

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTER COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA



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1. INTRODUCTION

By virtue of their influence on society, media and the professionals employed in media have a special responsibility for eliminating stereotypes as well as any grounds for discrimination and, in the case of sport, for contributing to the achievement of gender non-discriminatory standards and models that encourage and increase the wide variety of sports activities existing in a pluralistic society. There is no doubt that media have a significant influence, social responsibility as well as the main role in combating gender stereotypes and in improving the visibility of women.

The Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, has spoken on this issue on World Radio Day (WRD), celebrated on 13 February 2018. She called on media to provide more equal coverage of women athletes in their programmes.¹ UNESCO also deplored the stereotypical comments that circulate in media, often focusing on physical appearance of athletes or their family status, or even crediting their achievements to their male coaches and trainers.

UNESCO has also collected interviews of sporting legends and influential sports broadcasters who are contributing to improved diversity, greater respect, equality between women and men, and peace and development initiatives within the world of sports media².

Regulatory bodies supervising the implementation of audiovisual legislation are responsible for acting proactively, thus contributing to eradicating inequalities, imbalances and stereotypes spread through audiovisual contents, particularly in those areas that have a strong media and social impact, such as sports. Therefore the Croatian Council for Electronic Media has initiated the present overview and adopted the Recommendations for Better Coverage of Women's Sports in Electronic Media.

A significant contribution to the success of Croatian sports was made by female athletes - Janica Kostelić, Blanka Vlašić, Sandra Perković – who, due to their global success, were treated with suitable prominence and representation in Croatian media. However, the great interest shown by the media for their results has not been transposed to women's sports in their entirety. On the contrary, a research shows that the representa-

¹ Azoulay: *The fight for equality between women and men is central to our work*. Only 4% of sports media content is dedicated to women's sports. Only 12% of sports news is presented by women.

² UNESCO *calls for fairer media coverage of sportswomen (2018)* [online]. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-calls-fairer-media-coverage-sportswomen> [23 December 2018]

tion of women's sports in electronic media is extremely low and in great disparity with the results our female athletes do achieve. The manner in which female athletes are represented in the media is often inappropriate, i.e. burdened with numerous stereotypes and sexism.

Although the volume and manner of covering women's sports in their programmes and on their platforms cannot be imposed to media – nor is it the purpose of the present Recommendations - examples from other countries show that negative trends can be reversed and women's sports can be made more attractive to viewers and fans. Even small steps can lead to significant results and meaningful shifts.

2. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Encouraging gender equality has its foundation in both the Constitution and the applicable laws of the Republic of Croatia. Moreover, the obligation to respect gender equality in broadcasting audiovisual and radio programmes stems from legal provisions.

2.1. The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia

Gender equality is defined in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia³:

Freedom, equal rights, national and gender equality, peace-making, social justice, respect for human rights, inviolability of ownership, conservation of nature and the environment, the rule of law and a democratic multiparty system are the highest values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia and the basis for interpreting the Constitution.

2.2. The Electronic Media Act

Article 9 of the Electronic Media Act⁴ stipulates that the activity of providing audiovisual and radio programmes is in the interest of the Republic of Croatia when programmes relate to (...) *gender equality* as well as (...) *the development of education, science, art and sport.*

Article 24 of the same Act prescribes that audiovisual or radio programmes must in particular (...) *promote international understanding and the public's sense of justice, defend democratic freedoms, serve to the environment protection and fight for the equality of women and men.*

Furthermore, Article 64 prescribes that the financial resources of the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media shall be allocated *to stimulate the production and broadcasting of audiovisual and radio programmes which are of public interest and particularly important for (...) raising the awareness of gender equality.*

³ The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, *Official Gazette*, No. 56/90, 135/97, 08/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10 and 05/14

⁴ The Electronic Media Act, *Official Gazette*, No. 153/09, 84/11, 94/13 and 136/13

2.3. The Croatian Radio Television Act

The Croatian Radio Television Act⁵ prescribes in Article 5: *the Croatian Radio Television (HRT) must, through its programmes, satisfy the public interests at national, regional and local levels and it must ensure adequate representation of informational, artistic, cultural, educational, children's, entertainment, sports and other contents in accordance with the present Act.*

Sport and gender equality are also mentioned in the Article 9 of the Act, which states:

1. *The HRT's public services within the meaning of the present Act contain the HRT programme requirements that meet the democratic, social and cultural needs of the Croatian society, and guarantee pluralism, including cultural and linguistic diversity.*
2. *In implementing paragraph 1 of the present Article, the HRT shall in particular:*
 - *inform the public of political, economic, social, health, cultural, educational, scientific, religious, ecological, sporting and other events and occurrences in the country and abroad and ensure open and free discussion on all matters of public interest, (...)*
 - *produce, supersede and publish programs aimed at achieving equality between men and women, (...)*
 - *inform and educate on democracy, civil society and culture of public dialogue and contribute to the suppression of discrimination on every basis in accordance with the Constitution and regulations, (...)*
 - *produce, supersede and publish programs aimed at achieving human rights, equality and political rights of citizens, and the promotion of the legal and social state and civil society, as well as objective reporting and addressing violations of human rights of vulnerable groups, (...)*
 - *broadcast athletic events at home and abroad when Croatian national teams or athletes participate, and less represented sports or athletic events that are of interest to the public, (...)*
 - *encourage athletic and recreational activities.*

⁵ The Croatian Radio Television Act, *Official Gazette*, No. 137/10, 76/12, 78/16, 46/17, 73/17 and 94/18

2.4. The Anti-Discrimination Act

The protection of gender equality is also prescribed in Articles 1 and 2 of the Anti-Discrimination Act⁶:

Article 1

(1) The present Act provides for the protection and promotion of equality as the highest value of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia, creates prerequisites for the realisation of equal opportunities and regulates protection against discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic affiliation of colour, sex, language, religion, political or other belief, national or social origin, property, trade union membership, education, social status, marital or family status, age, health condition, disability, genetic heritage, gender identity, expression or sexual orientation.

(2) Discrimination within the meaning of this Act shall be deemed to be placing a person in a disadvantaged position on the basis referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article, as well as a person related to that person by family or other ties.

Article 2

(1) Direct discrimination is a treatment based on any of the grounds referred to in Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the present Act whereby a person is, has been or could be placed in a less favourable position than other persons in a comparable situation.

(2) Indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice places or could place a person in a less favorable position on the grounds referred to in Article 1, paragraph 1 of this Act, compared to other persons in a comparable situation, unless such a provision, criterion or practice may be objectively justified by a legitimate aim, and the means for achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

2.5. The Gender Equality Act

Article 16 of the Gender Equality Act⁷ deals with gender equality in media:

(1) The media shall use their programme contents, programme basis, programme orientations and self-regulating acts to promote awareness on equality of women and men.

⁶ The Anti-Discrimination Act, *Official Gazette*, No. 85/08 and 112/12

⁷ The Gender Equality Act, *Official Gazette* No. 82/08 and 69/17

(2) It shall be prohibited to publicly present women or men in an offensive, degrading or humiliating manner with regard to their gender or sexual orientation.

2.6. The National Policy for Gender Equality

The Governmental Office for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia emphasized, in 2011, the importance of women's position in sports when it for the first time incorporated, in co-operation with the Croatian Olympic Committee, measures for promoting gender equality in sports into the National Policy for Gender Equality⁸, the basic strategy document of the Republic of Croatia for eliminating discrimination against women.

The aim of the measures at the time, which still remain valid, had been to increase the share of women in the management structures of sports federations and other sports organizations, in accordance with the Gender Equality Act, and to review the existing legislative framework as well as to improve the model for monitoring statistical data on the position of women in sports, with the aim of combating direct and indirect discrimination. Furthermore, the measures included the requirement to provide female athletes with equal access to sporting infrastructure in both its quality and the time of use, as well as the availability of professional education, training and employment in sports.

⁸ The National Policy for Gender Equality 2011-2015, The Office for Gender Equality (2011)

3. CAUSES OF INEQUALITY

There are numerous causes of great disparity in media coverage and treatment of female athletes and their male counterparts. They include historical, biological, sociological, media, commercial and many other elements.

3.1. Historical reasons

Women were excluded from the antique Olympics (776 BC - 393), not only as participants but also as viewers of sports competitions. As far as participation is concerned, their status did not improve during the revival of the Olympic Games in 1896.

Founding patriarch of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin said the inclusion of women would be *impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic, and incorrect*.⁹ He defined the Games as *the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism, with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, art for its setting, and female applause as reward*.¹⁰

Although there is evidence that at least one woman ran the marathon of the first modern Games in 1896, this information is not officially reported anywhere. Women were completely excluded from the Olympic programme at the very beginning of the modern Olympics. At the Olympic Games in 1900, they only participated in tennis and golf, and archery was added to the programme in Paris in 1904. Finally, in 2012, in London, women competed in all the sports in which men competed.

3.2. Biological predispositions

Men are taller and stronger than women. Men also have more muscle mass: muscles make up about 42 percent of male body mass, but only 36 percent of female body mass. Men also have a larger heart, larger volume of blood vessels, more red blood cells, higher lung capacity and are on average higher (15 cm) and heavier (10 kg) than women. The reason why, for example, the result of the fastest male sprinter at 100 meters (Usain Bolt - 9.58) is almost a second better than the fastest female sprinter

⁹ Fitzgerald, E. (2016). *Women & the Olympic Games: "uninteresting, unaesthetic, incorrect"* [online]. Special Broadcasting Service Corporation. Available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/contact/> [11 January 2019]

¹⁰ DeFrantz, A. L. *The changing role of women in the Olympic Games* [online]. Available at: <http://users.monash.edu.au/~skeast/olympics/The%20changing%20role%20of%20women%20in%20the%20Olympic%20games.pdf> [20 January 2019]

(Florence Griffith-Joyner - 10.49) is entirely biological and cannot be attributed to anything else.

3.3. Nature of sport activities

Sociologically and historically, the very nature of sports activities has an important role in the perception of sport. Running, jumping, throwing, fighting, endurance, physical strength ..., all of these sports elements are also useful in warfare, and for thousands of years wars have been an exclusively 'male thing'.¹¹

3.4. Earnings in sports

In the world where money is all, earnings are a strong argument in discussing whether something is worth the public's attention or not. Therefore, the great inequality in earnings between top female and athletes is the very base for the thesis that woman's sports are less interesting than men's. And these earnings in the most popular sports are often 50: 1 or even 100: 1 in favor of male athletes.

3.4.1. FIFA does not give financial incentives women's clubs

In the last four-year cycle, the international football organization FIFA earned almost a billion and a half US dollars. Before the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, a fund was established from which each club received a fee for every player who played for his national team in the final tournament. The \$ 40 million start-up fund grew to \$ 209 million, and each day of each player during the 2018 World Cup in Russia was worth \$ 8 530 (it must be noted that they were also being paid for two weeks of preparation). Meanwhile, FIFA will allocate no money to women's clubs for the players of national female teams who will participate in the World Cup in France in 2019, the fund for women's football simply does not exist.

