different posts. However, it must be taken into consideration that we sent out the questionnaire to all female sports leaders but only to part of the male sports leaders. We must therefore compare the percentage share as it does not make sense to compare the numbers of men and women. 73 per cent of all respondents are members of a committee of whom 31 per cent of the women and 41 per cent of the men are presidents.

**Table 25: Management positions in committees**

Management positions in committees	Woman		Man		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
President	120	29.5%	171	40.0%	291	34.9%
Treasurer	33	8.1%	34	8.0%	67	8.0%
Secretary	43	10.6%	12	2.8%	55	6.6%
Committee member	211	51.8%	210	49.2%	421	50.5%
Total	407	100.0%	427	100.0%	834	100.0%

High significance



### 5.10.3 Career

How was the road to the top for men and women respectively? Typical for both genders is the long – or rather – continuous career as sports leader during which most of the sports leaders have been involved in voluntary work at committee or board level for more than ten years. This is the case for 75 per cent of the male and 66 per cent of the female respondents. The gender difference can be explained by the fact that the average age of the women included in this survey is lower than that of the men's.

Men's and the women's leadership careers follow similar patterns in which the only significant difference is that 6 per cent of the women but 12 per cent of the men began their careers as presidents of a committee. There is no difference either when it comes to the high degree of course participation: 59 per cent of the women and 51 per cent of the men spend less than 20 days on leadership courses. Of the 18 per cent of all respondents who do not plan to participate in any courses for various reasons, the only gender difference being that more men than women state that they do not feel like participating.

### 5.10.4 Current Leadership Post

Men have had their current leadership post for longer than the women, on average for 8.4 years as opposed to the women's 6.8 years. There is a small albeit significant connection between the gender and the time spent on voluntary work. Men spend a little more time than women and women tend to take the time for voluntary work from the time usually spent on housework whereas men take the time for voluntary work from the time spent with family or on their main job.

**Table 26: From what other activities is the time taken to voluntary work?**

Time is taken from:	Woman (N=857)		Man (N=799)		Total (N=1656)	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Main job (high sign.)	98	11.4%	152	19.0%	250	15.1%
Family (high sign.)	474	55.3%	540	67.6%	1014	61.2%
Other hobbies (no sign.)	373	43.5%	358	44.8%	731	44.1%
Holidays (no sign.)	90	10.5%	93	11.6%	183	11.1%
Friends (sign.)	322	37.6%	257	32.2%	579	35.0%
Housework (high sign.)	375	43.8%	181	22.7%	556	33.6%

Men state to a higher degree than women that they spend part of their working hours doing things related to their voluntary work, such as telephone calls (42 per cent of the men and 31 per cent of the women) or meetings (21 per cent of the men and 12 per cent of the women). The possibility of spending one's working hours doing other things and of being flexible is closely related to one's job and the type of work one carries out. More men than women are self-employed and more men have

managing positions meaning they are set more freely to plan their own work day. This may be part of the explanation as to why men – to a larger extent than women – spend their working hours on voluntary work.

### 5.10.5 Views and Evaluations

When women are asked about the importance of different tasks, they tend to attach greater importance to the tasks than the men. Women attach more importance to committee meetings, preparation of meetings, social activities and PR activities even though this particular aspect is not highly prioritized by any gender.

There is a big difference in the importance attached to representation by the genders: 11 per cent of the women find representation “very important” and 41 per cent find it “important” whereas the men’s opinion is 5 per cent and 34 per cent respectively. Also the contact to sports clubs, the organisation of sporting events, coach education and development of ideas and programmes are highly prioritized fields by the female respondents. It should be noted, however, that the majority of these tasks have been evaluated as important by a majority of the interviewed leaders (regardless of gender cf. table B1 in annexes).

The respondents’ satisfaction with different areas and their possibilities in their associations is quite high, and both genders have only rarely marked that they are “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with something. Slightly more women than men express satisfaction with their possibilities for personal development and with their status within the association/organisation. In another question where the respondents have been asked to state their degree of agreement, 48 per cent of the women and 35 per cent of the men state they totally agree to the statement that they are appreciated for their work, 39 per cent of the women and 47 per cent of the men partially agree, some answer “neither/nor” while only very few feel that their work is not appreciated. Women do not experience less appreciation than men – on the contrary.

