

Women at the Top

- on women, sport and management

Summary of sub-reports 1, 2 and 3

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

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Women at the Top – on Women, Sport and Management

Summary of sup-reports 1, 2 and 3

The project *Women at the Top* deals with women and voluntary leadership within sport. The purpose of the project is to document and analyze the reasons for women's under-representation among voluntary sports leaders. The objective is to contribute to improving the conditions for both women and men in sports management, to increase the number of female leaders in sport, and to better exploit women's experience and resources.

The results of the project are meant to form a basis for the development of specific perspectives and strategies.

The sports federations involved in the study are the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF), the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI), the Danish Workers' Sports Federation (DFIF), and Team Danmark (TD).

The *entire* study consists of:

- Mapping of the current situation
- A comparative analysis of international trends
- Questionnaire to all female and approximately half of the male leaders in the Danish sports federations

Mapping of Women in Sports Management (cf. sub-report 1)

The approach was the following:

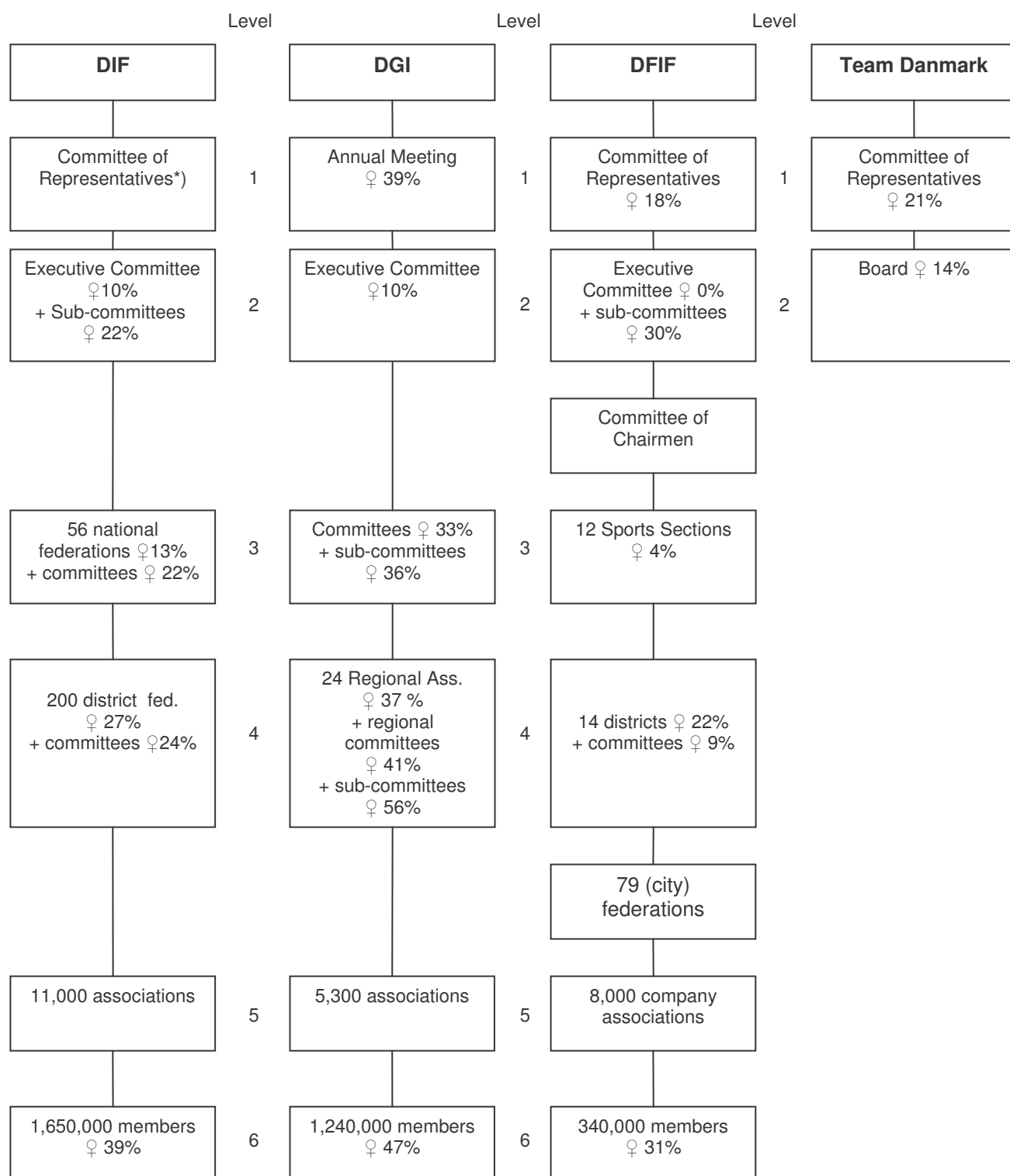
The collection of information on the gender distribution in boards and committees has mainly been conducted through the web pages of the sports federations. The data include all boards and committees from the federations' executive committees to their committees at the regional level (district federations, regional federations and districts). The mapping does *not* include local associations. The data were collected at the beginning of 2003.