¹¹ Alberto J. C. Micheletti et al. (2018). Why war is a man's game, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* [online]. Available at: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rspb.2018.0975> [15 January 2019]

3.4.2. Average annual earnings in American sports (2010)

MALE ATHLETES

- *NBA (basketball): \$ 5.15 million*
- *MLB (baseball): \$ 3.34 million*
- *NHL (hockey): \$ 2.4 million*
- *NFL (American football): \$ 1.9 million*
- *PGA (golf), total award fund: \$ 256 million*

FEMALE ATHLETES

- *WNBA (basketball): \$ 36,500 - rookies, \$ 50,000 - veterans, \$ 95,000 - max*
- *LPGA (golf), total award fund: \$ 50 million*

3.4.3. The world's highest-paid athletes (in US dollars)¹²

1. Floyd Mayweather - boxing (285 million)
2. Lionel Messi – football (111 million)
3. Cristiano Ronaldo - football (108 million)
4. Conor McGregor – martial arts (99 million)
5. Neymar - football (90 million)
6. LeBron James - basketball (85.5 million)
7. Roger Federer - tennis (77.2 million)
8. Stephen Curry – basketball (76.9 million)
9. Matt Ryan - American football (67.3 million)
10. Matthew Stafford - American football (59.5 million)

Among the top 100 highest-paid athletes on the Forbes list for 2018 there is no female athlete. The best paid female athletes are tennis players Serena Williams (18 million) and Caroline Wozniacki (13 million).

Incidentally, the tennis Grand Slam tournaments are always presented as the best example of equality in earnings where, since 2007, male

¹² Forbes (2018). *The world's highest-paid athletes*

and female tennis players receive equal cash prizes. This has successfully completed the process that began in 1973 at the US Open, thanks to the best world female player Billie Jean King and other players who formed the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) as part of the gender equality struggle.

Equal awards for male and female athletes were introduced by the World Athletics Federation (IAAF) which equally rewards them at the athletic championships and at the Diamond League competitions. Art skating, shooting, volleyball, diving, sailing, windsurfing, taekwondo as well as some cycling competitions are also among the sports with gender equality in when it comes to the award funds for male and female athletes.

3.4.4. Five reasons for inequality in earnings

Experts from the Faculty of Sports Management in San Francisco¹³ attempted to explain the disparity in earnings between women and men in sports. They outlined five reasons for the situation:

- *Female athletes get physically much less tired because their races and matches in many sports are shorter and less intense than men's.*
- *Women are not strong, explosive nor fast as men.*
- *Women are not nearly as popular among the average audience as men, and therefore the sponsors' interest in them is lower.*
- *According to the research, 50% of sports enthusiasts are not even interested in women's sports.*
- *Competition is much lower in women's sports.*

¹³ Ledinski, K. (2016). The best female football player earns 70 times less than Messi! Večernji list, 22 March [online]. Available at: <https://www.vecernji.hr/sport/najboljoj-nogometasici-70-puta-manje-nego-messiju-1070260> [15 January 2019]

4. THE OVERVIEW OF STUDIES AND RESEARCHES

4.1. Croatia: The Share of Women's sport in National TV News Bullitens Only Four Percent

All recent studies show unequal treatment of women in sports news and TV programmes, even nowadays when social progress is being increasingly accepted and new policies aimed at guaranteeing male-female equality adopted. It was likewise demonstrated¹⁴ in *The Analysis of Equality between Men and Women in Sports Programmes of Audiovisual Media*, conducted by the Agency for Electronic Media within a Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA) study¹⁵ on the same issue. The AEM has been an active member of the MNRA since 2014.

The aim of the MNRA study was to determine the presence of women's sports in sports news and to present the reality of gender positions in sports through an analysis of the most important public and private television services in the Mediterranean countries, with a view of promoting dialogue and raising awareness on how sports and gender discrimination are interrelated in media. The study therefore had a twofold approach: the first issue of analysis was the presence of women's sports in news and on sports channels, and the second issue was the presence of women in sports with emphasis on the length of women's speech in sports news as well as their roles in this field.

4.1.1. National Televisions: Male Football Dominates

For this purpose sports news bullitens broadcast daily within central news programmes on three most watched television channels with national concession in Croatia (HRT - HTV1, RTL Televizija, Nova TV) were analyzed. The sample for media content analysis was one week per month of broadcast programmes for February, March and April 2016 (a total of three weeks per TV broadcaster). Thus, on HTV1 channel 2 hours and 49 minutes, on Nova TV channel 2 hours and 29 minutes as well as 1 hour and 51 minutes of sports news on RTL Television channel was analyzed.

¹⁴ *The Analysis of Equality between Men and Women in Sports Programmes of Audiovisual Media*, Agency for Electronic Media (2017)

¹⁵ *Equality between Men and Women in the Sport Programmes through Audiovisual Media Services*, Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (2017)

The analysis of sports news that are broadcast as a part of the central news programmes on channels HTV1, RTL Televizija and Nova TV revealed that the share of women’s sports coverage is only four percent. The share of news items devoted exclusively to male sports in the analyzed period on the Croatian Radio and Television (HRT) is almost 80 percent (79.33 percent). At the same time, the number of items devoted exclusively to male sports in the sports news of RTL Television exceeded 90 percent (92.6 percent).

Table 1: *The number of analyzed news items, according to gender, in sports news bulletins of the three most watched TV channels (HTV1, Nova TV, RTL)*

Gender	Number of items	%
Male	319	86
Female	14	3.76
Combined	37	9.94

The results clearly show the dominance of items on football in sports news, and it is also evident that all of these news items are dedicated exclusively to male football competitions and male football players. Following football, the most prominent sports are tennis and basketball. In those news items female athletes and their successes are present, albeit modestly. In news items dedicated to some sports usually less represented in sports news, such as gymnastics, skiing, archery or jogging, female athletes’ achievements are reported along those of their male counterparts. Therefore female athletes are more likely to appear in the news in items dedicated to athletes of both genders, rather than being the main actors of sports news.

Table 2: *The number of analyzed news items distributed according to gender and the type of sport (HTV1, Nova TV, RTL)*

Sport	Number of items		
	Male	Female	Combined
FOOTBALL	169	/	1
BASKETBALL	57	2	/
AUTO RACING	1	/	/
TENNIS	26	3	1
ROWING	2	/	1
VOLLEYBALL	2	1	/
GYMNASTICS	5	/	6
CYCLING	4	/	/
HANDBALL	18	/	2
WATERPOLO	4	/	/
European Youth Games	/	/	3
Olympic Games	/	/	1
KARATE	/	/	1
SAILING	3	/	/
BOXING	7	/	/
HOCKEY	1	/	/
ARCHERY	1	2	1
SKIING	3	5	2
SKI JUMPS	5	/	/
ATHLETICS	/	1	1

4.1.2. Female athletes get only 5.6 percent of female time on television

The analysis of the roles of female speakers within the total time devoted to women's sports in news programmes reveals that the majority share of speaking time was assigned to female anchors, followed by female journalists. Only 5.60 percent of the total time devoted to women in sports news was allocated to female athletes.

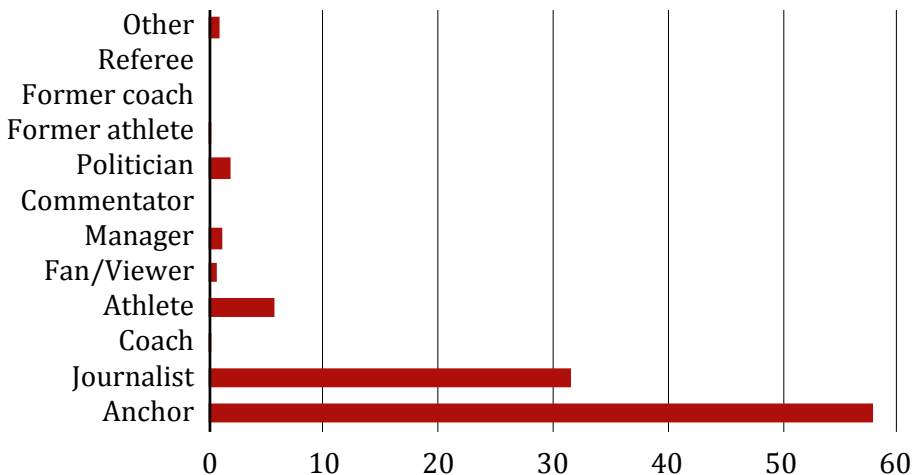
Table 3: Speaking time by role and gender in sport news on all three TV networks (HTV1, Nova TV, RTL)

Role	Speaking time			
	Male		Female	
	Time	%	Time	%
Anchor	1:31:38	22	0:30:50	8,3
Journalist	2:43:39	39,3	0:16:46	4
Coach	0:39:07	9,39	0:00:08	0,03
Athlete	0:40:37	9,75	0:03:01	0,72
Manager	0:17:51	4,28	0:00:34	0,15
Other	0:08:21	2	0:00:34	0,15

Earlier data show that the bulk of sports news focuses on dominantly male sports, primarily football. In the analyzed period 169 items dedicated to football were broadcast on all three television channels, accounting for 46 percent of all analyzed items, and none of them was dedicated to women’s football.

The data also reveal that the dominance of football in sports news is much more pronounced on commercial televisions than on the public media service channel. Thus, on RTL Television and Nova TV channels more than half of the sports news was dedicated to football, which is a dominantly male sport. If by chance women do appear in news items on football, they are presented only in the role of football fans/viewers.

Chart 1. The role of women in sports news (HTV1, RTL, Nova TV)



4.2. USA: Women's sports are considered less dynamic and slower paced than men's

Although sports nowadays involve more women than ever before, and sports fans are becoming increasingly interested in women's sports, many critics claim that women's sports are tedious and not nearly as thrilling as men's¹⁶. Women's sports are also considered less dynamic and slower paced than men's.¹⁷

Research participants often state that they scarcely watch/follow women's sports, mostly only when they are on television, and as we have already mentioned, it is much less represented on television than men's.

Although men's and women's sports are equally represented at the Olympic Games, media also discriminate against women's sports in this regard. When, for example, the 2012 US women's basketball team won the fifth consecutive gold medal, it received less than half a minute in prime-time television coverage while at the same time the men's team, which won its second consecutive gold medal, had half an hour coverage in prime-time.¹⁸ It is true that the 2012 Olympic Games, for the first time on NBC, ensured higher coverage of female athletes than their male counterparts, but this applied only to sports that are generally perceived as "primarily female", such as gymnastics.

Such inappropriate treatment of female athletes in media is undoubtedly responsible for the lack of interest in women's sports among fans and strengthens the general negative attitudes of the public towards women.¹⁹ Sports fans are not interested in women's sports because they have far less media coverage than men's sports, meaning that they are less important and less interesting.²⁰

Using several theoretical frameworks, scientists concluded that the increasing of media coverage, especially television coverage of women's sports, would increase interest in and reduce prejudices against women's sports and female athletes. More coverage would contribute to women's sports importance, and at the same time increase their share of audience.

16 Tuggle, C. A., Huffman, S. i Rosengard, D. (2007). A descriptive analysis of NBC's coverage of the 2004 summer olympics. *Journal of Sports Media*, 2, 55

17 Lebel, K. & Danylchuk, K. (2009). Generation Y's perceptions of women's sport in the media. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 2, 152

18 Coche, R., & Tuggle, C.A. (2016). The women's Olympics?: A gender analysis of NBC's coverage of the 2012 London Summer Games. *Electronic News*, 10 (2), 130

19 Tuggle, C., Huffman, S. i Rosengard, D. (2007)

20 Cunningham, G. (2003). Media coverage of women's sport: A new look at an old problem. *Physical Educator*, 2, 43

This could, in turn, lead to a greater appreciation of female athletes and women's sports, and also bring changes in (negative) attitudes towards women in sports.²¹

4.2.1. The role of society and social stereotypes

Social stereotypes are one of the biggest obstacles to women's sports and media use them as some sort of a pretext for reducing women's sports. The society determines that there are sports in which women can participate, such as golf and tennis. But when women try to undertake sports that are considered masculine, society ignores them because by doing so women go against social norms and customs.²² Stereotypes about which sports women should undertake are the product of media framing of sports, namely determining "what [programme] piece or item is considered the most important".²³

Through media framing editors exhibit the most relevant aspects of a story and emphasize the issues they consider more important for their audience. Using this tactic is detrimental to the coverage of women's sports in media because most journalists and editors tend to emphasize masculinity over femininity. In that manner the public's psychology is being manipulated since the audience follows what an editor and journalist present. Another critical issue is male hegemony, i.e. male domination in the society. Mass media promote male beliefs when it comes to dominant tendencies in sports.²⁴

4.2.2. Advertising revenue

Various studies show that male athletes have the greatest turnover in terms of sponsorship, advertising revenue and television rights. Therefore media strive to cover those sports, stories and athletes that will bring them more revenue. These sports stories are then designed mainly to attract male viewers. Likewise, male athletes, rather than their female counterparts, are most often chosen for advertising purposes. Since they are more famous and recognizable all over the world, the advertising revenue

21 Zajonc, R. B. (1968). Attitudinal effects of mere exposure. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 9, 1

22 Shaller, J. (2006). Female Athletes in the Media. Under Representation and Inadequacy. *The Review: A Journal of Undergraduate Student Research* 8 (2006): 50. Accessible at: <https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/ur/vol18/iss1/10> [10 January 2019]

23 Ibidem

24 Ibidem

will be higher than if female athletes played the main role in those adverts.²⁵ In the United States male athletes have nearly 13 times more photos in newspapers and sports magazines than female athletes. This form of bias against women's sports condemns women to wait for the Olympic Games when they get a much better media coverage.