In conclusion we can note that the women experience as much appreciation as the men. Furthermore, they are as satisfied with: their freedom to plan their work, the fulfilment of their ambitions, their influence in the organisation/association and their relationship with other leaders. The hypothesis that women meet more obstacles and more barriers than men and that they are not as self-confident is not supported by the statements made by the women in our survey.

The answers to the questions if the respondents have met barriers or problems during their careers as leaders do not provide support for our theories on discrimination. Only a few more women (50 per cent) than men (46 per cent) have met obstacles in their voluntary leadership post and this small difference is not significant. In chapter 5.3 “Problems and Barriers” we mentioned several potential obstacles but most of these do not seem of any relevance neither to men nor women (cf. table B5 in annexes). A large majority of approximately 95 per cent of all respondents have not met any obstacles, refusals or lack of support in their organisation. As mentioned earlier, the lack of time is the only barrier with some relevance and this goes for only 20 per cent of the respondents. The problem is the time consumption and to a lesser degree, the time at which meetings take place (weekend/evenings). The time factor affects both men and women. 24 per cent of the men and 15 per cent of the women answer that their work as volunteers takes too

much time. Similarly, 23 per cent of the men and 15 per cent of the women see the lack of time for family and children as a barrier (cf. table 17).

Regarding the question on advantages and disadvantages of voluntary work, more than half of the male and female leaders have noticed that their main job is affected by their voluntary leadership position (or vice versa). More women (65 per cent) than men (56 per cent) among the respondents, who experience influence by their voluntary work, experience increased self-confidence because of their voluntary work. They are also more optimistic with regard to their employers' recognition/appreciation of their voluntary work, and they see their voluntary work as an advantage in relation to their education. Men in particular stress the disadvantage of voluntary work being that it is very time consuming. This is marked by 33 per cent of the men and 24 per cent of the women, who have experienced negative effects on their main job or education. The gender difference mentioned is slightly significant (cf. table B5 in annexes).

Regarding the question of the Danish sports system, men and women share the same positive attitudes and evaluations of the voluntary work and the sports system in general. Gender differences are few and minor. When it comes to the future of voluntary work, the women (73 per cent) are slightly more sceptical than the men (65 per cent). Correspondingly, more women (38 per cent) than men (26 per cent) agree to the statement that voluntary work should be paid to a bigger extent.

**Table 27: Voluntary leadership posts should be paid**

Should be paid?	Woman		Man		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Totally disagree	158	19.0%	172	21.9%	330	20.0%
Partially disagree	165	19.8%	201	25.6%	366	22.6%
Neither/no	189	22.7%	197	25.1%	386	23.9%
Partially agree	246	29.5%	168	21.4%	414	25.6%
Totally agree	75	9.0%	46	5.9%	121	7.5%
Total	833	100.0%	784	100.0%	1617	100.0%

High significance

It seems that women are more prepared than men to move away from the traditional ideology of voluntary work (that it should not be related to any economic goods at all).

From an overall perspective, the majority of male as well as female leaders appreciate the voluntary work and they consider it the basis of and beneficial for Danish sports. Less than 15 per cent of both women and men do not agree to the statement that sport will lose its value and independence without voluntary work. A significantly higher share of male leaders (37 per cent as compared to 29 per cent female leaders) work as volunteers in associations not related to sports. It seems that a larger work load caused by housework and the responsibility for their families

prevent women from further involvement besides their main jobs and their voluntary work in sport.