The basis and the standard for comparing the gender distribution within leadership positions is the sports participation among men and women in the Danish population in total: 59 per cent men and 58 per cent are athletes and 32 per cent women and 36 per cent men are members of a sports association.

There is a big difference in the gender distribution in the different sports federations: in DIF 39 per cent of all members are women, in DGI almost half (47 per cent) of the members are women and in DFIF the women's share of members makes up almost one third (31 per cent).

The gender distribution at the different levels of management and administration of the four sports federations is shown in the following diagram:

Diagram 2: Share of female leaders at different levels of the federations



*) The number is not available at the moment

We have registered at total of 7,048 voluntary leaders at levels 1 to 4 in the four sports federations and of these 2,173 (31 per cent) are women. In total, women make up 41 per cent of all members of the four federations, but the share of female leaders

is only 31 per cent. Also in this respect there are major differences between the sports federations: in DGI the share of female leaders is 41 per cent, whereas the share in DIF is 22 per cent, in TD 19 per cent and in DFIF 15 per cent. These numbers can be compared to the share of female members and as is shown in table 1, the differences between women's share of leadership positions and of members vary between 5 and 17 per cent.

Table 1: Share of female leaders and female members

	Female leaders	Female members	Difference
DIF	22 per cent	39 per cent	-17
DGI	42 per cent	47 per cent	-5
DFIF	17 per cent	31 per cent	-14

In total, only one fourth of the presidents are women – again, however, with major differences between the sports federations, and if we compare the share of female presidents and female members, the difference is even bigger (cf. table 2).

Table 2: Share of female presidents of executive committees/committees and female members

	Female presidents	Female members	Difference
DIF	12 per cent	39 per cent	-27
DGI	36 per cent	47 per cent	-11
DFIF	6 per cent	31 per cent	-25

We have recently conducted a new analysis of the gender distribution of DGI's executive committee, regional boards and national committees as well as DIF's executive committee and national federations' boards show in March 2005:

We have recently conducted an analysis of the gender distribution of DGI's national management, regional associations and national committees as well as of DIF's boards in the national management, committees and national federations in March 2005:

The gender distribution in the management of DGI and DIF – March 2005 (according to the federations' web pages):

DIF

President and vice-president are men.

Executive committee:	1 woman 10 men	women per cent: 10
Committee presidents:	1 woman 8 men	women per cent: 11
Committee members in total:	13 women 55 men	women per cent: 19
DIF's day-to-day management:	5 men	

National federations

Presidents:	1 woman 54 men	women per cent: 2
Vice-presidents	5 women 35 men	women per cent: 9
Committee members in total		

(only 32 of the federations) 29 women 179 men women per cent: 14

DGI

President is a man

Executive committee 3 women 6 men women per cent: 33

National committees (17 activity committees)

Presidents 5 women 12 men women per cent: 30

Committee members in total 28 women 66 men women per cent: 30

Regional associations (lack data from two)

Presidents 7 women 16 men women per cent: 30

Vice-presidents 12 women 12 men women per cent: 50

Committee members in total 66 women 108 men women per cent: 38

The new data for gender distribution in the leadership positions of these two federations indicate a positive development – in particular in the executive committee of DGI. There is, however, still an important under-representation of women – in particular in the committees of the national federations under DIF.

According to the new study of the conditions for sport organised in clubs, 35 per cent of the committee members are women and 65 per cent are men. In total, 36 per cent of the leaders of associations are women whereas they only made up 30 per cent in 1985. (<http://www.dif.dk/index/idraettenshus.htm>)

Denmark in an International Comparison (cf. sub-report 2)

A comparison of the percentage of female leaders in Scandinavian sports associations and other selected countries shows that Denmark has a place in the middle. The relatively high share of female leaders in DGI plays an important part in this context. By contrast, the national federations are – to a very large extent – dominated by men, which is also the case in Germany. Norway is the country to have the best balanced gender distribution where quotas for women were introduced in 1987 has paved the way for women to top management positions. The very top positions are still to a very large degree reserved for men, also in Norway.

