



INTERNATIONAL FLOORBALL FEDERATION (IFF)

*Recognised by the IOC
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Appendix 17

Report on the 6th IWG Conference on Women & Sport
Helsinki, Finland
12th – 15th June 2014

IFF Secretary General, John Liljelund, and IFF Competition Coordinator, Sarah Mitchell, both attended the 6th IWG Conference on Women & Sport, with the main theme of the event being 'Lead the Change. Be the Change'. Sessions focussed on health, sport policy, participation, leadership and coaching, and sport without fear. The Conference was addressed by many leading sports academics, former-Olympians, politicians and IOC President Thomas Bach.

The IFF presented information on the GoGirls! Floorball programme that was launched in December 2013, while Mervi Kilpikoski, from the Finnish Floorball Federation made a presentation discussing the different methods of activation they are implementing on their pathway towards hosting the Women's WFC in 2015, including their very successful 'Tyttösäbä on Timantti' programme. Disappointingly, there were no representatives from any other Floorball Federations in attendance.

The IFF signed the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport in July 2011 and since then has worked hard to increase the participation of women in Floorball at all levels. We have had great success in increasing the number of female referees at international level through the Referee Development Group. The number of female players has also risen slightly, helped by the introduction of the IFF Licence System criteria requiring Member Associations to establish women's competitions. The number of women on the IFF Central Board has increased to 25%, however, they are still under-represented within the committees and in key leadership positions in the National Associations. Only 6 of the IFF Members have a woman as either the President (KOR, NOR, SLO) or Secretary General (AUT, IRL, SLO, UKR). Slovenia is the only member to have women in both of these positions.

The lack of female coaches at an elite level was a key discussion point during the IWG Conference. While at the 2012 London Olympics there may have been a nearly 50-50 split on male and female participants, of over 3000 accredited coaches only 11% were women. Floorball suffers a similar problem with a very low number of coaching positions on national teams held by women. While seeing women as part of the coaching staff on any of the men's national teams is extremely rare, it is equally difficult to find them coaching the women's teams. At the recent Women's WFC in December 2013, only one (Czech Republic), out of 16 participating teams, had a female head coach, and only three other countries had female assistant coaches.

There were more positive signs towards the future during the Women's U19 WFC in Poland in May, when just over half the teams had at least one female coach, however, it was only the World Champions, Sweden, who had a female Head Coach.



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This lack of female coaches at an elite level is an area that clearly needs to be addressed by the IFF and several recommendations will be looked at and discussed over the next months as we seek a way to improve this situation. Suggestions such as the following may be considered:

- Introduction of an IFF coaching qualification system
- A requirement for all Women's & Women's U19 teams to have at least one female coach
- Coaching seminars for women only
- Guidelines for National Associations on different policies they can adopt to encourage and retain female coaches

Regarding the number of women in key leadership and decision-making roles, this also needs to be addressed again with the Member Associations, and within the IFF itself. The IOC have their own criteria of 20% representation, however this was a number that was proposed 20yrs ago, and there is a growing push for this to now be revised to 40%. If this was to be adopted by the IOC, the IFF would find themselves in a very weak position. In this matter, we need to be proactive, rather than reactive.

During the conference the IFF participated in workshops on several different topics and was able to introduce Floorball to several new organisations and regions. Contact has been made with a representative from Bulgaria who is very interested to help develop the sport there. In the Oceania region, the Chair of the Oceania Women's Group which is part of the IOC expressed interest in receiving materials and development assistance in Fiji. A government funded youth group – Support through Sport UK – were also very eager to find out more about Floorball as they saw great potential for it in their programmes. Contact details for all of these groups and others will be passed on to the relevant local contacts for follow-up.

Sarah Mitchell