4.2.3. Female athletes get less airtime on television channels than in 1989

According to a multi-year study by researchers at the University of Southern California, the airtime dedicated to female athletes on the Los Angeles-based TV channels is now shorter than it was in 1989, the first year of the research. At that time up to 5 percent of the programme was dedicated to female athletes while today the share of women's sports dropped to 3.2 percent, with the popular ESPN show SportsCenter being even worse since it dedicates only 2 percent of its programme to women's sports.²⁶

The study's researchers regularly update the results, approximately every five years: 1993, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2018... In the last cycle they analyzed three two-week segments (six weeks total) of sports news coverage on three television channels in Los Angeles, as well as on ESPN's SportsCenter. The results were compared through 20 different categories, including gender, sport type, sporting competition, length of content and production quality.

Inequality was visible in the very length of women's sports coverage (77 seconds on average on SportsCentre and only 44 seconds on local TV channels), and the discrimination of women's sports was particularly apparent in the fact that far more airtime was dedicated to men's sports even during their off-season than to women's sports in the middle of the season. In addition, women's achievements in sports are very often presented as "weak" and "non-inspirational" when compared to men's, and female athletes have been much more covered as girlfriends or wives of well-known male athletes than because of their own sporting achievements.²⁷

25 Jones, D. (2010). "Women's sports coverage: online images of the 2008 Olympic Games." *Australian Journalism Review* 32.2, 98-99

26 Cooky C., Messner, M. A i Musto M. (2015). „It's Dude Time!': A Quarter Century of Excluding Women's Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows. *Communication & Sport* 3, 265. - 266

27 Musto: *When we look at the time from the beginning of this study, we see that the coverage of women was extremely sexist at that time. Now that sexism is more subtle. At first glance it seems that women in sports are treated*

The authors of this study also pointed out that in sports media there were very few women who could influence on better coverage of women's sports. According to their data, as many as 95 percent of analysts and their guests during live sports broadcasts and in other sports shows were men.²⁸

In response to the results of this research, in 2010 ESPN launched a special ESPNW digital platform to better cover women's sports. It was even announced that at some point it could evolve into an independent cable TV channel.

4.2.4. Building the excitement of men's sports

Although there are still too few of news and stories about women's sports, their presentation has improved over time. Unlike in early studies, when most of the women's sports stories were just verbal news items, they are now complemented with relevant graphics and video coverage. But the authors of the study established that reports and broadcasts of men's sports were presented with a lot more enthusiasm and excitement as well as modulation in the voice of the commentator. Commenting on women's sports, on the other hand, still resembles a boring display of data with no enthusiasm.

For the purposes of the study a number of phrases was compiled, phrases which commentators, often in a very excited voice, exclaim during live broadcasts of men's sport events and which are almost never used in the case of women's sports: *bingo, thriller, angry fans, he fired a laser beam, battle, a vicious kick, huge, he threw a bomb, scary, exciting, he delivered a shot, he flew with a full throttle, he sent a rocket across the wall, he punished his opponent, he flew through the air, a big catch, sensational, really incredible, large, a heavy clash, thunders, wonderfully, shocking, fiery, perfect, explosive, spectacular, incredible, another beauty, electric, dominant, brilliant, extraordinary, master of his position, unbelievable, powerful, weapon, rock star, madly good...*

with much more respect, but if you compare this to coverage of men's sports, it's clear that women are presented in a much more boring way. There is no joke nor praise on their account, and this is precisely what is missing in the coverage of women's sports.

28 Messner: I believe that more women in the positions of radio and television commentators would contribute to increasing the equality of women's sports in media. I also think that employers, when hiring new people, should look for journalists and commentators - women or men - who really are interested in women's sports and whose reports and comments will be dominated by true enthusiasm, and not sexism.

Such colourful commentaries, common to almost every story about men's sports, play an important role in creating excitement and constant interest in them.²⁹ SportsCenter show is particularly committed to maintaining enthusiasm for men's sports. A good example of this is the show on 14 July 2014, which analyzed the American Baseball League (MLB).

One analyst claimed that a teammate had brought Jose Bautista a refreshing drink "Gatorade" *to cool him down a bit because he was on fire*. Another analyst described a shot by Giancarla Stanton in the following words: *Wow! Take another look at this one. He absolutely destroys them! You can see the speed of that swing in real time. And just stand and admire such a hit*. One of Stanton's home run hits was also described as *an absolute bomb*.

While the viewers were shown more footage of his moves, it was claimed in the studio that Yoenis Céspedes was *hitting bomb after bomb after bomb*, and that during the match he *kept getting better and better, and the home runs kept getting longer and longer, and the numbers got bigger and bigger*.

By contrast, commentaries on women's sports are mostly reduced to factography, banality, and even underestimation. A good example for this is the KABC's women's beach volleyball story accompanied by a comment: *If you don't have anything else to do...*

Women's sports stories and commentaries are mostly not followed by an elevated anchor's voice, an exciting description of the action and great sporting achievements, or bemoaning of a failure, as is the case with men's sports. The lack of excitement in the broadcasts and the monotonous news agency language in the reports significantly contribute to the fact that women's sports are less interesting, even boring.

4.2.5. Suggested solutions

Cooky, Messner and Musto have suggested to media three policy benchmarks³⁰ that could make positive change in covering women's sports, primarily on television, over a period of five years:

1. Increase the share of women's sports in news, sports shows and broadcasts from the current 2 - 6 to 11 - 18 percent;

29 Messner, M. A., Dunbar, M., i Hunt, D. (2000). The televised sports manhood formula. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 24, 386

30 Cooky C., Messner, M. A i Musto M. (2015). „It's Dude Time!": A Quarter Century of Excluding Women's Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows. *Communication & Sport* 3, 281

2. Present women's sports stories in ways roughly equivalent in quality with the typical presentation of men's sports. This refers both to the technical quality—deploying ample game footage, graphics, music and interviews to accompany a story—and to the quality of the sports anchor's verbal presentation, including amplifying the enthusiasm in reporting women's sports to a level on the excitement meter that is equivalent with the usual presentation of men's sports.;
3. Hire and retain on-camera sports anchors, editors and analysts that are capable and willing to do #1 and #2 and who are interested in women's sports.

It has been noticed during the most recent study that two out of three editors/anchors/analysts were the same ones as those in 1989, which would not have been an issue if they had been willing to change their habits and standards in covering women's sports. But in this case, they demonstrated very little change in that direction. There were less insulting comments on female athletes' account, however the share of men's sports in the programmes of the analyzed television channels had increased.

American writer, comedian, and activist Lindy West has expressed her thoughts³¹ on covering women's sports in media in a few pointers:

1. DO write about female athletes the way you write about male athletes – i.e. without mentioning their gender except maybe in the name of the sport. DO write about gender when it's relevant, such as when you're discussing gender discrimination – for instance, the pay gap in women's basketball and soccer, and the garbage way the media covers (or doesn't) women's sports.
2. DON'T spend more time discussing female athletes' makeup, hairdos, very small shorts, hijabs, bitchy resting faces, voice pitch, thigh circumference, marital status and age than you spend analysing the incredible feats of strength and skill they have honed over a lifetime of superhuman discipline and restraint.
3. DON'T refer to women in terms of men they know, are related to, work with or have sex with. Women are fully-formed, autonomous people who do things. We are not pets or gadgets or sex-baubles.

31 West, L. (2016). *How to talk about female Olympians without being a regressive creep – a handy guide* [online]. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/09/female-olympians-guide-gaffes-athletes-sports-makeup-short-marital-status-lindy-west> [6 January 2019]

4. Athletes are athletes. If you care about sports, write about sports. If you care about gender equality, write about sports.

4.3. France: The share of women's sports in sports programmes grew to 20 percent

In France, 14.5 million women regularly engage in sports or some other physical activity, which is about half of all the athletes in that country. The television coverage of sports plays a major role in the perception of sports by people as well as in their interest in sports. Thus the high coverage of the Olympic Games has had a positive effect on the acceptance of some sports that usually do not get much airtime in television broadcasts, especially those in which French male and female athletes achieved good results (badminton, swimming and boxing).

Women's football is also a good example of the mutual effect between the level of television coverage and the increasing acceptance of female athletes in a community. Since the 2011 World Cup, media coverage of women's football matches in France is on the rise and with it the popularity of football among women. Since the year 2011 the number of women in football clubs increased by 90 percent.³²

The French regulator for audiovisual media services, Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA), conducted a research³³ from 2012 to 2016 on what percentage of overall hourly volume of television sports broadcasting was dedicated to women's sports. This was 7 percent in 2012 and twice as much in 2014, 14 percent. In 2016 the CSA used a much more complex and extensive methodology than the previous one, this time taking a full year of sports broadcasts into account. Bearing on all free-to-air channels³⁴ having shown sports broadcasts (4 public and 8 commercial channels) and a broad sample of the main pay-TV channels which are partly or wholly dedicated to sports³⁵, the analysis showed that this proportion ranges between 16 and 20 percent in 2016.

³² French Football Federation's statistics

³³ Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (2016). *Report on women's sport coverage on television*

³⁴ TF1, France 2, France 3, M6, C8, W9, TMC, France 4, CStar, France Ô, L'Equipe, Numéro 23

³⁵ Sport, Golf +, beIN SPORTS 1, beIN SPORTS 2, beIN SPORTS 3, Eurosport, Equidia

4.3.1. Tennis, football, skiing, biathlon

In terms of hours, the largest share of coverage was dedicated to tennis tournaments (1039 hours), then football matches (443 hours), skiing (360 hours) and biathlon (268 hours). For the sake of comparison, the highest television coverage when it comes to male athletes was football (4173 hours), motosport (2396 hours), tennis (2149 hours) and rugby (1663 hours).

