



Raising the growth and participation  
of female sport officials in Europe

# LEARNING RESOURCES

## /// PILLAR 1: WOMEN OFFICIALS STRATEGY AND PLANNING

**SUB-PILLAR 1.2**  
**Understand gender  
and cultural needs in  
your sport**



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## /// Sub-Pillar 1.2

# Understand gender and cultural needs in your sport

## OVERVIEW

Understanding gender and cultural needs in your sport is crucial for creating an inclusive and welcoming environment.

👉 [Here's a step-by-step guide on how to do it:](#)

### 1. Educate yourself:

Start by educating yourself about gender and cultural diversity. Read books, articles, and research papers on topics like gender identity, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity in sports. Attend workshops or training sessions that focus on these subjects.

### 2. Create an inclusive environment:

Foster an inclusive environment by promoting respect, acceptance, and open communication among all participants. Encourage diversity and create a safe space where individuals feel comfortable expressing their gender identity and cultural backgrounds.

### 3. Conduct surveys and interviews:

Develop and distribute surveys or conduct interviews to gather information directly from participants. Ask questions about their gender identities, cultural backgrounds, and any specific needs or challenges they may face in the sport. Ensure confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest responses.

**4. Engage with cultural and gender-specific organisations:**

Connect with cultural and gender-specific organisations or groups that can provide insights and guidance on understanding and meeting the needs of diverse participants. Collaborate with them to develop strategies and initiatives that promote inclusivity.

**5. Provide cultural and gender sensitivity training:**

Organise workshops or training sessions to educate coaches, officials, and administrators about cultural and gender sensitivity. This training should cover topics like respectful language use, understanding different cultural practices, and creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all participants.

**6. Adapt policies and procedures:**

Review your existing policies and procedures to ensure they are inclusive and respectful of diverse genders and cultures. Make necessary adjustments to accommodate the specific needs and requirements of different individuals.

**7. Offer appropriate facilities and resources:**

Assess your facilities and resources to ensure they are accessible and suitable for individuals of different genders and cultural backgrounds. Consider factors like changing rooms, restrooms, equipment, and uniforms to accommodate diverse needs.

**8. Regularly assess and adapt:**

Continuously assess the effectiveness of your efforts in meeting gender and cultural needs. Seek feedback from participants and stakeholders and make necessary adjustments to your strategies and initiatives. Regularly review and update your policies and procedures to ensure they remain inclusive and relevant.

By following these steps, you can better understand and meet the gender and cultural needs in your sport. This will help create an inclusive and supportive environment where all participants feel valued and can fully enjoy their sporting experience.

## >> CONTENT AREA 1: UNDERSTAND THE DETERMINANTS OF SPORT OFFICIATING - INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC FACTORS

Intrinsic factors in sport officiating refers to the qualities and attributes that are inherent in the individual serving as an official. These factors can include their level of expertise, knowledge of the sport's laws/rules and regulations, decision-making skills, communication skills, physical and psychological fitness.

Extrinsic factors in sport officiating, on the other hand, are external to the individual and may include things like the laws/rules and regulations of the sport, the official's gender and subsequent experiences, equipment used, the environment in which the sport is played, and the expectations of the coaches, players, and spectators. For example, weather conditions, crowd noise, and pressure from coaches and players can all be extrinsic factors that can influence an official's decision-making and performance.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can have an impact on an official's ability to make accurate and fair calls during a sport event. Officials who possess strong intrinsic factors and are able to manage extrinsic factors effectively are more likely to be successful in their role.

### ⦿ **The determinants of sport officiating are the various factors that influence the quality of officiating in a particular sport. Some of the most significant determinants include:**

#### **1. Laws/Rules and regulations:**

The specific laws/rules and regulations of a sport have a significant impact on the role of officials. Understanding, interpreting, and properly applying the laws/rules is essential to making fair and accurate calls.

#### **2. Training and experience:**

Officials who have received appropriate training and have experience working in a particular sport are more likely to be effective in their role. This includes knowledge of the sport, understanding of the laws/rules, and a fair equitable application across the sport.

#### **3. Physical / Psychological fitness:**

Officials must have the physical and mental ability to keep up with the pace of the sport, be in position to make calls, and make accurate judgments even under physically challenging circumstances. Alongside this sport officials must be psychologically strong, focused and concentrated throughout the sport event.

#### **4. Communication skills:**

Effective communication with all stakeholder and other officials is essential for respected decision-making during the sport event.

