



Raising the growth and participation  
of female sport officials in Europe

# LEARNING RESOURCES

## /// PILLAR 2: RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION

### SUB-PILLAR 2.4

Ensure fair equitable  
development pathways  
are established and  
shared at all times



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## /// Sub-Pillar 2.4

# Ensure fair equitable development pathways are established and shared at all times

## OVERVIEW

🕒 To ensure the establishment and sharing of fair and equitable development pathways, consider the following strategies:

### 1. Clear and transparent criteria:

Establish clear and transparent criteria for women sport officials, promotions, and opportunities within the organisation. Ensure the criteria are fair and unbiased, based on objective and relevant factors such as skills, performance, and potential. Communicate these criteria openly to all sport officials.

### 2. Provide equal access to development opportunities:

Create a level playing field by ensuring that all women sport officials have equal access to development opportunities. This includes training programs, mentorship, and leadership development initiatives. Avoid favouritism or bias when selecting sport officials for such opportunities.

### 3. Individual development plans:

Encourage women sport officials to create individual development plans that align with their career goals and aspirations. Support them in identifying the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences required to progress in their officiating careers. Regularly review and update these plans to ensure they remain relevant and inclusive.

### 4. Supportive mentorship and sponsorship programs:

Establish mentorship and sponsorship programs that connect women sport officials with those who are more experienced, who can provide guidance, support, and advocacy. Ensure that these programs are accessible to women sport officials from all backgrounds and levels within the organisation.

### 5. Diverse leadership representation:

Strive for diverse leadership representation at all levels of the sport organisation. Actively work towards developing and promoting individuals from underrepresented groups into leadership positions. This helps create role models and demonstrates the organisation's commitment to equitable development pathways.

### 6. Regular communication and engagement:

Communicate and engage with women sport officials on matters related to development pathways. Share information about available opportunities, possible related career paths, and development resources. Encourage open dialogue and feedback to ensure that individuals voices are heard, and their perspectives are considered in decision-making processes.

### 7. Evaluation of development programs:

Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of development programs and initiatives to ensure they are achieving their intended goals. Collect feedback from women sport officials and make necessary adjustments based on their findings. Monitor the representation and progression of women sport officials from different backgrounds to identify any systemic barriers that need to be addressed.

By implementing these strategies, you can create a fair and equitable environment where employees have equal opportunities for growth and development. This fosters a sense of inclusivity, promotes diversity, and ensures that talent is nurtured and recognised based on merit.



## >> CONTENT AREA 1: IDENTIFY EXISTING PATHWAYS AND THE RATIONALE FOR THEIR STRUCTURE AND CRITERIA

Identifying existing pathways for sport officials involves researching and understanding the structures and criteria established by sport governing bodies and organisations.

👉 Here are the steps you can take to identify these pathways and understand their rationale:

### 1. Research Sports Governing Bodies:

Start by researching the sport federations relevant to the sport you are interested in. These bodies are responsible for establishing and regulating the pathways for sport officials. Examples include the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), and International Cricket Council (ICC), International Hockey Federation (FIH).

### 2. Explore Official Certification Programs:

Many sports governing bodies offer official certification programs for sport officials. These programs outline the pathways and criteria for becoming a certified official at different levels. Visit the websites of the respective governing bodies to access information about these programs. Look for sections specifically dedicated to officiating or referees/umpires.

### **3. Review Pathway Structures:**

Examine the different levels or tiers within the officiating pathway. Typically, there are multiple levels based on experience, expertise, and the level of competition. For example, there might be beginner or entry-level officiating positions, intermediate levels, and advanced levels for officiating at national or international events.

### **4. Understand Criteria and Requirements:**

Analyse the criteria and requirements set by the governing bodies for progressing through the officiating pathway. This may include criteria such as completion of specific training programs, passing certification exams, gaining practical experience by officiating at lower-level competitions, and receiving positive evaluations from experienced officials or mentors.

### **5. Consider Experience and Skill Development:**

Recognise the importance of gaining practical experience and developing officiating skills. Look for information on mentorship programs, workshops, and opportunities for officiating at local or regional competitions. These experiences often contribute to the progression along the pathway and enhance the expertise of sports officials.

### **6. Seek Guidance from Officiating Associations or Organisations:**

Officiating associations or organisations at national or regional levels can provide valuable insights into the existing pathways. Reach out to these organisations to inquire about their specific structures, criteria, and resources available for officials. They may provide additional training opportunities, mentorship programs, or resources to help officials progress in their careers.

### **7. Understand the Rationale:**

To understand the rationale behind the structure and criteria of the officiating pathways, consider factors such as the need for standardised officiating practices, ensuring competency and professionalism, and maintaining the integrity of the sport. Governing bodies establish these structures to ensure that officials possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience to officiate at different levels of competition.

### **8. Attend Officiating Workshops and Seminars:**

Many sports governing bodies and officiating associations conduct workshops, seminars, and conferences for sports officials in general. These events often cover topics related to officiating standards, law/rule interpretations, and best practices. Participating in such events can provide deeper insights into the rationale behind the criteria and structure of officiating pathways.

By following these steps, you can identify existing pathways for sports officials and gain a better understanding of the rationale behind their structure and criteria. Remember that the specific pathways and criteria may vary between different sports and governing bodies, so it's important to research and consult the relevant organisations in your specific sport of interest.

### **Top Tips**

1. Research relative sport organisations to understand the criteria of their development pathways.
2. Use the research gained to ascertain the general rationale of why and how the officiating pathways are structured.
3. Look for standardisation of development pathways throughout all levels, so there is clear progression.
4. Consider whether the sport in question needs one pathway, gender fluid, or two pathways for women and men sport officials, or for women and men's competition.
5. Identify what works for your sport and the rationale as to why.