Table 4. *Placement of Women's Sports on Non-Traditional French TV Channels from 2011 to 2015*

Rank	Date	Programme	TV Channel	Audience (million)
1	26/6/2015	Women's World Cup: France - Germany	W9	4.1
2	30/1/2015	Men's Handball World Championship: France - Spain	TMC	3.3
3	11/10/2015	The Hunger Games, movie	D8	3
4	21/6/2015	Women's World Cup: France - South Korea	W9	2.8
5	13/12/2015	Oblivion, movie	TMC	2.3
6	13/7/2011	Women's World Cup: France - USA	D8	2.3
7	8/2/2014	2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi: Freestyle Skiing	France 4	2.3
8	24/10/2013	Despicable Me, animated movie	TMC	2.3
9	17/6/2015	Women's World Cup: Mexico - France	W9	2.2
10	28/10/2013	Thor, movie	France 4	2.2

A confirmation of the real growth of interest for women's sports can be seen in the share of audience of some sports broadcasts. The finals of the women's judo tournament in the +78kg category at the 2016 Olympics were followed by 5.6 million television viewers, and the final match of the World Championship in Rugby between England and France was followed by 3 million television viewers in France, which is also a record share of audience for women's rugby.³⁶

³⁶ L'Equipe (2017). *Audiences : 3 millions devant Angleterre-France sur France 2* [online]. Available at: <https://www.lequipe.fr/Medias/Actualites/>

Furthermore, the match between Germany and France on the 2015 Women's World Cup was followed on W9 channel by 4.1 million television viewers. The match between France and Spain at the World Handball Championship in the same year was followed on TMC by 3.3 million people, while 3 million people watched the world movie hit *The Hunger Games* on D8.³⁷

The analysis of the 2016 survey also reveals that the percentage of women who appear in sports TV shows - whether as anchors, commentators, interviewed athletes, sports fans or doctors talking about a subject - is only 17 percent, compared to 83 percent of men appearing in the same roles. And while the share of female anchors of sporting events is as high as 44 percent, there are considerably less female sports journalists - 13 percent - while female sports columnists' share is only 1 percent.

4.3.2. Women's sport on television is a profitable programme

Women's sports events in France attract an increasing number of television viewers, which increases their attractiveness to advertisers. Given that the value of television rights associated with women's sports is still quite reasonable, when compared to the rights associated with men's sports, the live broadcasts of women's competitions can be profitable to media. The Women's World Cups, which were broadcast by D8 in 2011 and by W9 in 2015, are a good example of this.

In order to study the direct profitability of an event for terrestrial television broadcasters, the CSA used the profitability coefficient - i.e. the ratio between the amount paid for television rights and the relevant advertising revenue. This coefficient gives an idea on how cost-effective a live broadcast of large-scale sports events on a free-to-air television channel is.

For both Women's World Cups mentioned above this coefficient was above 1, i.e. the advertising revenue associated with the event far surpassed the amount paid for the relevant television rights.

If we compare this with the profitability of broadcast large men's sports events on terrestrial television between 2007 and 2015, we can see that only the 2015 World Rugby Championship was profitable³⁸ with

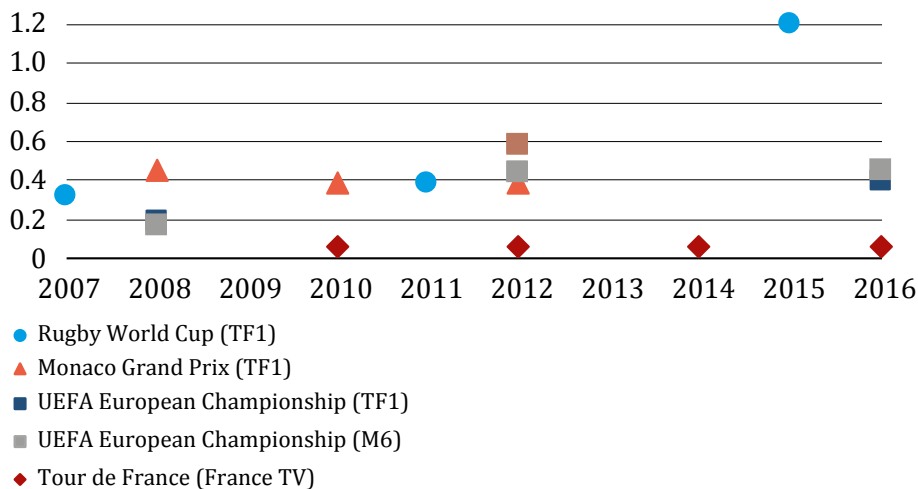
Audiences-3-millions-devant-angleterre-france-sur-france-2/827771 [5 January 2019]

³⁷ Mediamat - Médiamétrie/CSA

³⁸ Kantar Media, CSA

a coefficient slightly above 1. The 2008 European Football Championship (TF1 and M6) had a coefficient of less than 0.2, the Monaco Grand Prix in Formula 1 in the same year was just over 0.4 (TF1), the European Football Championship in 2012 had a coefficient of 0.6 (TF1) while for the world's largest cycling race Tour de France it's regularly just above zero.

Graph 2. Profitability of broadcasting large sports events



Source: Mediamat – Médiamétrie/CSA

4.4. European Commission: Key elements are contracts between media, sports federations and sponsors

The countries of the European Union are a large and rich market with highly developed numerous sports and a great interest of television viewers for them. Among viewers of TV broadcasts of women's sports competitions the male fans are predominant group. This is a valuable consumer group attractive to advertisers that is hard to reach through usual advertising.

Studies in the EU Member Countries show that women are responsible for most consumer decisions in a family, and female athletes both have greater marketing potential than male athletes and enable advertising of more commercial brands.

The key element for increasing the number of women's sports broadcasts on television are contracts between media, sports federations / clubs and sponsors. Sports organizations need to work closely with television companies and other media to increase interest in women's sports. In this regard, there are particularly important high-quality competitions

attractive to media, such as the Women's World Cup.

A major role in increasing the volume of women's sports in media is also played by aligning match dates with programming schedules of the media interested in broadcasting them. The most popular and richest world clubs also have such practice. Even the English and the Spanish football leagues, same as the American NBA league, align their matches to the early afternoon because of television broadcast. With regard to women's sports, the WNBA league (professional women's basketball) is played outside the NBA season.

In some EU Members, sports federations already negotiate special clauses in television rights treaties where television companies demand that batch rights are guaranteed for men's and women's championships in popular team sports (football, basketball).³⁹

A good example for the cooperation of a sports federation and a television broadcaster can be found in Croatia as well. The Croatian Judo Association, through the International Judo Federation (IJF), has secured that the Sports Television Channel obtains the television rights for the World Cup and other top judo competitions.

Many important sports federations have also launched special projects for better coverage of women's sports:

- *The French Basketball Federation provides an online website⁴⁰ where women's basketball matches and match summaries can be watched and partially downloaded;*
- *In Germany, every domestic match of the Women's Bundesliga is streamed live on the Internet platform⁴¹ of the German Football Association;*
- *The British telecommunications company BT launched two new sports channels in August 2013, investing considerable resources in obtaining the rights to broadcast women's tennis and football, while the English Football Association and BT TV, with their sponsors, launched a special commercial programme dealing with women's football. BT TV has at the same time become the main partner of the English Football Association in implementing a five-year strategy for women's football development.*

39 EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism, Youth and Sport (2014). *Gender Equality in Sport Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014 – 2020*, 36

40 www.ffbb.com/edf/videos-equipe-de-france-feminine

41 tv.dfb.de/static/livestreams/

4.5. Nielsen Sports: 84 percent of fans interested in women's sports

The last year's major global study⁴² by Nielsen Sports revealed that 84 percent of those who are interested in sports, more than half of them men, are also interested in women's sports.

A survey conducted in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia and New Zealand shows that 51 percent of male fan population follows women's sports. Among the total fan population - male and female - in these eight countries, as many as 64 percent of respondents show interest in at least one women's sport. The level of interest in women's sports is, however, higher in competitions where male and female athletes perform together (athletics or tennis) than in competitions where female athletes are separated from their male counterparts (golf, cricket, football).

The study, which included 1000 respondents from each of these countries, has also revealed that women's sports are considered more *inspirational, progressive, family-oriented* and *cleaner* than men's sports, which are generally considered to be *driven by money*.

Almost 50 percent of women think women's sports are competitive, while 44 percent of men think the same. Also, 41 percent of women and 31 percent of men consider it stimulating. Furthermore 43 percent of respondents showed interest in women's football, which means that in the said eight countries this sport has a potential fan base of 105 million people.

In France, 63 percent of the respondents are aware that their country hosts the 2019 Women's World Cup, but only 34 percent of fans have shown interest in the event, compared to 45 percent of the last year's World Cup in Russia, where France won a gold medal.

When considering the respondents from all eight countries included in the study, 43 percent would like to be in the audience at women's sports events, while 63 percent of them would attend some male athletic competition.

⁴² Nielsen Sports (2018). *The rise of women's sports - identifying and maximizing the opportunity* [online]. Available at: <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2018/the-rise-of-womens-sports.html> [11 January 2019]

5. GENDER STEREOTYPES AND SEXISM

Even 25 years after 412 sports organizations around the globe have adopted the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sports⁴³, neither sports nor its media coverage have been cleansed of sexism and gender discrimination of women, but have rather, in the world of tabloid media and reality show programs, become a polygon of inadmissible sexist outbursts, vulgar mockery and humiliation of women, whenever an opportunity arises. Therefore we can rightly say that many sports organizations are still not able to institutionalize gender integration in sports, nor are media ready, aware and trained to treat women in sports equally to their male counterparts.

5.1. The best female football player and *twerking*

Although the main purpose of the Declaration was to develop a sport culture that allowed and appreciated the full participation of women in all aspects of sports, and although both governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as all sporting institutions committed themselves to applying the principles of the Declaration, in the interest of equality, development and peace, by developing appropriate policies, structures and mechanisms for the overall equality of women in sports, 25 years after Brighton too many attempts remained unfinished. That was only confirmed by the 2018 scandal on one of the most important sports stages where the Golden Ball Award was presented, for the first time in history, to the outstanding female football player of 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Co-host of the ceremony, French DJ Martin Solveig, has been criticized for asking the award winner, Norwegian Adu Hegerberg, whether she knew how to twerk. In other words, how to shake her bottom. The Lyons's football player answered that completely inappropriate question with a brief "no", and after the ceremony was finished, she pointed out that she considered the commentary a joke, not sexual harassment. However, she could not, and did not need to, protect the vulgar co-host from the lesson he was taught by the more enlightened part of the society. The triple Grand Slam winner, tennis player Andy Murray stood out among the critics, candidly saying: *Another example of the ridiculous sexism that still exists in sport. Why do women still have to up with that shit? What questions did they ask Mbappe*

⁴³ Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport, International working group on women and sport (1994)

and Modric? I'd imagine something to do with football. And to everyone who thinks people are overreacting and it was just a joke... it wasn't. I've been involved in sport my whole life and the level of sexism is unreal.

5.2. Sexism at the Olympic Games

Paradoxically, it seems that nothing like the Olympic Games can remind women how inferior they are, thanks to the omnipresent patronization of female athletes from all over the globe, whenever and wherever an opportunity arises. This was a unanimous conclusion of an exhaustive analysis of media coverage of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Both male and female analysts agreed that the media coverage of the Games in Rio was scandalous and openly sexist! TV and radio programs alike, as well as print and electronic media and social networks abounded with sexist comments and statements, and the exhaustive, and ultimately most quoted study was made by the Cambridge University Press.⁴⁴

5.2.1. Subtle gender divisions

By analyzing the media coverage of the sports in Rio, the study displayed subtle gender divisions and a large number of sexism in reporting on male and female athletes, which was partially processed and published by the Libela.org, web site of the Center for Education, Consulting and Research. It is primarily about the manner in which men and women in sports are described, namely the dominant discourse of the female athletes' descriptions based on their appearance, age, and marital or love status.

Here is a list of the most prominent sexist prejudices and statements that were commented by media at the time of the Games in Rio:

- NBC Marketing Manager John Miller said that the *sexy opening ceremony of the Games with nearly naked samba dancers* was merely gratification for female audience who is *less interested in the result and more interested in the journey. It's sort of like the ultimate reality show and mini-series wrapped into one.*
- US media also expressed many humiliating comments for members of their female gymnastics team. For example, after being highly dominant on the top team qualifications, five finalists were exposed to comments on their appearance, and one of the NBC commenta-

⁴⁴ Cambridge University Press (2016). *Language, Gender and Sport* [online]. Available at: cambridge.org/betterlearning. [13 January 2019]

tors said that they might as well be standing around at the mall, trying to reduce the authority of the convincingly most powerful gymnastics team in the history of the Olympic Games.

