

Science, Movement and Health, Vol. XIX, ISSUE 2, 2019  
June 2019, 19 (2): 81-89  
Original article

## GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

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### Abstract

**Introduction.** Gender equality is a fundamental right and an important value underlying any democratic society. Unfortunately, we still encounter gender inequalities in various areas and our country, according to European Index for Gender Equality 2015 Edition published by the European Commission, had the lowest score.

**Objectives.** The aim of this paper was to analyze gender equality in our field, sports area. Therefore, we wanted to find out the representation of women in management positions in 20 national sports federations. Also, by applying a questionnaire, we wanted to identify the opinion of 32 coaches from national sports clubs on gender equality issues. Last but not least, we have proposed a set of measures that can be taken into account for promoting gender equality in sports organizations.

**Methods of research.** The research methods used for this study were: literature review, questionnaire survey and structured interview, statistical-mathematical method, graphic representation method.

**Results.** The results obtained highlighted that in 2018, for the 20 federations chosen, for the position of president, women had a representation of 20%, for the vice-president position 17.95%, for the general secretary position 15% and for the federal coach position 32.35%.

The coaches questioned have low levels of knowledge on national legislation about gender equality and organizations that are responsible for ensuring this fundamental right is respected. Most respondents considered it necessary to address the issue of gender equality in sports management, which shows the increased interest in the topic and the importance of its approach. In their opinion, the main reason for women's lower chances of management positions is represented by preconceived ideas.

**Conclusions.** With considerable efforts, women have made remarkable progress and have become more and more present in the sport phenomenon, both as athletes and in various management positions. However, compared to men, they are still under-represented in sport organizations management positions.

**Key words:** gender equality, sports management.

### Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental right and an important value underlying any democratic society. This fundamental right is written in Article 2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and this is one of the core values on which the European Union is founded. Although in the last decades Europe has made significant progress, unfortunately we still encounter gender inequalities in various areas and our country, according to European Index for Gender Equality 2015 Edition published by the European Commission, had the lowest score. According to the European Commission, "women in the European Union still earn an average of 18% less than men per hour of work. They have fewer resources in their working lives, and during retirement they face more

difficulties in accessing finance, and are thus more affected than men by all forms of poverty, including workers' poverty. "(A press release of the European Commission on the occasion of the International Women's Day, Brussels, 2010). Also, in various publications on this topic, the woman's path to higher management positions in organizations is presented as paved with glass or "glass fragments". When it comes to women in top hierarchical positions, literature abounds in concepts that imply this element, such as: "the glass ceiling" (Singh si Vinnicombe, 2004), „glass escalator” (Williams, 1992), „glass cliff” (Ryan si Haslam, 2005). Perhaps the most well-known concept is the "glass ceiling", which means the possibility of women's ascension in hierarchical positions up only to a certain point. Statistics over the past decades have identified an upward trend in women's presence in leadership

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Received 15.03.2019 / Accepted 6.05. 2019

\* the abstract was published in the 19<sup>th</sup> I.S.C. "Perspectives in Physical Education and Sport" - Ovidius University of Constanta, May 16-18, 2019, Romania

positions, but only for middle management, while for top management positions, women still have a very

small percentage (Singh, Vinnicombe, 2004)

### Research methods

The aim of this paper was to analyze gender equality in our field, sport area. Therefore, we wanted to find out the representation of women in management positions in 20 national sports federations. Also, by applying a questionnaire, we wanted to identify the opinion of 32 coaches from national sports clubs on gender equality issues. Last but not least, we have proposed a set of measures that can be taken into account for promoting gender equality in sports organizations.

The research methods used for this study were: literature review, questionnaire survey and structured interview, statistical-mathematical method, graphic representation method.

### Results

For a better understanding of the representation of women in sports leadership, we wanted to find out the representation of women in management positions, in national sports federations. In the first phase we have made a statistic only for the position of president, for all 74 recognized federations in our country and subsequently extended the research to the positions of vice-president, general secretary,

federal coach on a number of 20 federations. We specify that data collection took place in 2018.