**Table 28: Volunteer in other association than sports associations**

Volunteer in other associations	Woman		Man		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Yes	242	29.3%	280	37.0%	522	33.0%
No	584	70.7%	477	63.0%	1061	67.0%
Total	826	100.0%	757	100.0%	1583	100.0%

High significance

The women are more optimistic with regard to their own work as volunteers in the future. 18 per cent of the women plan to work more whereas only 10 per cent of the men have the same plans. Half of the respondents regardless of gender wish to continue their present involvement whereas more men (21 per cent) than women (15 per cent) wish to “work less”. This gender difference may be caused by the fact that the female leaders in the survey are younger than the men. When it comes to the question of long-term involvement, the associations will be able to count more on the male than the female leaders: 41 per cent of the men and only 33 per cent of the women still see themselves as leaders in a sports association in ten years from now.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of our study reveal that male and female leaders in the Danish sports federations share many common features, among other things when it comes to educational level, socio-economic background, income, involvement in sports as well as their attitude to voluntary work and the sports system in general. The differences between male and female leaders in the survey reflect in many ways the gender differences in the population as a whole like for example women being responsible for housework. Our results suggest that both male and female leaders are recruited from specific population groups and that there are specific expectations and demands to which both men and women should live up.

Another perspective arises, however, when we compare the female sports leaders with the female population in general. Are these female sports leaders typical or atypical? Something which certainly is atypical is these women's (high) degree of involvement in sport and exercise, their high educational level and their over-representation as business leaders.

As we saw when mapping the gender relations in the Danish sports federations, this study also reveals that there is only a small probability that female leaders hold the very top positions in the sports federations. This is not reflected as dissatisfaction in the women's statements on their experiences and general conditions in the federations. The female leaders are in this context comparable to their male counterparts.

There is major agreement as to central aspects such as sports values and, what is just as important: women are not more preoccupied by gender equality than men – or put in another way: quite a high share of the men are open to this problem to a certain extent. “Mainstreaming” (which focuses on both genders and where men's input is important) could be a strategy to involve these men in further developing democratic and non-hierarchical relations between women and men in the sports federations. Regarding women's relatively low interest in gender equality questions, we are only able to make assumptions at this point in time. It should be taken into consideration that these women are an integral part of the management and a part of the sports system, and they can be presumed to have adapted to the structure and culture of the system. They have managed to get to the top, they have had a positive experience in the system and their voluntary work has been an advantage to them. It may therefore be difficult for them to see barriers and conflicts which would prevent other women from following their example. This does not, however, explain the relative lack of women in top management or why many women are not attracted by voluntary leadership. The explanations offered by the sports leaders in our survey mainly point to the women's own part such as lack of motivation and their way of prioritizing. Upon closer examination, our survey shows that the sports leaders *also* focuses on structural barriers to a certain extent which could be part of the explanation as to why these leadership positions are not attractive to women (and to some men). The time problem was raised in several different questions: on the one hand the time which sports leaders must spend on their voluntary work and, on the other hand, the planning of spare time for this work in their personal “time budget” on weekdays and during weekends. Many respondents, women as well as men,

complain that meetings and courses take place in the evening or during weekends, and many leaders mention the conflicts that arise between family, work and voluntary work.

These results correspond with several other studies dealing with women's "balance problem". Often women have to – depending on the different countries' policies in the field – fight to unite and create a balance between their family obligations and their obligations related to work. In other research projects, recent studies on the "Work-Life-Balance" have shown that the conflict between private life and work life is caused by the structure of industrial societies: the division between private life and work life and the double economy consisting of paid work outside the home (production) and unpaid work at home (reproduction). Even though giving birth to and raising children are vital for a society's continued existence, it is the individual's job to solve the structural problem of integrating private life, paid work, spare time and voluntary work. In Denmark, a gender policy whose objective is to integrate women (and men) in the labour market – combined with a good child-minding system – resulted in an employment rate of 75 per cent for women (men 80 per cent), which is the highest in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Paradoxically, together with the fact that the Danish society attaches great importance to the family, this may be an explanation why women show less interest in voluntary leadership positions than men. A relatively large group of Danish women has to create a balance between family and work obligations and is assumed to opt out of voluntary work. In general, slightly fewer women than men participate in voluntary work (32 per cent of the women and 38 per cent of the men of the Danish population).<sup>9</sup>