- After almost perfect performance by Simone Biles on uneven bars, one commentator praised her, saying: *She could go even further than men*. In general, Biles was constantly compared to male athletes who were not even gymnasts, to which she answered perfectly: *I'm not the next Usain Bolt or Michael Phelps, I'm the first Simone Biles*.
- We have heard a similar comparison for American swimmer Katie Ledecky, who was said to *swim like a man* and was described as *the female Michael Phelps*. Instead of giving full credit to these women because they were top athletes, they were constantly compared with men.
- A newspaper headline was shared on social networks, which was - as Nancy Leong defined it when it was published - *a metaphor for basically the entire world*. She explained that not every achievement was equally impressive. Although Phelps had won the second place, and Ledecky had set a world record, Phelps gained more media coverage and bigger newspaper headlines.
- Furthermore, NBC said that “the man responsible” for the result of Hungarian swimmer Katinka Hosszu, who broke the world record of the 400 meter individual medley (i.e. for her success), was her coach Shane Tusup.
- The Chicago Tribune, reporting on the success of the bronze medal winner, launched the shooter Corey Cogdell-Unrein as *the wife of a Bears' lineman*. “Somehow” they have forgotten to mention that these were her third Olympic Games and the second bronze medal, following the one in Beijing in 2008.
- Mail Online had decided to report on the best and worst gymnastics leotards with a plethora of commentaries that a leotard *failed to complement the gymnast's skin tone* or that a leotard *turned heads for all the wrong reasons*, describing its *unattractive teal hue and a rhinestone-covered collar*.
- The very fact that there is still a dress code for female gymnasts is sexism in itself. Gold Olympic winner Nastia Liukin said in an interview with People Magazine that gymnasts get point deducted if they pick a wedgie or if their bra strap is out. Plus, the leotard must be of *elegant design*.

- The Australian edition of The Sun wrote that the 100 meter hurdler Michelle Jenneke is *certainly not shy about showing off her body*, in an article that focused on her figure and presence on social networks rather than her sporting skills.
- Media generally could not reconcile with the fact that Dana Vollmer, a winner of multiple swimming medals, was a mother, although she had had her baby more than a year before. There was no article that did not mention her role as a mother, implying that having a child makes a woman incapable of achieving the success she had had before she gave birth. Among other examples, the commentator of the BBC described the fight of the women's judo finalists, the Kosovo Majlinda Kelemendi and the Italian Odette Gioffrida, as *a cat fight* and the world's swimming record holder Sarah Sjostrom had been constantly asked by the NBC commentators *whether she would dance samba on Copacabana* to celebrate the victory. The Mexican gymnast Alexa Moreno had been exposed to vicious comments and ridicule on social networks where some "trolls" called her a pig and more suitable for hot dog eating contests than for gymnastics.
- Despite the amazing achievements of female athletes in Rio, commentators rarely talked about them as (adult) women. For example, *a men's and a girls' team* were announced in a bicycle race, and one commentator called Missy Franklin, a four-time gold medal winner, *an enthusiastic girl*.
- Not even female commentators were spared the overflow of sexism in Rio. Thus the BBC co-host Helen Skelton was overwhelmed by commentaries on Twitter on the short dress she wore, despite the fact she was reporting from a closed, damp swimming arena, while her male co-host Mark Foster was in short shorts.
- Panelists Bo Dietls and Marco Simone discussed in the Fox News sports programme whether the female athletes should wear makeup during Olympic competitions. The two (who, of course, had no clue about makeup) talked about why some female athletes like it and how *makeup just increases the beauty of a female athlete*.
- The BBC Sports commentator John Inverdale had "forgot" that men were not the only species that existed on Earth. Inverdale, after Andy Murray won the second Olympic gold, said: *You're the first person to ever win two Olympic tennis gold medals*. Murray replied: *Venus and Serena [Williams] have won about four each*.

- The Canadian tennis player Eugenie Bouchard found herself the target of the Canadian rower Adam Kreek, who accused her of losing a match against German Angelique Kerber because she had spent too much time on Instagram, changing hairstyles and posting selfies, concluding his tirade with a sentence: *And maybe that's, 'I got into the tennis world and I want to leverage this.'* We did not hear anyone say anything like that to Ryan Lochte.
- A journalist from Swedish magazine Danderyd dared to ask Pia Sundhage, who led the American women's team to gold in the first two Olympic games, a stupid question: *could she coach the men's national team*, at which Sundhage immediately replied: *Well, Angela Merkel is running an entire f***ing country. Clearly it works!*

5.2.2. Some positive examples

Caitlin Constantine, a blogger and news producer on digital media in Florida, along with some embarrassing examples of reporting on female athletes from the Games in Rio, also highlighted some positive news stories.⁴⁵

A lot of it has just been embarrassing. I still recall watching John McEnroe go on and on about the bikinis worn by the beach volleyball players and wanting to throw my shoe at the television. And the whole thing with Fox about Gabby Douglas's uniform not being patriotic, and The New York Times' Jere Longman's hit piece on Lolo Jones ... ugh. The common denominator in all of this problematic coverage was that it focused not on the athletes' performances but on what they looked like.

Here you have all of these driven, focused women pursuing their moment of glory, a moment that comes around once every four years, and all anyone can talk about is what they look like! And then, of course, that sparked a reaction in which people criticized the criticism, and meanwhile I'm like "But what about the sports!?"

That said, I did come across a lot of reporting that I really enjoyed. I loved a piece I read about U.S. women's soccer on Grantland, where the author talked about the team's unpredictability on the pitch, (...) I liked stories I read about Diana Taurasi's leadership on and off the basketball court, about Evelyn Stevens' transition from life as an investment banker

45 Nathman, A.N. (2012). Femisphere: Sports Bloggers with a Gender Lens Ms. Magazine, 31 August [online]. Available at: <http://msmagazine.com/blog/2012/08/31/femisphere-sports-bloggers-with-a-gender-lens/> [20 January 2019]

to a pro cyclist, about Kayla Harrison's backstory as a sexual abuse victim-turned-gold medalist ... really, I could go on and on. The point is that there was a lot of great coverage out there but I had to go seek it out.

5.3. Even positive stories burdened by stereotypes

Even when female athletes and their results are presented with a high degree of professionalism, interest, and even enthusiasm, stories are often burdened by stereotypes that put the athlete's sporting achievements in the secondary position. A good example of this is a story on one of the best female basketball players of all time, Lisa Leslie, aired on the KNBC on July 22, 2014. The segment contained numerous footage from her playing days, featuring numerous awards, titles and medals she had won during her great sporting career.

At the end of the segment, however, Leslie was shown holding her baby, and she said: *Being a wife and a mom is just my favorite title. People often ask me if I miss playing basketball and I'm like, absolutely not, because I love being a wife, cooking and being home.*

Similar versions of the story were broadcast on NKBC three times in total duration of 4:17 minutes, which represented almost half of the total (10:30) main coverage of women's sports on that channel in the analyzed period.

SportsCenter's July 18th broadcast ran an in-studio interview with WNBA star Candace Parker, similar to the Lisa Leslie story. The segment opens with game footage clips of Parker scoring a basket, along with commentary from the game ("Wow! Candace Parker! What a move!"), and contains photos of her holding a trophy and other sporting elements. Next we see Parker in a dress and full makeup sitting in the studio, and the interviewer asks her at some point: *We always see you with your daughter, Lailaa. How do you balance being the centerpiece of a franchise with being a centerpiece of a little girl's life as well?*

These two stories on Lisa Leslie on KNBC and on Candace Parker on ESPN were long segments with very high production values and respectful commentary. Both Leslie and Parker were featured because of their dominance and stature in the sport of women's basketball, however, each piece eventually meanders to the theme of motherhood.

It is difficult to imagine a sports anchor or journalist questioning a prominent male athlete — say, a LeBron James — *How do you balance being the centerpiece of a franchise with being a centerpiece of a little girl's [or boy's] life as well?*

Scholars have noted how professional women's sports are frequently framed by commercial interests and media in ways that highlight women athletes' heterosexual attractiveness and/or roles as mothers. "Other" women—those who are single, or who are lesbians, or who might not be viewed as conventionally attractive—are rarely given the same attention by media, sports promoters, or advertisers.

5.4. Sexism in Croatian media

From the beginning of April to the end of June 2012, home pages of nine web portals were collected each working day.⁴⁶ According to the International Agency for Website traffic competitive analysis⁴⁷, these websites are visited by nearly 6.5 million individual visitors per month, which together accounts for nearly 100 million visits. This clearly explains the reach of their content and therefore the manner of their presentation of women and men and the themes with which they are associated represent a social impact that should not be neglected.

5.4.1. Female athletes get 9 out of 1510 sports news features

Besides the lowest percentages of representation (6%) when compared with other activities, women in sports are presented in a drastically different manner than men, but very similar to the manner in which they are presented in connection with any other topic. Sports news related to women in sports include photos and news about top female athletes who win medals at international sports competitions, individual news from the world, and an almost negligible number of news related to women's team sports (9 out of 1510). It should be noted that although the volleyball was codified as a women's team sport, its presentation is not exempt from downgrading women to objects of a man's gaze and diverting the attention from sports and female athletes to their looks: *We prefer the volleyball bottoms* (Net.hr, May 25, 2012).

The majority of few articles on women in sports present female athletes as worthy of attention primarily because of their looks and not the sport in which they are involved: *Sexy Bodybuilders Enchant the European Championship in Zagreb* (tportal.hr, May 15, 2012), *Firm Bottoms on Parade: The European Championship in Bodybuilding Held in Zagreb* (Jutarnji

⁴⁶ The Gender Equality Ombudperson (2012). *Annual Report*

⁴⁷ Gemius [online]. Available at: <https://rating.gemius.com/hr/tree/8>

list, May 14, 2012). In other cases photos of female athletes are simply inserted into a feature on a men's sport event as additional content or the relevant sport is simply used as a reference point for the female athlete presented in the given article.

5.4.2. Headlines dominated by men

Sport is a subject in which men and topics of men in sports dominate on the home pages of web portals. Photos presenting male athletes partially undressed are taken when they take off their T-shirts after a football match, or when the naked torso is common in that sport, for example photos of boxers. The accompanying texts include superlatives related to the male sportsmanship such as *the hellish center forward*, or *the Brazilian wunderkind*, or *in the middle of Croatian football darkness, Ivica Olić appeared*.

Discriminatory and sexist presentation of women in sports is characteristic of virtually all of the home pages of web portals, with the exception of the HRT portal where we did not record such photos or titles / texts in the analyzed period. On the Novi List portal, the share of this manner of presentation is much lower than, for example, on portals Tportal.hr, Nova TV's dnevnik.hr, or Jutarnji list, which predominate in gender discriminatory photos, texts and messages.

5.4.3. "Girlies, pack your little bags!"

One of the most drastic examples of female athletes' discrimination, i.e. crude sexism in media, had nothing to do with reporting on a female athletes' competition. It was a shameful front page as well as the home page of the 24sata daily newspaper, in both printed and web edition, which published, after the Croatian national team was defeated by Mexico 1-3 at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, an offensive and unequivocal sexist title *Girlies, pack your little bags!*

The front page caused an uproar and the revolt of the public, so that even some social network groups were launched calling for a boycott of 24sata, but for all the wrong reasons. The readers called for the boycott not because the title was brutally humiliating for women but rather because the title hurt our boys, our pride and our nation. How did anyone even dare to compare our boys to girlies!