The 20 federations chosen were: the Romanian Federation of Modern Bathing and Pentathlon, the Romanian Athletics Federation, the Romanian Handball Federation, the Romanian Basketball Federation, the Romanian Volleyball Federation, the Romanian Rugby Federation, the Romanian Gymnastics Federation, the Romanian Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation, The Romanian Judo Federation, the Romanian Polo Federation, the Romanian Table Tennis Federation, the Romanian Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness, the Romanian Combat Federation, the Romanian Karate Federation, the Romanian Martial Arts Federation, the Romanian Fighting Federation, the Romanian Triathlon Federation, The Romanian Dance Sports Federation, the Romanian Baseball and Softball Federation, the Romanian Canoe Federation.

Of the 74 national sports federations, only 7 have women presidents. These 7 positions held by women account for 9.46% of the total of 74 "President" positions in national sports federations (Fig.1). Therefore, not even 10% of these functions are occupied by women, with men over 90% (90, 54%).

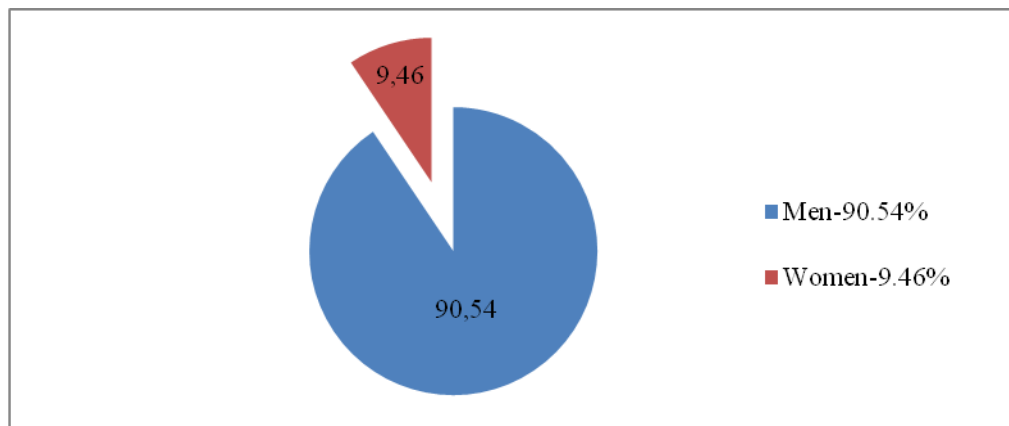
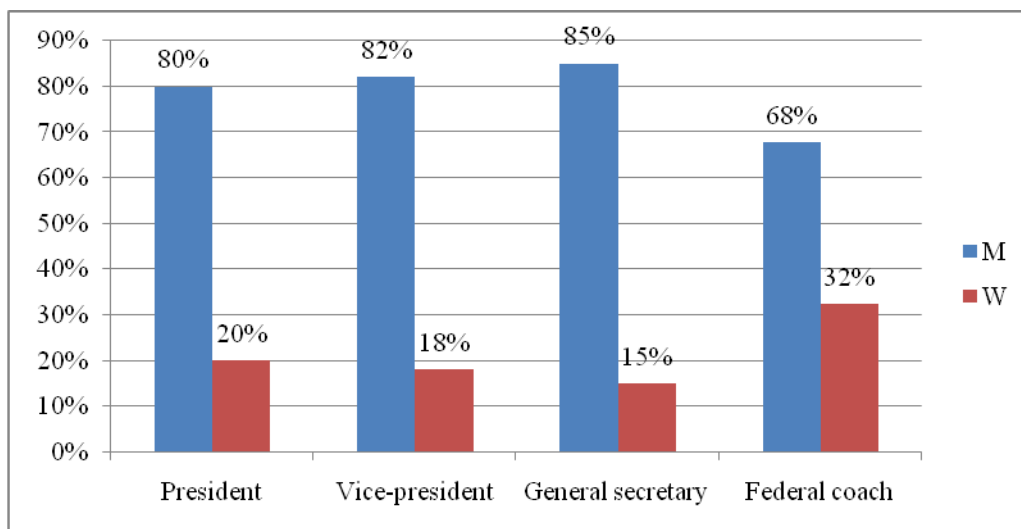


Fig.1 Women's representation in the position of president in the 74 national sports federations, 2018

Next, we present women's representation in the 20 national sports federations chosen, as president, vice president, general secretary and federal coach.

Four of the 20 federations chosen have women presidents (Fig.2) and in 9 of them women do not occupy any of the 4 management positions analyzed.