Results from the Questionnaire (cf. sub-report 3)

The survey was conducted among all female leaders and approximately half of the male leaders, but does *not* include leaders of local associations.

Who are they – they voluntary sports leaders and what do they think?

Male and female leaders in the Danish sports federations have many common features, among other things regarding educational level, socio-economic background, income and their involvement in sport throughout most of their life. When we compare the female sports leaders with women in the Danish population as a whole, they make up a special group. Typical for the female sports leaders is their (high) degree of involvement in exercise and sport, their high educational level as well as their over-representation as business managers.

Voluntariness and sports involvement are social heritage. Firstly, the sports leaders' parents are very often members of a sports club – or used to be. This trend is remarkably stronger for women than men. The women in our study come from families who are very active in sports and they have often had their mothers as role models for their own sports participation and their work as voluntary leaders. Compared to the men (30 per cent), a relatively high share of the women (40 per cent) has children, who are also involved in voluntary work. Thus, the whole environment surrounding female sports leaders is very focused on sport, which seems to be beneficial to their careers.

On the basis of the results of the German project “Frauen an die Spitze” we assumed that also Danish women were more inclined than men to commit to voluntary work when they do not have children. But this hypothesis is not valid for Danish sports leaders.

A typical feature of Danish sports leaders of both genders is the long and continuous career where most of them have been involved in sport 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 in our survey is lower than that of the men, where approximately half of the women – and only 37 per cent of the men – are younger than 45 years.

The leadership career for men and women begin at club level and follow comparable patterns where the only significant difference is that 6 per cent of the women – but 12 per cent of the men – began their career as chairman of a committee.

Specific training/education is not a pre-condition to become voluntary leader in a Danish sports association, but many of the leaders have such qualifications: 66 per cent of the leaders in our survey have participated in one or more leadership courses with different topics and contents – from a general introduction to management to bookkeeping.

Management positions in Danish sports associations are very time-consuming: only 15 per cent of the leaders in our survey spend less than 5 hours per week whereas 62 per cent spend more than 10 hours per week. To 25 per cent of the leaders it is more than a half-time job, and 12 per cent even spend more than 30 hours per week. 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. Men, however, often take the time for voluntary work from time usually spent with family or at work.

In general, the respondents express a high degree of satisfaction with their leadership position and with the interhuman relations of their work as volunteers. This is thrown in relief when we look at the number of leaders who have marked “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” in the questionnaire. The share of respondents who are *dissatisfied* with something in their association varies from 1 per cent to 7

per cent. Fields showing a relatively high degree of dissatisfaction are: appreciation of their own work (7 per cent), pay and budget (6 per cent), influence in the association (6 per cent) and support from the executive committee (5 per cent).

Male as well as female leaders in the Danish sports federations express a high degree of support to a sports system based upon voluntariness: 75 per cent of the respondents share (totally or partially) the opinion that the sports federations would lose their value if the voluntary work disappeared, but there is also a high degree of agreement (total or partial support of 69 per cent) that in future it will be difficult to recruit a sufficient number of people who are willing to undertake the work of being voluntary, unpaid leaders. And even though a large share of the respondents experience great appreciation of their work in the federation (44 per cent partially agree and 32 per cent totally agree to this statement), the majority feels that their efforts are not sufficiently appreciated by society (43 per cent partially agree and 21 per cent totally agree to this), and thus it does not provide real status and recognition.

To the questions regarding the Danish sports system, women and men share the same positive attitudes and evaluations. The gender differences are minor and few. Regarding the future of voluntary work, women (73 per cent) are a little more sceptical than men (65 per cent). More women (38 per cent) than men (26 per cent) find accordingly that voluntary work should be paid.

Attitudes to Gender Equality

When it comes to the question of gender equality, the leaders of the Danish sports associations are divided into two groups: approximately half of the leaders consider equality a more or less important problem while the other half is not interested in the issue. These opposite opinions are seen in several questions regarding gender.

Contrary to our expectations, 6 per cent more men than women express readiness for gender equality in the sports federations. Similarly, 7 per cent more men than women state 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 should be more women in management positions. 34 per cent of the female and 24 per cent of the male leaders totally agree that women make a difference in the sports federations, but this last gender difference disappears when the answers “totally agree” and “partially agree” are combined.

There should be more female leaders in sport

Opinion on more female leaders	Woman		Man		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
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

Likewise, women and men agree to the same extent on the paths to change: both genders find that women themselves should make a greater effort, and all other strategies for increased gender equality do not find many supporters among men nor women.

Reasons for under-representation of women in leadership positions?