#### **5. Judgement and decision-making:**

Officials must be able to make quick and accurate decisions under pressure, even in situations where the laws/rules are not clear or where there are conflicting viewpoints.

#### **6. Environment:**

The physical environment in which the sport event is taking place, including the weather, the lighting, and the size and condition of the playing surface, can all impact the role of officials.

#### **7. Cultural and societal factors:**

Cultural and societal factors, such as bias and discrimination, can influence the decisions made by sport officials. This could also include the officials' gender and the resulting experiences and/or abuse that they have had. It is important to understand the existence of these factors in order to address them and ensure fair and equitable officiating.

**Top Tips**

1. Know and fully understand the intrinsic and extrinsic factors.
2. Ensure all factors are considered when planning a strategy and ensure all stakeholders are aware of their role in the strategy.
3. Be sure to know and understand cultural needs of your sport.
4. Ensure internal and external communication is in place.
5. Include continued development of personal key skills, knowledge of the laws/rules and regulations, decision making skills, communication skills etc. The way this is delivered can include a mix of online learning, webinars, seminars, face-to-face learning, group learning, one on one learning etc.





## >> CONTENT AREA 2: UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS WOMEN SPORT OFFICIALS CAN BRING TO YOUR ORGANISATION

In some sports there is of course gender parity, but in some team sports there are many more men than women operating as sports officials. Women sport officials can bring many benefits to the role, particularly as they are often an 'untapped' resource, in a time when many sports report they do not have enough officials to cover all their competitions.

### 🕒 Some further benefits of women sport officials are as follows:

#### **1. Increased diversity and representation:**

Women officials can help to increase diversity and representation within the sports officiating community, which can help to promote inclusivity and equity in the sport.

#### **2. Role models and inspiration:**

Women officials can serve as role models and inspire young girls and women to pursue careers in sports officiating, which can help to increase the number of women in the field.

#### **3. Unique perspectives and insights:**

Women officials may bring unique perspectives and insights to the role, which can lead to more creative and effective decision-making.

#### **4. Improved communication:**

Women officials may bring different communication styles and techniques to the role, which can help to improve communication with coaches, players, and other officials.

#### **5. Enhanced teamwork:**

Women officials can often bring a different perspective to the role and therefore help to improve teamwork among officials, which is essential to making consistent and accurate calls throughout a game.

#### **6. Better understanding of the game:**

Women officials may have a different understanding of the game than male officials, which can lead to a more well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of the officiating role.

**7. Improved Decision-Making and Governance:**

Gender-balanced decision-making boards and committees in sports organisations have been associated with more effective and inclusive decision-making processes. Having a diverse group of decision-makers leads to a wider range of perspectives, better problem-solving, and more robust governance structures.

**8. Expanded Market Reach:**

Engaging women in sports organisations can help attract a broader audience, including female fans, sponsors, and supporters. Catering to diverse audiences can lead to increased revenue streams and sustainable growth.

**9. Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement:**

Women's involvement can help foster stronger connections with stakeholders, including women athletes, fans, sponsors, and community members. By addressing the needs and interests of diverse populations, sports organisations can cultivate greater support and engagement.

**10. Expanded Talent Pool:**

Encouraging women to participate in sports organisations broadens the talent pool. It allows organisations to tap into a larger pool of qualified individuals who can contribute their skills, expertise, and unique perspectives to drive innovation and organisational success.

Overall, women officials can help to enhance the quality of officiating in a sport and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable sports environment.

Women bring a wealth of benefits to the sports world, and their contributions are essential to the growth, development, and success of sport organisations and communities.

**Top Tips**

1. Women will often bring a strong work ethic and dedication, look at how this can be of benefit to your organisation.
2. Enhance community involvement and activism.
3. Provide positive views, values and instil positive behaviours.
4. Support advocacy of E.D & I and leading by example

## >> CONTENT AREA 3: IDENTIFY THE SPECIFIC NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF PROSPECTIVE WOMEN WHO COME IN TO SPORT OFFICIATING AND STAY

The specific requirements for women to venture into sports officiating can vary depending on the sport and the level of competition.

👉 **However, there are several general requirements that are common to many sports:**

### **1. Knowledge of the sport:**

Prospective sport officials should have a solid understanding of the laws/rules, regulations, as well as strategies and structures of the sport they wish to officiate.