In this context it is important not to forget that the culture of organisations (companies as well as voluntary associations) plays an important role. The culture of organisations is based upon "obvious" rules, stereotypes and myths, one of the strongest myths being that time is crucial to an organisation's performance and success. The glorification of employees and volunteers who do not seem to have life beside their jobs or as in our case beside their job and the sports association could be one of the decisive barriers on women's road to management positions in a sports association. Because the leaders of the voluntary associations are not only expected to carry out the jobs they have been assigned but also to spend time on "extra activities" such as social life and maintaining networks. The wide-spread and deeply rooted convictions and ideologies of the "ideal employee", the "ideal leader" and the "ideal parent" may work as barriers and prevent women (as well as men) from participating in voluntary work, which does not receive much appreciation from society as such according to the leaders in our survey.

The results of our survey support at least in part the theory that organisation culture contribute to the gender imbalance in executive positions.

We should keep in mind, however, that the participants in our survey are men and women in managing positions, who have already overcome barriers and obstacles and who have also adapted to the organisation's structure and practices, including time management/planning and ideology. In order to better understand the reasons which keep women (and men) from considering a leadership career in the sports

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<sup>8</sup> Swiss Federal Statistical Office » World Data » Country Portraits » Denmark » Key Data  
<http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index/international/laenderportraits/denmark/blank/kennzahlen.html>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. [www.frivillighedsundersogelsen.dk](http://www.frivillighedsundersogelsen.dk)

associations, we will have to extend our research project to include people who do not want (or are unable) to spend their time and energy on voluntary leadership in the sports associations.

### *Perspectives*

The large number of respondents and the comprehensive questionnaire will make it possible for us to make several different types of analyses. Among other things, we plan to focus on female leaders with different views on gender equality and mainstreaming, to analyze the differences between the sports associations and to study how age, social background and address affect the leaders' statements on different topics – in particular on the value of sports associations and voluntary work. Another objective is to compare our results with other studies and identify the development in recent years (among others Ibsen/Ottesen 2001, Habermann 2000). Our overall wish is to contribute to a concrete image of the Danish sports leaders' different experience and perspectives.

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# Annexes

**Table B1: The importance of the leaders' work**

Tasks	Not important		Less important		Neither/nor		Important	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Board meetings	57	3.8%	69	4.6%	137	9.2%	718	48.2%
Committee meetings	19	1.2%	57	3.6%	88	5.5%	768	48.2%
Preparation of and follow-up on meetings	15	0.9%	32	2.0%	77	4.8%	846	52.7%
PR activities	62	4.0%	177	11.4%	301	19.4%	761	49.0%
Collecting and sponsor activities	414	27.3%	342	22.5%	333	21.9%	328	21.6%
Administration/book keeping	103	6.7%	187	12.2%	273	17.8%	663	43.2%
Social activities	29	1.9%	75	4.8%	195	12.5%	784	50.2%
Representation	131	8.4%	308	19.8%	409	26.4%	580	37.4%
Contact to public authorities	136	8.8%	221	14.4%	370	24.0%	615	39.9%
Contact to sports associations	32	2.0%	77	4.9%	193	12.2%	704	44.4%
Contact to other associations	73	4.7%	187	11.9%	386	24.7%	675	43.1%
Organising sporting events	51	3.2%	76	4.8%	139	8.8%	688	43.6%
Coach/leader education	40	2.5%	75	4.7%	129	8.1%	623	39.4%
Development of ideas/programmes	28	1.8%	61	3.9%	192	12.2%	777	49.4%
Development of organisation culture	44	2.8%	117	7.6%	366	23.7%	695	45.0%