To the question what obstacles and barriers can explain the gender distribution in leadership positions, both women and men emphasize that women generally chose to prioritize family over career (in a sports federation). There are, however, few areas where the two genders' opinions differ: 9 per cent more women (33 per cent) than men (24 per cent) find that women do not have sufficient faith in themselves as leaders, and 10 per cent more women (40 per cent) than men (30 per cent) emphasize that women are often satisfied with working at club level. This explanation blames the women and also hides the part played by the structure and culture of the sports federations.

Our hypothesis that women's and men's qualifications differ and that the sports federations prefer men's attitudes and activities has not been confirmed. When it comes to an evaluation of own qualifications and activities, the women have described themselves as being fully as self-confident, active and qualified as the men. According the women's own statements they experience as much appreciation in their federations as the men. They are also as satisfied with their freedom to plan their own work, their possibility of fulfilling their ambitions, their influence in the association/federation and their relations to other leaders. Nor have the answers to our questions if the respondents have met barriers or problems during their leadership careers given any support to our assumptions of discrimination. A large majority of 95 per cent of all respondents have never met obstacles, refusals or lack of support in their federation.

Lack of time is the only structural barrier of any relevance which goes for 20 per cent of the respondents. The problem is in particular the time spent and – to a slightly lesser degree – the times meetings are held (weekends/evenings). The time factor

affects both men and women. 24 per cent of the men and 15 per cent of the women in the survey answer that their work as voluntary leaders takes too much time. We must consider that men on average spend more time on their leadership positions than women.

To another question, 44 per cent of the respondents mark they totally or partially agree that the voluntary work takes too much time: 23 per cent state that they do not have sufficient time for their own sports activities, 19 per cent state that they do not have time enough for their family, 17 per cent are of the opinion that meetings in the evening and during weekends pose a problem to them, and 12 per cent mention the number and the length of meetings as a problem.

When considering the reasons for the low number of women in leadership positions, it should be remembered that these women are already integrated into the management and are part of the sports structure, and they can therefore be assumed to have adapted to the structure and the culture of the system, including time management, time planning and time ideology. They have succeeded in reaching the top, they have had positive experiences within the system, and they have benefited from their voluntary work. It may therefore be difficult for them to see the barriers and conflicts that may keep other women from following their example. The large demands on among other things time may be one of the reasons that other women do not feel the motivation to get involved in a leadership position at a high level. It should also be considered that many women in Denmark have a full-time job and that family generally plays an important part in women's lives.

Gender Mainstreaming – Strategies and Perspectives

In the light of these results we are able to suggest three initiatives which will not only increase the share of female leaders but also support the integration of other groups into the leadership work (for example immigrants) as well as motivate and encourage young people to begin a career as voluntary leader. This will be particularly important as a large share of our respondents (69 per cent) agree either totally or partially that it will be difficult in the future to recruit enough people who are willing to take on the job of being voluntary, unpaid leaders.

Our suggestions aim at three different "target groups": the Danish society, the sports federations and the potential voluntary leaders. They have a social, a structural/cultural and an individual perspective, and they supplement each other.

1. Voluntary Leaders – Appreciation and Visibility

Background:

A large part of the leaders in our survey has indicated that their effort is not sufficiently appreciated by the Danish society (43 per cent partially and 21 per cent totally agree), and thus it does not convey status or recognition.

Action:

To make voluntary leaders more visible!! Make female leaders and young leaders as well as ethnic minority leaders visible! Express respect, appreciation and gratitude to volunteers within exercise and sport!

Strategies:

Recruitment of volunteers, expression of appreciation and female leaders as role models could be linked to a kind of campaign (for example through posters, a special day for honorary offices, a congress etc).

Another initiative could be the institution of a prize for voluntary work.

2. Change the Organisation Structure – change the ideology for time and time consumption

Background:

In various connections, our respondents have stressed the problem that a voluntary leadership position takes up too much time.

Action:

- Find out where, how and for what purposes the time of a voluntary leaders is spent
- Work out some priorities
- Work out “intelligent” solutions to save time and integrate “life/work/voluntariness”
- Break down the myth that “more time equals more results”

Strategies:

In cooperation with the sports federations, projects and/or guidelines could be developed for studies of time consumption and efficient use of time.

3. Motivate and Support Female (and Male) Leaders

Background:

33 per cent of the women in our study expressed that women lack faith and another problem could be lack of information on tasks and expectations to leadership positions.

Action:

Find, motivate and train potential leaders – in particular women but also immigrants and young people.

Strategies:

The establishment of mentor project is an excellent strategy for recruiting and supporting potential leaders. As support for sports clubs and federations, guidelines for mentoring could be laid down and seminars organised.