### **2. Physical fitness:**

Depending on the sport, officials may need to meet certain physical fitness requirements to be able to keep up with the pace of play and make accurate calls.

### **3. Communication skills:**

Effective communication is essential to sport officiating, and officials must be able to communicate clearly and confidently with key stakeholders and other officials.

### **4. Decision-making skills:**

Sport officials must be able to make quick and accurate decisions under pressure, often in fast-paced and high-pressure situations.

### **5. Training and certification:**

Most sports require officials to undergo training and certification before they can officiate at the highest levels of competition. This can involve attending workshops, completing online courses, and passing written and practical exams.

### **6. Personal characteristics:**

Officials must be impartial, unbiased, and able to maintain composure and professionalism in all situations.

Overall, women who wish to enter into sports officiating should be passionate about the sport they wish to officiate, have a strong work ethic, and be committed to ongoing learning and development. They should also be willing to work hard and persevere in the face of challenges and setbacks.

👉 **To stay in sports officiating, women officials require several things, including:**

### **1. Supportive work environment:**

A supportive work environment is critical to the retention of women officials in sports. This includes providing equal opportunities, pay, and benefits as well as promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equity.

### **2. Professional development:**

Officials need access to professional development opportunities such as training programs, conferences, and mentoring, to improve their skills and knowledge.

### **3. Fair and transparent evaluation:**

Women officials need fair and transparent evaluation processes that take into account their performance, experience, and knowledge. Evaluation should not be based on gender or any other biases.



**4. Recognition and advancement:**

Recognition for their achievements and advancement opportunities are essential for women officials to feel valued and motivated to continue in their roles.

**5. Work-life balance:**

Women officials, like all professionals, need to have a healthy work-life balance to stay in the field. This includes access to flexible working arrangements and support for child or eldercare responsibilities.

**6. Respectful treatment:**

Women officials must be treated with respect and dignity at all times. They should not have to tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment.

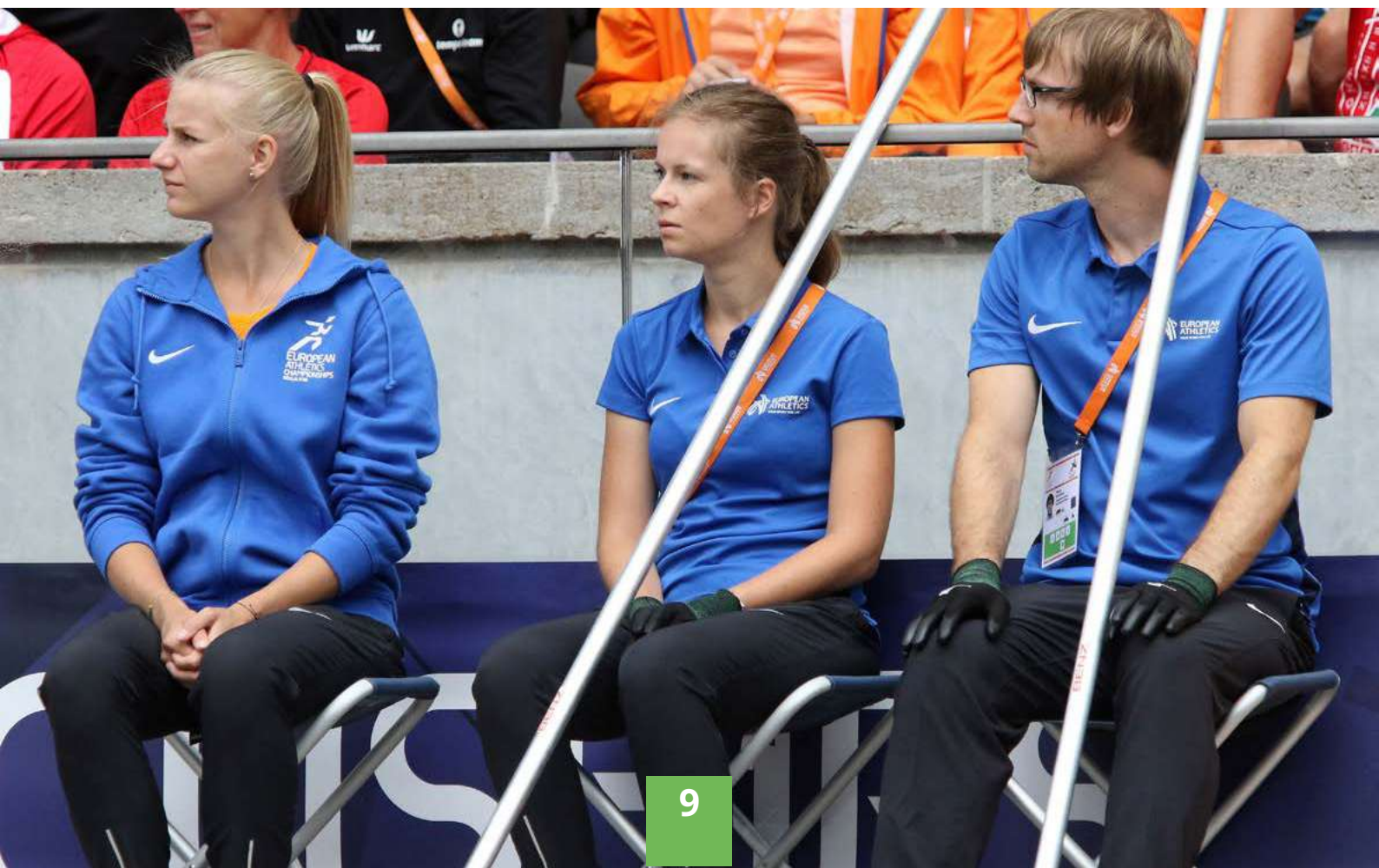
Overall, creating a supportive, inclusive, and equitable environment for women officials is essential to ensure their retention in sport officiating. Providing ongoing support, recognition, and advancement opportunities, as well as addressing barriers to participation, can help to ensure that women officials continue to thrive in their roles.

