

OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF SERBIA COMMISSION "WOMEN AND SPORT"

The Commission for Women and Sport within the National Olympic Committee was established in early 1997. The first concrete actions started in 1999.

All Presidents of this Commission have been women who were well established and well known in the world of sport: Svetlana Kitić, renowned handball player and recognized by the International Handball Federation as the best handball player of all times was elected for the President of the Commission in 1999-2001. In the following term, from 2001 – 2004, the President was Jasna Šekarić, recognized by the International Shooting Federation to be the best shooter of the 20th century. Since 2005, the President of the Commission has been Milena Reljin Tatić, in the top of the rhythmic gymnastics for 10 years. All other members of the Commission were successful in their respective sports either as athletes, coaches or experts.

In 1999 the first national seminar was organized, entitled "**Women and Sport - Boldly into the 21st century**", with the following Action Plan adopted:

- Research on representation of women's in managerial positions in sport
- Recognition of and education on the issue of gender equality in sports
- Building up working and human resource networks
- Promoting the idea of "Women and Sport"
- Improvement and promotion of scientific knowledge about women in sport
- Finding, creating and funding programs and activities of the "Women and Sport" Commission
- Achieving a 10% quota of women in all sports organizations
- Provide a quota of 10% of men in the Commission "Women and Sport" OKSCG (NOC Serbia and Montenegro at the time)

The main problem issues were identified, being **the budget and the management**.

Period 1999 – 2004

In 2001, thanks to the European Women and Sport Group, six young women from Serbia participated in the project GIPAS 2001. Serbian Ministry of Sports financially supported the project "Support for Gender Equality in elite sport". A project was created and the website was prepared, but due to lack of funds the project could not be implemented. A bulletin was published and sent to all sports organisations, institutions, ministries and the media. The second number was done as well, but there were no funds to print it, so that project was also abandoned.

Recommendations were repeatedly sent to the National Sports Federations to include more women in managing bodies, which, unfortunately, was not complied with for various reasons.

Period 2005 - 2009

The Commission was reorganized with aim to quicken realization and implementation of activities and plans.

- Contacts were established with ENGSO and IAPESGW.
- All sports federations forwarded a letter to Jacques Rogge of preference - 20% of women in the NOC.

- At the proposal of the Commission, a sentence about women in sport was introduced in the preamble of the NOC Statutes (Olympic Committee of Serbia and Montenegro at the time).
- The recommendation of Jacques Rogge was accepted by the NOC Serbia and their Statutes were changed. In this Olympic cycle, NOC Serbia had more than 30% of women on the Presidential Board.
- Two books dealing with women in sport were published by the Sports Academy in the period between the two seminars.
- The Commission in collaboration with the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education organized the second national seminar "Women and Sport" 2005. The lecturers from the United Kingdom, Germany, Slovenia and Serbia came to present their positions on Women and Sport to 158 representatives of sports organizations and scientific institutions from countries in the region. Proceedings were published from this event, on the issue of girls in sports perceived from different angles. Recommendations were forwarded to the sports federations and various other institutions involved. This project was partly funded by the IOC Olympic Solidarity and the Ministry of Science and Technology of Serbia.
- Member of the Commission became a member of the EWS Steering Committee in 2006.
- The second regular meeting of the then elected EWS Steering Committee took place in 2007 in Belgrade.
- During this period, the Commission participated in numerous seminars and conferences at home and abroad.
- Members of the Commission took part in the 4th IOC World Conference of Women and Sport in Jordan.
- The Commission was co-organizer and sponsor of several sports events for women.
- As part of the Strategy for Sport Development in Serbia carried out by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Serbia, the Commission took part in the Women's Sport Development Strategy.
- Coaching seminars were held in synchronized swimming and rhythmic gymnastics, which is still ongoing.

Period from 2010 onwards:

- The third National Seminar and International Conference "Women and Sport" on social inclusion of women in sport was held in May, within the General Assembly ENGSO. Over 200 representatives of sports associations and institutions, sports and academics from all over Serbia took part in this unique seminar with local and international speakers having presented a total of 19 works.
- Commission supported the organization of the Women's Sport Festival.
- In December Commission organized a meeting with women who joined the "network" and established the basic principles of further cooperation and mutual communication.
- Commission started planning the organization of the fourth National Seminar on "Women and Sport", scheduled for May 2011.
- As a result of the Seminar and the Conference, Commissions for Women and Sport were initiated in the National Federations (including Track and Fields and others).
- An increasing number of women took part in various seminars, but this time, men also showed great interest and awareness of the role of women in sport.
- Members of the Commission were regularly involved in a variety of social activities, like the fight against smoking, participation in the Health Festival, Women's Sport Festival, Annual Women's race, the Children's Fair, and various other humanitarian actions.