If we look at the position of vice-president, we notice that of the 39 vice-presidents of the 20 federations, only 7 are women. Therefore, women are represented in a percentage of 17.95% (Fig.2) in the "second most important management position in a federation".



**Fig.2-** Women's representation in management positions in the 20 national sports federations chosen

As for the secretary general, we have 17 men and 3 women in the 20 federations. This translates into a 15% representation of women, with men accounting for 85% (Fig.2).

In the 20 federations we have 34 federal coaches, 11 of them being women, respectively 32.35%. The 11 women with the federal coach function are found in 6 federations (some federations have several federal coaches).

This 32.35%, being the highest percentage of the 4 leadership positions surveyed, confirms previous gender equality studies. When women hold management positions, this is especially true for middle and low management positions and less for top management positions.

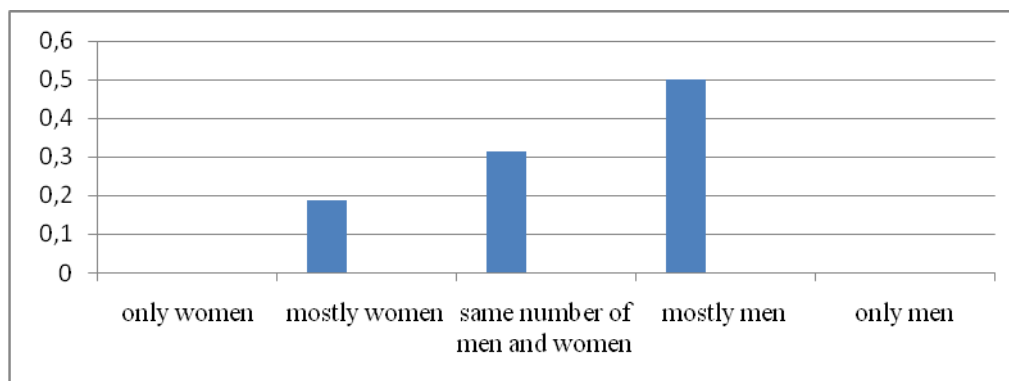
Also, in order to evaluate the perception of gender equality among employees from 8 national sports

organizations, we applied a questionnaire on 32 sports coaches and instructors (24 men and 8 women). The 8 structures are from 5 cities (Bucharest, Constanta, Ramnicu Valcea, Voluntari, Pantelimon) and have as sporting branches: swimming, tennis, dancing, football, athletics, rugby, handball.

Next, we present the responses of the 32 respondents to the 11 questions in the questionnaire.

Question no. 1 (Fig.3) At your workplace, the staff is formed of:

- only women - 0%
- mostly women - 18.75%
- approximately the same number of men and women - 31.25%
- mostly men - 50%
- only men - 0%.



**Fig.3-**Answers Question no.1

50% of the respondents chose the "Mostly Men" option, while the "Only Women" and "Men Only" options were not chosen by any respondent.

Question no. 2 (Fig.4) Do you think that, having to choose between a woman and a man (with the

same experience, qualification, etc.), sports

employers choose:

- To hire:

sooner a man than a woman - 21.88%

sooner a woman than a man - 9.38%

it doesn't matter the gender - 68.75%

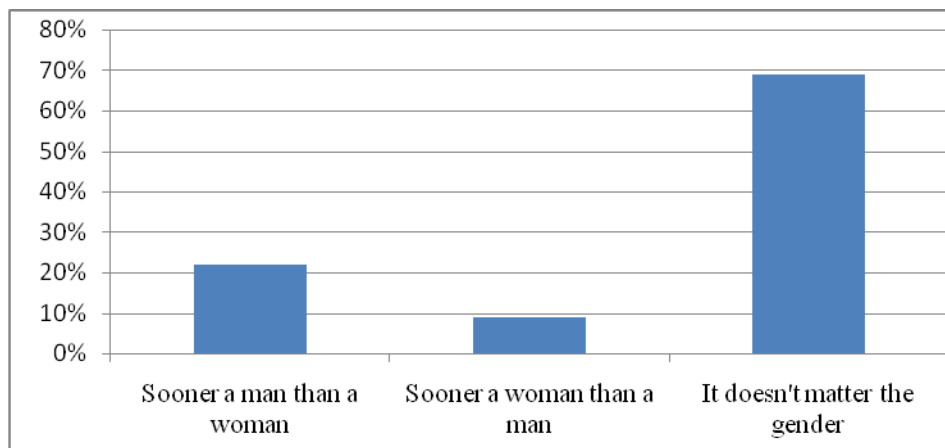


Fig.4- Answers Question no.2

- To promote:

sooner a man than a woman - 21.88%

sooner a woman than a man - 9.38%

it doesn't matter the gender - 68.75%.

than a woman, and 9.38% chose "rather a woman than a man" option.