**Case Study**

The research paper “I’m a Referee, not a female Referee!”, in particular the sections “The only female referee – gendered entry into football careers” and “Just grin and bear it – coping strategies for remaining in the game”.

**Top Tips**

1. Ensure your sport environment is genuinely accepting of women sport officials.
2. Use your data collected to inform what the specific needs are for women officials.
3. Ensure respect for women officials is demonstrated alongside their male counterpart.
4. Embed the specific needs of women officials in your strategic plan and deliver against them.



## >> CONTENT AREA 4: IDENTIFY WOMEN OFFICIATING TRENDS IN YOUR SPORT

Overall, women's officiating is a growing and dynamic field, with increasing opportunities for women to get involved and make their mark. As the field continues to evolve and grow, it will be exciting to see the contributions that women officials make to the world of sports.

🕒 **In recent years, there has been many positive trends in women sport officiating, including the following:**

### **1. Increasing participation:**

More and more women are getting involved in sport officiating at all levels, from youth and community sport to elite and professional levels.

### **2. Breaking barriers:**

Women are breaking barriers and shattering stereotypes in traditionally male-dominated sports, such as football and basketball. Women officials are now a common sight on the field, court, etc.

### **3. Professionalisation:**

As women's sports continue to grow and gain prominence, there has been an increasing demand for professional and highly skilled officials. This has led to the development of more robust training and certification programmes and increased recognition for the work of women officials.

### **4. Leadership and mentorship:**

Women officials are increasingly taking on leadership roles within officiating organisations and serving as mentors and role models for other women who are interested in getting involved in sport officiating.

### **5. Technology and innovation:**

New technologies and innovations, such as instant replay and video review, are changing the landscape of sport officiating. Women officials are at the forefront of these changes, embracing new technologies and adapting their skills to meet the demands of a rapidly changing field.

### **6. Increased focus on safety:**

Officials are becoming more aware of the importance of safety in sports and are working to ensure that athletes are protected from injury and harm.

### **7. Diversity and inclusion:**

There's a growing push for diversity and inclusion in sport officiating, with efforts to recruit and retain officials from underrepresented groups.

### **8. Globalisation:**

Sport officiating is becoming more global, with officials from around the world working together to ensure that sports are played fairly and safely.

### **9. Data analytics:**

The use of data analytics is becoming more prevalent in sport officiating, with officials using data to analyse performance and make more informed decisions.

Overall, sport officiating is evolving rapidly, with new technologies and approaches emerging all the time. Officials are becoming more professionalised and focused on ensuring safety and fairness in sports, while also striving to promote diversity and inclusion in the field.

### Top Tips

1. Research best practice trends for women officials across sport.
2. Identify and implement best practice trends where possible.
3. Communicate positive trends implemented.
4. Evaluate and review the success of new trends.
5. Ensure your sport is up to date with current trends.





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