Strategic Plan:

The main strategic goal has remained **the massive involvement of women in all areas of sporting life**, and it will continue to be its priority mission.

The recommendation of the IOC to include more women in management sport structures did not give the expected results, despite the will expressed by the leading persons of the NOC Serbia. NOC Serbia gave the recommendation to the National Sport Federations to increase the number of women in their managing and other structures and bodies. They also recommended to them to propose more candidates among women for the functions within the NOC Serbia. However, that failed to give any satisfactory results, because there are rarely any women in sports organizations, especially on managing or leading positions. The reasons vary, but so far apparently, women have not been supported or directed to participate in the work of these organizations. There is some progress, but this by no means is any major development nor the one that was desirable and expected.

It is very difficult to make specific binding measures on inclusion of certain percentage of women in the management or in the coaching professional staff. There is also the issue, if they were included, what would their influence be in these bodies.

It is obvious that the strategy for gender equality in sport should be set up differently and in the long term starting both from top and from the base, namely from the elite and the grassroots, with emphasis on creating a wide basis for promotion and dissemination of women's sport and education of young athletes in various directions:

For the girls that have the potential for sport career, the following should be realized:

- to remain as recognizable promoters of women's sport;
- If there is interest and potential, to have them educated and involved in professional work;
- If there is interest and potential, to have them educated and involved in the management structures;

Those girls who practice various sports for a longer period, without having achieved significant results in sense of competitions on higher level, then:

- to identify the potential and interests, education and involvement in professional activities.
- to identify potential and interests, education and involvement in management structures.

Definitely, the number of participants in sports has increased, as is evident primarily through the results achieved by women athletes, but also through a larger scale female population being involved in practicing sports. Thanks to the exceptional results these women achieved, there is an evident increase in the interest of young girls to practice volleyball, handball, athletics, tennis, rhythmic gymnastics and other sports. It is noticeable that there are more women participating in various seminars, women's races, various festivals, but also that more women are involved in commissions of sports federations.

However, what would provide the best results in increasing the percentage of women in sport, based on previous experience, is a unique network that was established and launched in mid-2010. This network will greatly help the direct connection of a large number of women from sports organizations, institutions and other organizations that are linked to sport and thus to achieve the necessary communication, exchange of information and ideas and to engage in actions that are realized by the Commission, for which there is still great interest. This type of work, in addition to regular mutual

communication, shall mean that the meetings seminars and conventions, will be organized more often, will the main goals with activity areas to be as follows:

- **Raising awareness of the role of women in sport**

Through the encouragement of role models of successful female athletes, sports workers, trainers, judges and all those who contribute to the improvement and promotion of women's sport.

- **Initiating and encouraging research on women in sport**

Through cooperation with the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, Faculty of Political Sciences, the Ministry of Education and the Department for Gender Equality at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations.

- **Encourage inclusion of women in decision-making processes**

By encouraging women to get involved and helping them to train for their roles in management and through incentives provided to the associations and organizations that achieve the greatest progress in including women in their organizations.

- **Encouraging the media to follow the women's sport and the role of women in sport**

Regular announcements and notices to the media about the activities of the NOC Serbia and the Commission on the promotion and encouragement of women in sport, by including individuals and organizations from the field of media in these activities.

- **Using the Olympic Solidarity project aimed at women and sport. Use of funds and other foundations**

Competitive bidding for funds for specific projects and education of women in sports.

- **Creating and developing a coordinators network in order to achieve the foregoing objectives**

At the level of National Federations and regions, starting from sports officials, coaches, media professionals and involving all others.

- **Holding regular annual seminars of the NOC Serbia "Women and Sport"**

Seminar in 2011 should be engaged in the development of sport for women and legal aspects of participation in sport which would aim at the creation of the ombudsman in Serbia.

- **Organization of seminars and workshops for the empowerment of women, taking on the active role in sport and sport management**

An example would be a workshop for training women for taking on leadership positions in sport, a seminar on the impact of sport on the health of women and girls, a workshop during which participants would be trained on how to formulate programmes related to women in sport and how to access resources for achieving such programs.

- **Improving cooperation at the international level with bodies and organizations dealing with the problems of the commission**

Through sharing of experiences, cooperation and participation in international conferences and programs, and through use of existing international agreements of Serbia in the field of sports.

Many more ideas and projects await realization, depending on available finances and efforts of the newly created network.