Question no.3 (Fig.5) Do you think that women's chances of management positions in sports are:

Lower than men's - 25%

Equal - 75%

Higher than men's - 0%.

It is worth noting that for the two given situations (employment, promotion) we have the same percentages. The majority of respondents, 68.75%, considered that it did not matter the gender, 21.88% considered that employers would rather choose a man

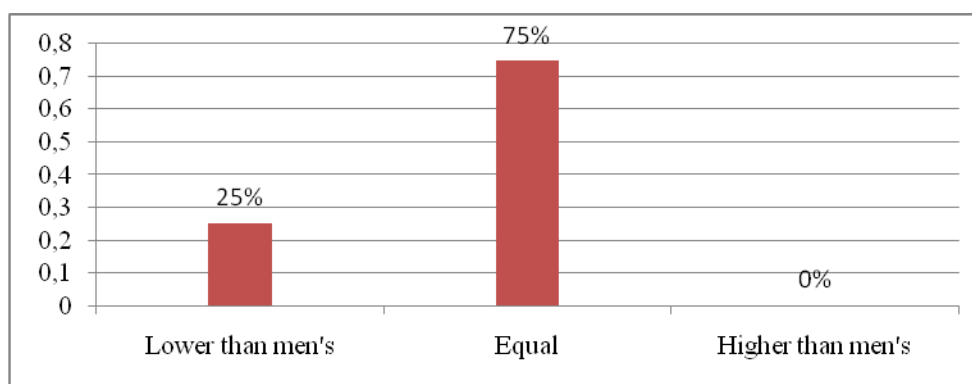


Fig.5- Answers Question no.3

No respondent believed that women were more likely than men to get into sport management, 25% felt that women were less likely than men, and 75% considered the chances to be equal.

Level of training - 11.54%

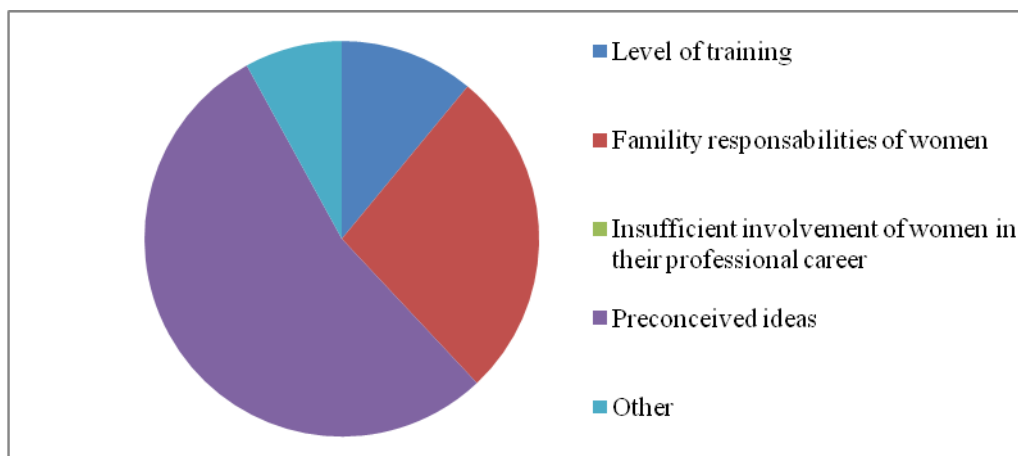
Family responsibilities of women - 26.92%

Insufficient involvement of women in their professional career - 0%

Preconceived ideas - 53.85%

Other ..... - 7.69%

Question 4 (Fig.6) If you felt that women have lower chances, what do you think is the main cause?