In general, in the locker rooms of Croatian athletes, but also in many media, the victory or defeat is often explained with *we had/did not have the balls*, or *we played like girlies*, or more directly, *we played like pussies*.

Some time ago we could witness, on the example of basketball player Antonija Mišura who had had been presented almost exclusively in a tabloid manner, despite her top-notch sporting quality, that the coverage of women's sports is inseparable from commenting on and judging female athletes' appearance, and that their accomplishments often remain in the shadow of their physical appearance. Social networks, Facebook and especially Instagram, where female athletes are self-promoting so as to promote their sponsors, but also because of the social climate, have even more drastically committed them to fashion, beauty and spectacle categories in media.

5.5. How are female athletes portrayed in media?

Researcher and author Toni Bruce has studied women's sports coverage for more than 20 years. In her 2012 research, she highlighted 15 rules which show current and past trends on how female athletes are portrayed in the media and she split them into four categories.⁴⁸

5.5.1. Older rules (still exist but research suggests they are no longer that prevalent)

- *Lower broadcast production values: Coverage of women's sport used to use fewer cameras, fewer statistics and fewer replays. Commentators were male and had little knowledge of the players. The overall quality was bad and it made women's sport look boring.*
- *Gender marking: There is football and then there is women's football. There is the World Cup and then there is the Women's World Cup. That is the concept behind gender marking – men's sport is described as just 'sport'; women's sport is not.*
- *Infantilisation (particularly in 20th century): It was common for coverage to describe women as girls or young ladies throughout the twentieth century. The problem is not with women being called girls but that it was only applied to women – men have always been called men.*
- *Non-sport related aspects: Studies have shown a high level of attention to women's personal lives, appearances and families. This tendency is reducing but has not disappeared.*

48 Bruce, T. (2018). *The 15 rules of sports media representation of female athletes*. IWG World Conference on Women and Sport [online]. Available at: <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/news/15-rules-sports-media-representation-female-athletes> [5 January 2019]

- *Comparisons to men's sports: "She's the female Usain Bolt." Such statements intend to flatter women but are actually another way that men's sport is presented as the standard against which women's sport should be judged.*

5.5.2. Persistent (established and difficult to change despite extensive critique)

- *Sportswomen don't matter: Media coverage of women's sports is very low.*
- *Compulsory heterosexuality/appropriate femininity: "Ok, you can be an athlete but only in a feminine way." This rule views femininity as incompatible with physical strength. Coverage emphasises heterosexual femininity and negatively represents lesbian identities and 'masculine-looking' bodies.*
- *Sexualisation: This rule focuses on athletes' bodies rather than athletic abilities. This is common in the United States where women are shown in 'sexy poses' in magazines.*
- *Ambivalence: When a female athlete does get media coverage, it focuses on both the strength, skill and achievement common in sports discourse and also attributes associated with infantilisation, compulsory femininity and sexualisation. These contradictions continue to place her outside of sport's 'norms.'*

5.5.3. Current (focusing on situations where coverage of female athletes is similar to that of men)

- *Athletes in action images: Coverage shows women's power, strength and athleticism. Research shows that images of female athletes competing at events are similar to those of men. The number of images is lower, however.*
- *Serious athletes: Women are increasingly portrayed as serious athletes, with more focus on the abilities than in the past. This is particularly evident in global events such as the Olympics.*
- *Model citizens: When women win, particularly if they are from our country, we see them as standing up for us, as people we should look up to. We associate whatever stereotypes we have for us with them. They might be strong and determined, for example.*

- *Us and them: However, we only put those stereotypes on our own country's women, not on others'. Our own athletes are strong and determined model citizens and serious athletes but we excessively feminise or sexualise women from other countries.*

5.5.4. Emerging online (new trends in the age of the internet)

- *Our voices: Athletes and sports fans are now able to produce media themselves due to websites, blogs and social media. The internet has allowed alternative voices to gain media attention.*
- *Pretty and powerful: You can be feminine but also a powerful and determined world champion. Female athletes who are represented in both ways are often those who have risen to prominence on social media. Research on this comes mostly from the US, where a study showed that athletes are rated as more attractive than models. It's difficult to say if it's really positive or just another form of sexualisation. The same research shows that athletes viewed as attractive tend to be white, thin, tall and heterosexual.*

6. A SURVEY AMONG FEDERATIONS AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

6.1. National sports federations

In a survey⁴⁹, we analyzed the relationship between national Croatian sports federations and media in the production of contents and their exchange as well as the interest in women's sport. The federations were asked same two questions. Five national federations in Croatia participated in the survey.⁵⁰

1. Do you think that Croatian women's sports are sufficiently represented in the news programmes of Croatian electronic media?
2. What should happen, namely improve, so that women's sports are more represented in electronic media? Where do you see the problem and the possibility of improvement?

In Croatian national sports federations, they are either not satisfied or they are dissatisfied with the share of women's sport in the media. As possible reasons they point out that women's careers last shorter, the results of female athletes are inferior, there is too little investment in sports and too much interdependence between investing in women's sports and financial viability of women's sports, namely influences and trends in the market. Women's sports' sponsors are not visible in media so it is recommended to increase the interest of girls for sports media consumption through increasing reporting on women in sports, and not only by reporting on medals won but also on difficult and inadequate conditions in which medals can hardly arise.

The federations' recommendation is to introduce quotas, 10 to 30 percent, for the media coverage of women's sports and it is also recommended to media editors not to represent women's sports in their reports as beauty contests. Federations claim that regulation would help the matter, but it is not clear whether it can be achieved at the level of internal regulations or of legislation. In the conducted survey, both media and national federations often emphasize the phrase *an internal agreement on coverage*, i.e. an agreement on the level of several media

49 The survey was not based on a scientific approach so that its results are only illustrative.

50 Tomislav Pacak, Spokesman for the Croatian Football Federation (HNS), Lidiya Bojić - Čačić, Coordinator for Women's Handball in the Croatian Handball Federation (HRS), Igor Rajković, Spokesman for the Croatian Tennis Association (HTS), Zrinka Tomičić, PR contact person for the Croatian Basketball Federation (HKS) and Ivana Janković, Spokeswoman for the Croatian Water Polo Federation (HVS)

houses on the treatment, time and editorial presentation of an individual feature.

The federations recommend increasing share of articles on women's sports by 20-30 percent, and therein presenting female athletes who are known and successful in their sports, presenting the clubs that work well with young girls and have good results as well as presenting female athletes who are the future in a particular sport. Likewise, they recommend providing adequate funding for women's sports. Collaboration with media in reporting on women's sports is currently extremely poor because there is no interest in affirming women's sports in Croatia.⁵¹

It is recommended to affirmatively write about sport as a social activity, not just about the greatest results. We cannot expect the highest results in Croatian women's sports, they say in the federations, because there are no quality working conditions.

6.1.1. Croatian Tennis Association

The national sports organizations in Croatia unquestionably testify to disproportion in the announcements and reports on the results of female and male athletes. Some federations, such as the Croatian Tennis Association, claim that they cannot influence the attractiveness and market value of a particular sport and programme, but on their official sites they give equally valuable treatment to equally valuable results in men's or women's competitions. They use the same practice on all social networks used by the CTA, namely Facebook and Instagram. The Croatian Tennis Association points out that the result determines the media coverage, as seen on the examples of Marin Čilić and Borna Ćorić. However, they add that one of the problems of lower coverage of women's sports is the fact that female athletes finish their careers before their male counterparts of the same age and that due to marriage and childbearing they find themselves in objectively inferior position than men, who can continue to engage in their sports without interruption. This diminishes the female athletes' pool, they claim in the Tennis Association, and reduces the possibility of a good organization for equal numbers of clubs and tournaments in both competitions.

In our society, many still think that a woman should stay at home or at least pay more attention to child upbringing, and as long as that attitude is not altered, women's sports as well as their results will suffer, and likewise the possibility of having equal media coverage, the Croatian Tennis Association remarks.

⁵¹ Lidija Bojić-Čačić, HRS

6.1.2. Croatian Handball Federation

In the Croatian Handball Federation, they are also not happy with the share of media coverage of women's collective sports and consider it minimal. During the Women's Senior Championship, when the Croatian representation played in the European Championship in France in December 2018, the women's handball matches were not broadcast on Croatian Radio Television (i.e. PSB) or any other television channel. The CHF considers it unacceptable not only for handball but also for any other sport, men's or women's. *It is impossible to recognize the success of handball players, if we can not see it anywhere*, says Lidija Bojić - Čačić, PhD, the Coordinator for Women's Handball at the CHF. Another causal-consequent link is also a smaller budget for women's sports and therefore a lower interest of sponsors who think they would not be visible in media.

6.1.3. Croatian Basketball Federation

The problem of low investment in women's sports, and especially in domestic league competitions where experience is gained for the representative level, is the key issue, the Croatian Basketball Federation points out, along with the reciprocity of supply and demand for women in sports presented in electronic media. You can read about women's basketball in the Croatian media only in articles on some Miss of Sports beauty pageant, they claim in this federation.

6.1.4. Croatian Football Federation

The Croatian Football Federation has participated in the survey with specific examples and recommendations for media that are more interested in male cadets than women's A selection. Only a small number of media covered the great success of the women's national team, which played 1:1 in the qualifiers against the Danish national team, the European Vice-Champion, while the similar success of any male team - football, basketball, handball or water polo - would have had much more significant media coverage.

Media's interest in women's football is raised mainly by non-sporting reasons, says Tomislav Pacak, the award-winning "press officer" of the Croatian Football Federation, citing the texts from various internet portals with the following headlines:

1. *The new President of WFC Marjan is especially liked by Serbs who say: The new football muse has enchanted the region;*

2. *Women's sports in its best edition, if you don't believe it, see for yourselves;*
3. *Pastor Halić: Women's football endangers religious freedoms;*
4. *Steaua's controversial president continues with his outbursts on women's football, his statements raise hair on one's head.*

Editors believe that only in this context women's football can be interesting to readers, and they often use a sexist approach where female football players and women's football are treated through the prism of their looks, and not sporting values. Female football referees are interesting to media if they are *lovely, attractive beauties*. Croatian coach Tihana Nemicic, a future PhD, is mostly presented in texts related to her appearance and not to her notable academic career related to football. The Croatian Football Federation believes that media must act more professionally because they currently send a message to viewers that women's sports as such cannot be interesting unless they are played by beauties.

How many times the terms 'beautiful tennis player' and how many times 'handsome tennis player' are used in reports from tennis courts? Only when we equalize the standards of media coverage of men's and women's sports, we will be able to move towards the equalization of quantity of media contents on men's and women's sports, claims the CFF, which has published on its website more than 300 news on women's football over the past three years. In comparison, approximately 200 news on futsal have been published in the same period, but it has a much greater media coverage. 146 news articles have been published on the CFF website on the men's U-19 team and 52 on the women's U-19 team. The Federation considers the difference to be acceptable given the different results achieved by male and female selections, as well as the number of male football players compared to the number of their female counterparts.

The Croatian Football Federation recommends increasing media coverage of women's football by ten percent because they are convinced that would bring results. The CFF calls on media to republish the news on women's football, originally published on its web site, and thus help promoting young women and girls who are as dedicated to their sport as their male colleagues. Examples from Western and Northern Europe show a growing trend of women's football, but besides the Federation's efforts it is necessary that media contribute to its promotion. Without media's support the CFF's reach of general public for this purpose is very limited.