**Table B2: Satisfaction with leadership position**

Position	Very dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Neither/nor		Satisfied	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Pay/economy	27	1.8%	64	4.4%	641	43.8%	580	39.6%
Content of job	6	0.4%	16	1.0%	110	7.0%	1043	66.8%
Fulfilment of ambitions	8	0.5%	43	2.8%	341	22.2%	872	56.8%
Improvement of qualifications	7	0.5%	32	2.1%	486	32.0%	792	52.1%
Personal development	6	0.4%	21	1.4%	298	19.2%	870	56.1%
Effort is appreciated	12	0.8%	93	6.0%	324	20.9%	828	53.4%
Freedom to plan own work	5	0.3%	24	1.5%	197	12.7%	775	49.9%
Recognition/status	6	0.4%	35	2.3%	595	39.5%	693	46.0%

Support from board	15	1.0%	62	4.0%	233	15.0%	816	52.7%
Relationship to other leaders	1	0.1%	19	1.2%	160	10.3%	967	62.1%
Relationship to staff in association	7	0.5%	28	1.8%	310	20.1%	769	49.9%
Influence in association	15	1.0%	73	4.8%	538	35.3%	702	46.0%
Solidarity/social relations	3	0.2%	20	1.3%	284	18.4%	883	57.1%
Level of information	15	1.0%	92	6.0%	363	23.6%	888	57.8%

**Table B3: Views and opinions regarding voluntary work**

Views and opinions	Totally disagree		Partially disagree		Neither/nor		Partially
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.
Voluntary work is not appreciated in society	89	5.5%	294	18.1%	207	12.8%	695
Members of the association/organisation appreciate the work	31	1.9%	136	8.5%	223	13.9%	706
Voluntary work takes too much time	125	7.8%	280	17.4%	494	30.8%	533
Too much time is spent on administration and collecting funds	209	13.1%	292	18.3%	474	29.7%	388
Not be possible to recruit enough volunteers in future	95	5.9%	225	13.9%	180	11.1%	610
Members do not want to contribute, only receive	99	6.1%	258	15.9%	255	15.8%	686
Voluntary should more often be paid	330	20.4%	366	22.6%	386	23.9%	414
Sports association will lose value without voluntary work	53	3.3%	160	9.9%	193	11.9%	510
Voluntary, unpaid work is guarantee of independence of sport	76	4.7%	156	9.7%	301	18.7%	578

**Table B4: Experience from leadership position**

Statement	Totally disagree		Partially disagree		Neither/nor		Partia
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.
Gladly take on work in the board	60	3.8%	82	5.2%	176	11.2%	537
Receive support to run for leadership position	45	2.9%	62	4.0%	443	28.7%	477
Association does enough in the field of gender equality	54	3.5%	122	7.9%	658	42.3%	400
Like to teach in courses	266	17.1%	157	10.1%	287	18.4%	395
Often speak up at meetings	45	2.9%	130	8.2%	196	12.4%	597
There should be more female leaders	36	2.3%	43	2.7%	575	36.7%	461
Association/organisation is equally committed men/women	52	3.3%	96	6.1%	297	19.0%	425
I am appreciated for my work	13	0.8%	74	4.7%	158	10.0%	674
Mass media pay equal attention to female and male sports	292	18.6%	412	26.3%	331	21.1%	368
Men and women are equal within sports	178	11.3%	360	22.9%	381	24.2%	437
Angry about discrimination between men and women	418	27.0%	257	16.6%	656	42.3%	152
Energy and will to do something about gender issue	257	16.6%	258	16.7%	814	52.6%	177
Women should support other women in the association/organisation	105	6.8%	117	7.6%	533	34.4%	505
Men have more power than women in sports	191	12.2%	158	10.1%	370	23.7%	536
Women make a difference in the association/organisation	36	2.3%	52	3.4%	479	30.9%	532

**Table B5: Advantages and disadvantages of voluntary leadership positions**

Which advantages/disadvantages	Women (N=480)		Man (N=397)		Total
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number
My experience from sport can be used elsewhere	412	85.8%	345	86.9%	757
Employer attached importance to active employees	189	39.4%	127	32.0%	316
Voluntary work gives me self-confidence	314	65.4%	222	55.9%	536
Voluntary work gives me points for education	82	17.1%	37	9.3%	119
Voluntary work is too time-consuming	117	24.4%	129	32.5%	246