**Fig.6-** Answers Question no.4

The majority of 53.85% believe that the main reason for the women's chances of leading positions is represented by the preconceived ideas. The second identified cause was the family responsibilities of women. No respondent considered that insufficient involvement of women in their professional career would be the cause of their lower chances of leading positions.

Question no.5 (Fig.7) Do you think it is necessary to address the issue of gender equality in sports management?

- Yes 78,12%  
 - No 21.88%

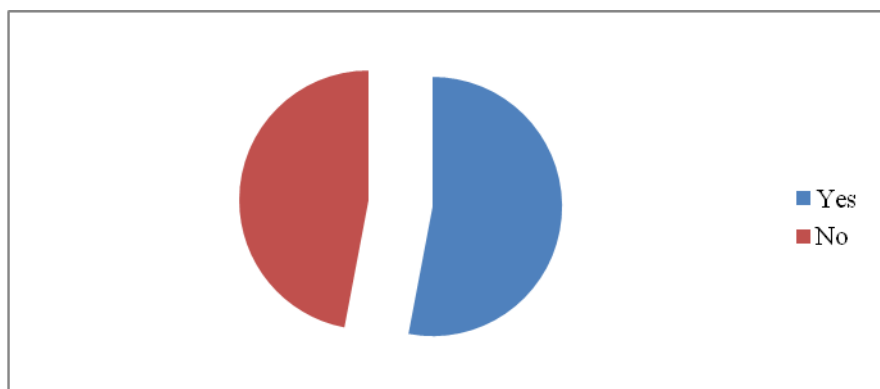
A majority of 78.12% of respondents considered it necessary to address the issue of gender equality in sports management. These percentages show the increased interest in the topic of gender equality in sports management and the importance of addressing it.



**Fig.7-** Answers Question no.5

Question no.6 (Fig.8) From your knowledge, are there any laws on gender equality on the labor market, in Romania?

- Yes 53.12%  
 - No 46.88%



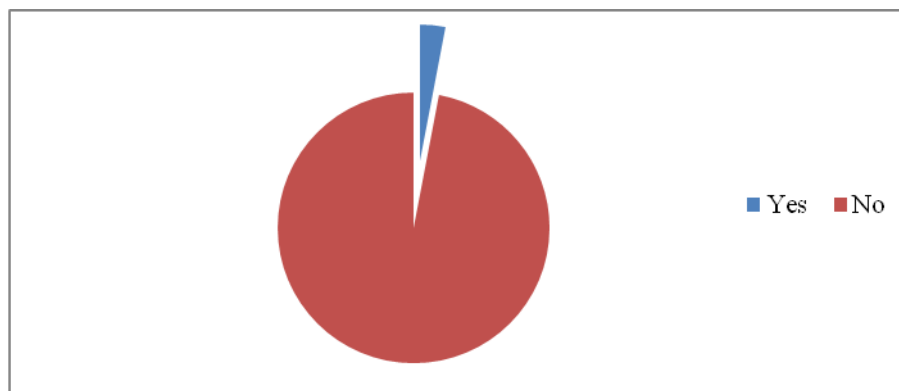
**Fig.8-** Answers Question no.6

A percentage of 46.88% of people surveyed has no knowledge of the existence of national laws on gender equality on the labor market.

Question no.7 (Fig.9) Do you know organizations, institutions that aim to ensure respect for the principle of gender equality in our country?

- Yes 3.33%
- Not 96.67%.

Only one of the respondents answered yes, while a very high percentage of 96.67% has no knowledge of organizations that aim to promote gender equality in our country. The answers to this question and to the previous question show us that sports coaches and instructors have very little knowledge of national legislation on gender equality and organizations that are responsible of ensuring that this fundamental right is respected.