6.1.5. Croatian Water Polo Federation

The Women's Water Polo League, which has been played for 20 years, is unknown to Croatian sport fans, they claim in the Croatian Water Polo Federation, an organization that holds many World and Olympic medals. The lack of information leads to the prejudice that girls who practice water polo are male-like and rough and therefore media have to take responsibility for editorial presentation and placement of relevant information. The Croatian Women's Water Polo Team competed in the European Championship in 2018, and their matches were broadcast on the Croatian Radio Television in the late night hours. The men's water polo matches in the same rankings were broadcast live, with introductory features. Even though the achieved result plays a key role in the choice and attractiveness of a broadcast, the Croatian Water Polo Federation holds that even one match in live broadcast would help the promotion of women's sports.

In the USA, Australia, Russia, China, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Hungary and Greece, women's water polo investments are considerably higher, according to the Croatian Water Polo Federation, and this is also true for a number of other sports and their associations.

6.2. Media

According to the conducted survey and analysis of contents, obtained on a sample of 11 journalists of leading sports newsrooms in Croatia who were asked the same two questions as abovementioned sports federations, it can be concluded that most editors determine which content would be published based on the popularity of sports, the size of the audience in the stands at a sporting event as well as data on reading/viewing of information, news and features on women's sports. Croatian media are also guided by foreign competition and they do not see a lot of women's sports in their daily headlines. They emphasise that the biggest problem is the commercial unprofitability of such contents. The data on reading audience of articles on women's sports are defeating, and according to that numbers, the calculation seems to indicate that women's sports are actually already overly presented.

However, editors admit that they are wrong on this issue and they recommend that, regardless of the audience size or viewing data or the number of "clicks", media do write and report on women's sports. They claim that appropriate regulation would help the issue, or even just a general agreement among the newsrooms. Media openly call upon the regulatory bodies to take action because they themselves are willing to get involved

and give their space to women's sports. Many authors and analysts who create media contents, do not have women's sports in their focus of interest. Media representatives believe that due to the market situation they cannot do much and they also say that football takes about 70 percent of media sports coverage. Journalists and editors have marginalized many of the sports with long traditions in Croatia, and journalists working in one part of media claim that such editorial decisions are not always based on numbers nor on data on women's sports.

Reporters and journalists of leading media claim that little can be done individually to mend this disparity but they see room for progress and recommend launching a joint initiative for which they are willing to offer their space. The statements of editors and journalists collected in January 2019 are published here in their integral version since we believe that in that form they could be used for further research or recommendations regarding the future coverage of women's sports in Croatian electronic media.

6.2.1. Croatian Radio – HRT⁵², Marko Šivak

The share of women's sports in Croatia media is at the minimum of the minimum. However, given the fact that we are lead by the results, i.e. sporting success - it is causally-consequently related. At the European Women's Handball Championship in Sweden in 2016 we were the only editorial team, but at the European Championship in France in 2018 there were no Croatian journalists. Our girls flatly lost all three games. In addition to the Podravka and Lokomotive matches in European cups that we occasionally follow, we also sometimes broadcast the women's basketball or handball national team's matches. Furthermore, we regularly cover Sandra Perković and our female tennis players in news and through statements. We have reports from European and world athletic championships and we cover our female athletes competing at the Olympic Games.

To improve the situation, the complete ownership / editorial structure in media should change, because the current trend is publishing trivia, which suppresses the "spirit of the Olympics" to the background and values things that have no connection with sports. Nevertheless, equality or better coverage of women's sports should not be demanded at all costs.

Raising the awareness of media consumers on the existence of women's sports should be carried out through the publication of contents on

⁵² The Croatian Radio Television (HRT) - the Public Service Broadcaster with several platforms

recreational sports and putting emphasis on reporting on youth sports. (Insisting, for example, on reporting on a total defeat of our female athletes in some international competition would cause an opposite effect, and probably provoke the ridicule of media consumers.)

Another serious issue is the disappearance of as much as 80% of sport contents from the national TV channels whereby there is no interest nor incentive for young people to engage in regular sporting activities through clubs. The time when 200 little girls joined the Athletic Sport Club Split because Blanka Vlašić had won a medal is long gone.

6.2.2. RTL Television⁵³, Antonio Vuksanović

I think that women's sports are not sufficiently represented. There is more man's sports in news programmes, not just on RTL TV. However, the results of female athletes are lower. With the exception of athletics (and in particular Sandra Perković), other sports' results are sporadic. That's especially the case in women's team sports. Not a single medal was won by a Croatian women's team sports representation at the Olympic Games since Croatia gained its independence. I do not claim that an Olympic medal is the only measure, but the fact is that the results in women's sports on the global level are lower than in men's. Especially in recent times. For example, in 30 seconds of the Council for Electronic Media's promotional video intended for the affirmation of women's sports in media, more than a third is dedicated to celebrations of female athletes who have been retired (Kostelić, Boroš, Majoli, Zaninović). Furthermore, for the last seven years the Sports News Award winner, chosen by sports journalists, is Sandra Perković, and all other female athletes remain far behind her. As for team sports, the women's crossbow national team has dominated for the last few years. With all due respect for the crossbow team and their successes, which are indeed great, when we talk about "big and small" sports, the crossbow, unfortunately, falls into the "small" category. Also this year, the Croatian Olympic Committee for the first time did not nominate any women's team for the Dražen Petrović Award, explaining that *there were no reason to vote due to the lack of candidates*. The Dražen Petrović Award is bestowed on young people so it is concerning if this situation is the future of women's sports.

First of all, the female athletes' results should be better. Sandra Perković has enough coverage on RTL TV. Sara Kolak also had enough coverage

⁵³ RTL Hrvatska d.o.o. – a commercial TV broadcaster on the national level with several platforms

before her injury; while the women's handball team was preparing for the European Championship, we broadcast a story on that; the woman's volleyball team qualified for the European Championship, we broadcast that story as well. The boxer Ivana Habazin is an "RTL project", a female athlete covered by RTL TV and we broadcast her matches for the last few years. When a new young hope emerges on the sport scene, RTL will cover her. Once again I draw attention to the Dražen Petrović Award and the fact that Croatian Olympic Committee did not nominate any female team this year due to the lack of candidates.

6.2.3. Nova TV⁵⁴, Ana-Marija Vuković

I am glad that the Council for Electronic Media has already noticed, in one of its analysis of national TV programmes, a significant representation of women's sports in our programme. We are happy to cover female athletes' achievements, but our sporting time is limited. This is why women's sports, having in mind the proportionality of the success in top sports when compared to Croatian male athletes, is less represented. Some good and positive stories of our female athletes often go unnoticed, however, I would not hold media responsible but rather home clubs and federations.

Federations and clubs should approach media to "sell a story" that deserves a place in the media sphere. Little or no information comes from their side, and most of the federations, and especially the clubs, do not have a person who takes care of media relations. If the interaction of federations / clubs and media was raised to a higher level, I'm sure the number of published information would be higher.

6.2.4. Večernji list's web portal Sportal.hr⁵⁵, Marko Pavić

Women's sports are not sufficiently represented in media, however, the cause is not just sports journalists and editors, but also audiences. Virtually all media in Croatia are led by commercial logic, *give to people what they want to read*, and this is rarely women's sports. Judging by the visitor's preferences of the portal Večernji list, which mostly follows marketing principles, the readers are interested in female athletes when they

54 Nova TV d.d. - a commercial TV broadcaster on the national level with several platforms

55 Večernji list d.d. - a commercial daily newspaper publisher on the national level (Večernji list) and a provider of several electronic publications (web portals)

achieve a great success, such as Janica Kostelić and Sandra Perković, or when they are involved in a scandal, or have provoking photos, love affairs and so on. Of course, such situation does not relieve journalists of their responsibility and they should strive to find a balance between the public interest and commercial success of the media they work for. Thus, the problem is in the way the Croatian media function and the lack of audience's interest for women's sports.

It is crucial that the State starts taking regulatory action so as to take care of the sport and invest in its infrastructure in order to raise new sports heroines. Since this will not happen, I think it would be good if journalists would find ways to present women's sports in an attractive way through interesting stories, interviews and similar suitable topics. Furthermore, our women's sports clubs and organizations could work on their promotion because it's enough to look at some of the websites of some clubs and federations to realize that little is done in that field.

6.2.5. Croatian Television – HRT, Boris Jelavić

The HRT Sports Department follows women's sports as well as men's, and treats both men's and women's successes in the same way and makes no difference. When it comes to news programme, women's sports are represented according to the level of the relevant competition, namely to the achieved top-level results at the highest competitions.

This was the case with the fantastic results of Janica Kostelić, Sandra Perković, female handball players of Podravka when they participated in the League of Champions as well as the matches of female national teams. We are aware that there are always opportunities for better coverage. Our desire is certainly to follow even more events in which our female athletes participate, either individually or as a club, and thus through news programmes further promote women's sports, as well as through other HRT shows, such as "Good Morning Show", "Good Day Show" and similar programmes.

6.2.6. Web portal GOL.hr⁵⁶, Ivan Šimac

Web portal GOL.hr is a relevant source of information related to all sports, so we cover women's sports and we will continue to follow and report on female athletes' achievements in the future. I personally think

⁵⁶ Nova TV d.d. - a commercial TV broadcaster on the national level with several platforms

that women's sports are sufficiently represented when observed from the following point of view: sports are generally covered by media as much as there objectively exists audience's interest for them, regardless of whether they involve male or female athletes.

The coverage of women's sports will increase with better results of individual female athletes or sports clubs. In addition to the success itself, a better presentation of the athletes by clubs, federations and even by athletes themselves and their teams is needed. If these conditions are fulfilled, I'm sure their status in media will improve.

6.2.7. Web portal Telesport⁵⁷, Aleksandar Holiga

I can not explicitly answer whether women's sports are sufficiently represented in Croatian media for at least two reasons: 1) Telesport is not a "news portal" and has no news programme or obligation to cover any contents: we do not bring news, we publish authors' stories, columns and analysis; and 2) I'm not sure what it means to be "sufficiently represented" and what criterion should be applied. What I can say is that there are very few features on Croatian women's sports on Telesport. This is primarily due to the editorial policy that leaves authors full freedom in choosing their themes, and Croatian women's sports are at the very margins of their interest. It could therefore be said that they are drastically underrepresented.

On the other hand, if we were to look at the interest of Telesport's audience and the popularity of these few and rare features on women's sports among them, we would notice that they are almost as a rule at the bottom of the list of the most read texts, so we could say that they are actually overrepresented. We could get tangled into „the chicken or the egg“ dilemma here, but the general conclusion is that there are very, very few of the said contents on Telesport and we do not notice any interest of our audience to increase them.

I do not believe that this issue can be resolved by institutional interference or in some similar way. The only way for Croatian women's sports to be more represented on Telesport is that an author appears, male or female, who would regularly prepare good quality features on them, at the same level of other Telesport contents. As an editor I would definitely support that because I believe it to be an important aspect of contemporary sports journalism. The popularity of such content among audience

⁵⁷ Telegram Media Grupa d.o.o. – a commercial electronic publications service provider

would not even be crucial, because the main criterion we have on Telesport is quality, followed by the broader importance of a topic, and only then its potential for popularity. So, there is room for improvement, and I would be glad to support it, but, like many things in our society, it depends on actual people, their enthusiasm and their quality. You can also take this as an open call.

6.2.8. Web portal Net.hr⁵⁸, Silvijo Maksan

Women's sports are very rarely presented on our portal, and even when they are, the texts deal with female athletes' chests and bottoms. Sandra Perković is the only one presented with more dignity as a national sporting heroine. I believe that such editorial policy needs to be changed and journalists need to write about women's sports even at the expense of potential clicks.

There is always room for improvement, especially if the majority of media would adopt the same practice or agreement on the representation of women's sports on their platforms, even if it meant that regulations would have to be passed, or through a general agreement between the newsrooms. I see possible obstacle in the commercial unprofitability of features on women's sports. You spend time and money on a text on women's basketball, and you get nothing, no visits. It is not profitable and it is obviously not interesting either to the broader Croatian sporting population or to the narrower one, as our statistics show.