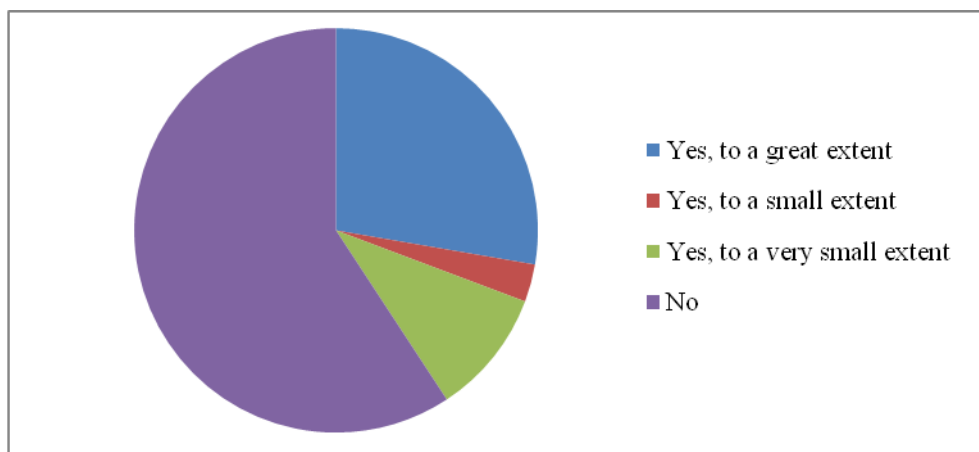
**Fig.9-** Answers Question no.7

Question 8 (Fig.10) Do you think that the current gender equality legislation facilitates the promotion of women in leadership positions?

- Yes, to a great extent 27.59%
- Yes, to a small extent 3.45%
- Yes, to a very small extent 10.34%

- No 58.62%

The majority of 58.62% respondents considered that the current gender equality legislation does not facilitate the promotion of women in leadership positions.

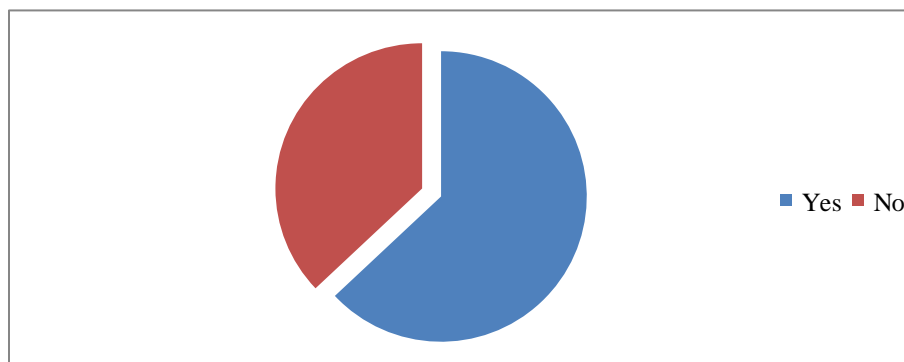


**Fig.10-** Answers Question no.8

Question 9 (Fig.11) In your view, does the gender equality legislation in our country apply properly?

- Yes 62.50%

- No 37,50%



**Fig.11-** Answers Question no.9

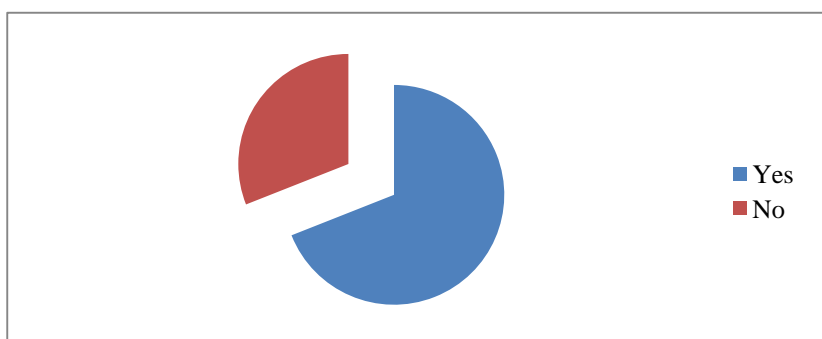
Only 62.50% of respondents considered that the gender equality legislation in our country is being properly applied.

Question 10 (Fig.12) Do you think that the principle of gender equality in sports organizations in our country is respected in terms of wages?

- Yes 68.75%

- No 31.25%

A percentage of 31.25% of the respondents consider that the principle of gender equality is not respected in the sports organizations of our country in terms of pay.



**Fig.12-** Answers Question no. 10

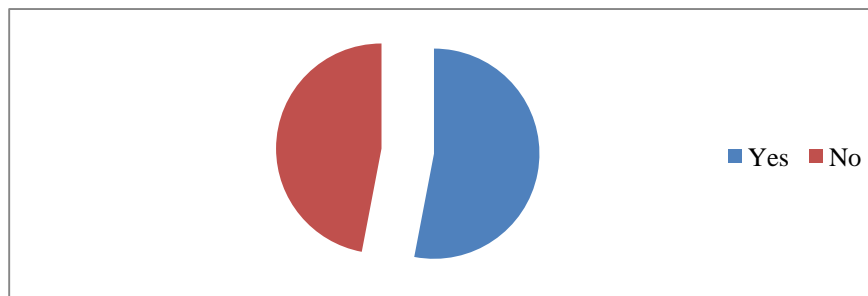
Question 11 (Fig13) Do you think it would be beneficial to impose gender quotas in Romanian sports organizations?

- Yes 53.12%
- No 46.88%

How about in the management positions in sports organizations?

- Yes 53.12%
- No 46.88%

Concerning the imposition of gender quotas (in sports organizations and leading positions in these organizations), 53,12% of respondents considered that such a measure would be beneficial.



**Fig.13-** Answers Question no.11

### Discussions and conclusions

Taking into account the president position, only 7 of the 74 national sports federations have women presidents. Four of the 20 federations elected have women presidents. In nine of the 20 sports federations chosen, women do not occupy any of the four management positions under consideration. In terms of vice-president, of the 39 vice-presidents of the 20 federations, only 7 are women. Therefore, women are represented by a percentage of 17.95%. For the position of secretary general, we have 17 men and 3 women in the 20 federations. This translates into a 15% representation of women, with men accounting for 85%. In the 20 federations we have 34 federal coaches, 11 of them being women, respectively 32.35%. The 11 women with the federal coach position are found in 6 federations.

The majority of 58.62% respondents considered that the current gender equality legislation does not facilitate the promotion of women in leadership positions. Concerning the imposition of gender quotas (in sports organizations and leading positions in these organizations), the respondents considered that such a measure would be beneficial in 53.12%. The majority of 53.85% considered that the main reason for women's lower chances of leading positions is represented by preconceived ideas. The second identified cause was the family responsibilities of women. No respondent considered that insufficient involvement of women in their professional career would be the cause of their lower chances of management positions. A majority of

78.12% of respondents considered it necessary to address the issue of gender equality in sports management. These percentages show the increased interest in the topic of gender equality in sports management and the importance of addressing it.

Given the poor representation of women in management positions of national sports federation that our study highlighted, we wanted to propose a series of measures that can be taken to promote gender equality in sports organizations:

- Drawing up a gender equality plan- each organization, depending on the objectives and issues identified can draw up, implement and monitor a gender equality plan.
- Organizing information meetings, seminars, courses regarding the legal framework, national and international organizations in the field of gender equality

For example, in Spain, the Ministry of Employment and Social Services has created a prize to recognize the efforts of companies that stand out through their equal opportunities and employee treatment policy. The law establishes the obligation to draw up an Equality Plan for those companies with more than 250 employees and organizations are liable to sanctions if they fail to comply. If a company fails to meet their obligations under Equality Plans it may be fined between 626 and 6250 euro.

From the respondents' answers we realized that they have low level of informations on national legislation about gender equality and about



organizations that are responsible for ensuring this fundamental right is respected. A better level of information would allow them to know their rights, to realize when they (or someone else) are discriminated and to report these issues to competent organizations.

- Designate a person within the organization to be responsible for gender equality within the company - the same person will ensure that the gender equality plan (if there is any) is properly implemented.
- Hiring or collaborating with a gender equality expert
- Establishment of gender quotas in sport organizations

In our country, there are experts trained in the field of gender equality and their expertise could help organizations eliminate potential irregularities.

At European level there are sports confederations that have adopted gender quotas, but at national level, we have not identified sport structures that have adopted such measures. Implementing gender quotas in sports organizations could facilitate the promotion of women in management positions and help Romania get closer to that "gender balance area."

- Introducing some women committees within the national federations.
- Work program to help reconcile work and family life. One of the main obstacles that women encounter in their careers is their family responsibility, so a work program that reconcile both work and family life is important.

With considerable efforts, women have made remarkable progress and have become more and more present in the sport phenomenon, both as athletes and in various management positions. However, compared to men, they are still under-represented in sport organizations management

positions. We believe that by adopting such plans and measures that promote gender equality in sport organizations, these gender differences in terms of management positions representation could shrink and we could get closer to that gender balance area to which we should aim.

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