6.2.9. Večernji list and web portal Sportal.hr, Karlo Ledinski

Women's sports take up about ten percent of our space in the sports section of Večernji list, approximately 10 percent compared to panegyrics dedicated to men's sports. Unfortunately, I think all media in Croatia cover women's sports sporadically, only in relation to the successes of individual athletes like Sandra Perković, Blanka Vlašić and Sara Kolak. I am sorry to say that there is no systematic coverage of women's sports in Večernji List, which is certainly *inter alia* the editor's mistake. I believe that all editors in sports newsrooms use the popularity of a particular sport in Croatia as their guiding criterion. The number of spectators on women's matches reveals that women's sports are not popular.

⁵⁸ Telegram Media Grupa d.o.o. – a commercial electronic publications service provider

I generally think that the situation is the same in most European media. I see today on the cover of the most popular sports journal *Gazzette dello Sport* (January 16, 2019) one article about women's sports, while the situation in the *L'Equipe's* issue is even worse. On 36 pages of its printed edition there is only one article about women's sports. The recommendation for other media is to do what we in *Večernji list* endeavor to do: produce interesting stories from women's sports, follow our female athletes even when it's not their sports' season so that Sandra Perković does not get written about only when she wins medals.

6.2.10. Web portal Sportske novosti⁵⁹,
Tihomir Hrga

I believe that women's sports are represented as much as women's sports' events are currently interesting to our readers. We do not make the difference in covering women's and men's sports, the basic criteria are the importance and attractiveness of a sporting event and of results. Unfortunately, when you do the math, the disparity is noticeable and women's sports are really less represented than men's. I think that the disparity arises at the very beginning of the issue of media coverage of sports, because of the huge share of football compared to all other sports. The coverage of the Croatian national football team, the Croatian Football League, the five strongest European leagues, the Champions League and the European League exceeds 70 percent share in sports sections of Croatian media.

Another problem is the lower representation of amateur sports as well as smaller sports compared to the big ones and it seems like all sorts of disparities (female - male, smaller - bigger, professional - amateur) propagate the commercialization of sports. "Big Business" has recognized which sports the market likes, and after choosing the most appropriate format, packed them and offered them as a product. After years of uncontrolled growth, a whole gray universe of various kinds of anomalies flourishes. Media are an important part of that "business", we work in the market and I think that we cannot individually make enough in the given frames to reverse this ratio. Things should change at other levels, both in understanding and regulation of sports in general, as well as in the way electronic media are financed. All possible should be done so that sport is again what it is in its nature - a healthy competition of equal opportunities for all, with a great deal of romance.

59 Hanza Media d.o.o. - a commercial daily newspaper publisher on the national level (*Jutarnji list*) and a service provider of several electronic publications

6.2.11. Web portal Index.hr⁶⁰, Dea Redžić

It is pointless to talk about the representation of women's sports in Croatian electronic media while there are no two key documents for Croatian sports in general: the National Sport Strategy and the Financing Plan for Croatian sports. Croatia has not yet adopted these fundamental documents nor relevant regulations which are the starting point for any further discussion on the status of Croatian men's and women's sports as well as sports as a social activity, with all the rights and obligations of all interested parties.

⁶⁰ Index promocija d.o.o. – a commercial electronic publication service provider

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RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Media, especially electronic media, have the most important role in creating public's attitudes towards women's sports and overcoming the dominant stereotypes. They also have the largest influence on viewers and fans when it comes to increasing interest in women's sports. Therefore, they have great responsibility for the future of women's sports and improving the status of female athletes in the community.

Given the starting position and the current practice, it is not possible to equalize the status of women's sports with the status of the men's sports in a short period of time, and no such accomplishment is expected from the present recommendations. They are possible guidelines for media for better coverage of women's sports, increasing both the quality of their contents and the audience's interest in them at the same time.

1. Increase the share of women's sports

Increase the share of women's sports in news, sports programmes and broadcasts from the current 4 to 10 - 12 percent in the period of four years. The four-year period, i.e. one Olympic cycle, includes the Summer and Winter Olympic Games and one or two World and European Championships in the most popular team sports, so it is possible to make the required shift within that time frame.

2. Equalize the presentation of women's and men's sports

Present women's sports in the same way that men's sports are presented. This refers to the technical quality of live broadcasts, retransmissions and news features (number of cameras, graphics, image quality, photo quality), but also to verbal or written presentation of women's competitions and women's sports by sports journalists, commentators and analysts (interesting information, statistics, comparison of results, knowledge of an athlete's sports biography). This also includes covering women's sports with equal interest and preparation that is used to cover man's sports.

3. Engage journalists and commentators interested in women's sports

Hire or employ part-time educated journalists, sports editors, commentators and analysts who are interested in serious and thorough coverage of women's sports. Provide them with addi-

tional education, enable reporting from domestic and international competitions where our female athletes participate and provide enough air time in news and other broadcasts.

4. Engage more women in sports newsrooms

Hire or employ part-time more women in sports newsrooms. Studies have shown that female sports journalists will rarely use stereotyping and sexism in reporting and commentaries on female athletes.

5. Avoid gender stereotypes and sexism

Female athletes should be talked and written about in the same manner as their male counterparts, without needlessly mentioning their marital and family ties, physical appearance, clothing, makeup and hairstyles. More space/air time should be devoted to presenting and analysing their results, sporting achievements and opportunities as well as comparing them with the results of other female athletes, their clubs and national teams.

6. Comparisons possible in features dealing with inequality

Comparisons between female and male athletes are needed and possible in features and broadcasts that deal with their unequal treatment regarding the time periods and facilities they use for training and preparation, the allocation of funds from relevant sports federations' budgets, the awards and wages, sexist and other inappropriate outbursts on sports grounds and in media as well as other issues that contribute to a better understanding and respect for women's sports.

7. Broadcasting women's competitions can be profitable

Increase the number of live broadcasts and retransmissions of major competitions. Since the value of media rights for women's competitions in popular team sports is still far less than for men's, broadcasting women's competitions can be profitable. Several experiences from around the world have shown that in such cases, advertising revenues by far surpass the amounts allocated to pay relevant media rights.

8. Make better use of the advertising potential of female athletes

Make better use of the advertising potential of female athletes. Male fans prevail among viewers of women's competition broadcasts, which is a valuable consumer group attractive to advertisers. On the other hand, studies in EU countries show that women are

responsible for most consumer decisions in a household. Therefore female athletes have greater advertising potential than their male counterparts and enable advertising of a higher number of trademarks and thereby they are undoubtedly very attractive to advertisers.

9. Cooperation with sports federations and clubs

It is important to establish good cooperation with sports federations and clubs. It should not be limited to obtaining information regarding announcements and competition calendars or downloading news and photos from their web pages and social networks. Such cooperation has to include active participation in the creation of schedules for various competitions and indicating to clubs and federations time periods suitable for better coverage of women's sports. Additionally, some of the federations could, through their umbrella organizations worldwide, provide television broadcasters and web portals publishers with cheap or even free of charge broadcasting rights for major women's sports events.

10. Sports stories and phenomenological themes

Female athletes, women's sports clubs and national teams and their performances on major competitions as well as day to day issues should be followed and promoted through interesting sports stories and even phenomenological themes in news sections and programmes which are not exclusively dedicated to sports but generally affirm success, excellence, knowledge, skill and other human values.

11. A consensus on covering women's sports

Although the legislative and other regulations did not yield much results on similar occasions, some sort of consensus among media, i.e. a general agreement between editors and journalists on how to cover and how much space/air time to dedicate to women's sports, would certainly contribute to their better coverage in electronic media.

This would exclude viewing or reading data as a criterion which determines whether something is worth publishing or not. In a survey conducted among editors of electronic media, the media representatives themselves advocated this idea.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPORTS FEDERATIONS AND CLUBS

Media and their editors are not the only ones responsible for better coverage of women's sports in electronic media. Sports federations and clubs must take over their part of the responsibility – through better organization, modernization, digitalization and coordination.

Positive experiences from other countries show that there is plenty of room for improvement, especially with better cooperation with media and potential sponsors. Federations and clubs therefore should be both partners and service suppliers to media. Even very simple measures and activities can sometimes be very effective when it comes to increasing coverage in media.

1. Prioritize women's sports

Federations and clubs must list women's sports broadcasts among priority actions of their marketing and development strategies. Cooperation with media in creating a calendar of competitions is one of the key tasks because it can provide much more space/air time in the media for women's sports, and even regular broadcasting schedules of certain leagues and competitions.

2. Provide more information to media

Federations and clubs must provide more information necessary for better coverage of women's sports in media: event announcements, calendars of competitions, interesting sports stories, high quality photos, sports archives, statistics, interesting sporting information, competition results, as well as audio and video statements of female athletes after a finished competition. There is no doubt that such information would certainly influence the quantity and quality of media coverage of women's sports. It is also important to build and maintain good relations with journalists and editors in media and preserve contacts with them. To this end, the engagement of media and public relations experts in clubs and federations is also required, as suggested by the interviewees in the survey conducted among the most important Croatian electronic media.

3. PR skills training for female athletes

Federations and clubs should provide PR skills training for female athletes to help them communicate with media and control the

rights to use their names and images for advertising and promotional purposes. Female athletes should not be just objects but also active participants in creating their own media images.

4. Internet and social networks

Quality websites with plenty of content as well as the use of social networks so as to better inform and increase public's interest for women's sports must become the responsibility of clubs and federations. They can also ensure better coverage of women's sports through high-quality streaming (video and audio live streaming) on their internet and Facebook sites and YouTube channels.

5. Contracts with media and sponsors

A key element for increasing the media coverage of women's sports are contracts between sports federations/clubs, media and sponsors. Federations and clubs could agree with the media on specific clauses in broadcasting rights agreements and thus encourage them to report more about women's sports, as is the case in some European Union countries. Such clauses may require media companies to bundle the rights for both Men's and Women's European and World Championships in popular team sports as well as to send their journalists and cameramen to these competitions.

6. National Sports Strategy

The adoption of two key documents for Croatian sports in general, i.e. the National Sports Strategy and the Sports Financing Plan, would significantly contribute to better coverage of women's sports in media. A clearer positioning of Croatian men's and women's sports as well as sports as a social activity, with all the rights and obligations of interested parties, would improve the marketing and advertising activities of federations and clubs, and thus the visibility of (women's) sports in media. Therefore, federations and clubs, through their representative bodies as well as through the Croatian Olympic Committee, should encourage the adoption of these documents.

7. Statistical indicators

Sports federations and clubs need to establish and maintain statistical indicators related to the coverage of their male and female athletes in media. Only on the basis of such data it is possible to gain a true impression of the (under)representation of female athletes and to accordingly take further steps to ensure better coverage of women's sports.

The Council for Electronic Media adopted *The Recommendations for Better Coverage of Women's Sports in Electronic Media* after the Agency for Electronic Media had conducted in 2016, as a part of the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA) study, the analysis of news on women's sports broadcast in the central sport news programmes of three national TV broadcasters. The Analysis revealed that the share of women's sports news was only 3.8 percent of the total sports news. In 2018, the Agency for Electronic Media, with the cooperation of the Croatian Olympic Committee and the Governmental Office for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia, launched the campaign *For Higher Visibility of Women's Sports in Electronic media*. The present Recommendations are an addition to the Campaign and a valuable tool for media as well as sports federations and clubs to better inform the public and promote women's sports.

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Iva Zebec

Translation:

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Design:

Duplerica d.o.o.



Publisher:

Agency for Electronic Media

Jagićeva 31

10000 ZAGREB

CROATIA

www.aem.hr

Zagreb, February 2019



Zagreb, 2019

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Agency for Electronic Media.