## >> CONTENT AREA 2: IDENTIFY IF EXISTING PATHWAYS ARE FAIR FOR ALL TO PROGRESS REGARDLESS OF GENDER

To determine if existing pathways for sport officials are fair for everyone to progress regardless of gender, you need to assess the inclusivity and equality of the pathways.

👉 Here are some steps you can take to identify potential gender biases and evaluate fairness:

### 1. Research and Review Pathway Documentation:

Thoroughly examine the documentation, guidelines, and policies related to the existing pathways for sport officials. Look for any explicit or implicit gender-specific requirements or language that may indicate bias or inequality. Pay attention to the criteria, prerequisites, and progression requirements outlined for each level.

### 2. Analyse Representation:

Assess the representation of women in sport officiating at different levels and in various competitions. Look for data or reports that highlight the number of women officials and their progression through the pathway. Identify any disparities or underrepresentation of women in higher-level positions or elite competitions.

### 3. Evaluate Selection and Promotion Processes:

Review the selection and promotion processes used for sport officials. Analyse how officials are selected for different competitions and advancement opportunities. Look for any gender-neutral criteria or objective evaluation methods that are used to assess competence and performance. Evaluate if these processes are transparent, free from bias, and promote equal opportunities for all.

### 4. Seek Feedback from Women Sport Officials:

Engage in discussions and seek feedback from women sport officials who have gone through the pathway. Inquire about their experiences, challenges faced, and perceived barriers to progression. Their insights can provide valuable perspectives on any gender-specific issues they encountered and whether the existing pathways are fair and inclusive.

### 5. Assess Support and Development Programs:

Examine the support and development programs available for sport officials. Evaluate if these programs specifically address the needs and challenges faced by women officials. Look for initiatives such as mentorship programs, training opportunities, and leadership development programs that aim to support and empower women officials.

### 6. Consult Women's Sport Organisations and Advocacy Groups:

Reach out to women's sport organisations and advocacy groups that focus on gender equality in sport. Inquire about their perspectives on the existing pathways for sport officials and any initiatives they have undertaken to promote equal opportunities for women officials. These organisations can provide insights, resources, and guidance on identifying and addressing gender biases.

### 7. Benchmark with Best Practices:

Look for examples of sport organisations or governing bodies that have successfully implemented inclusive officiating pathways. Identify best practices that promote gender equality and learn from their approaches. This could include implementing gender-neutral selection criteria, providing targeted support and mentorship for women sport officials, or addressing systemic barriers through policy changes.

**8. Collaborate with Sport Governing Bodies:**

Engage in conversations with sport governing bodies responsible for the pathways. Share your observations, concerns, and suggestions regarding gender equality. Collaborate with these organisations to foster dialogue, raise awareness, and advocate for changes that promote fair opportunities for everyone, irrespective of gender.

**9. Monitor and Track Progress:**

Continuously monitor and track the progress of gender equality initiatives within sport officiating. Keep updated on any policy changes, diversity initiatives, or programs implemented by governing bodies. Evaluate if these efforts have led to increased representation, improved opportunities, and fair progression for women sport officials.

**10. Encourage Feedback and Reporting:**

Establish channels for women sport officials to provide anonymous feedback and report any instances of gender bias or discrimination they may encounter during their officiating journey. Encourage a culture of inclusivity and openness to address and rectify any issues promptly.

By following these steps, you can evaluate the fairness and inclusivity of existing pathways for sport officials and identify areas where improvements can be made to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender.

**Top Tips**

1. Analyse all data collected to ascertain if the pathways you have researched are fair and equitable.
2. Analyse the selection process at all levels.
3. Seek feedback from existing women sport officials to ascertain effectiveness of the pathway.
4. Collaborate with sport organisations to influence change.
5. Benchmark with best practice.

## >> CONTENT AREA 3: CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS OF THE PATHWAY FOR WOMEN SPORT OFFICIALS IN YOUR SPORT

The expectations of the pathway for women sport officials can vary depending on the specific sport, organisation, and level of officiating.

### 🕒 However, here are some general expectations:

**1. Knowledge and Understanding:**

Women sport officials are expected to have a comprehensive understanding of the laws/rules, regulations, and technical aspects of the sport they officiate. They should continuously update their knowledge and stay abreast of any rule changes or developments in their respective sports.

**2. Technical Skills:**

Women sport officials should possess strong technical skills specific to their sport. This includes the ability to make accurate and fair judgments, apply the laws/rules consistently, and effectively manage game situations.

**3. Communication and Leadership:**

Effective communication skills are essential for women sport officials. They should be able to clearly and confidently communicate with athletes, coaches, fellow officials, and spectators. Additionally, they should demonstrate leadership qualities by maintaining control of the event, handling conflicts, and making authoritative decisions when necessary.

**4. Professionalism and Integrity:**

Women sport officials are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. They should demonstrate fairness, impartiality, and consistency in their officiating. They should also exhibit respect for all participants, regardless of their gender, race, or background, and refrain from any biased or discriminatory behaviour.

**5. Physical Fitness:**

Depending on the sport, women sport officials may be required to meet certain physical fitness standards in order to progress up the development pathway. They should maintain a level of fitness that allows them to keep up with the pace of the sporting event, maintain proper positioning, and make accurate calls.

**6. Continued Learning and Development:**

Women sport officials are expected to engage in ongoing learning and development to enhance their skills and knowledge in order to maintain their level and progress up the pathway. This may involve attending workshops, clinics, or seminars, participating in training programs, and seeking mentorship or guidance from experienced officials. Continued learning helps officials stay updated with the latest practices and advancements in their sport.

**7. Adaptability and Resilience:**

Women sport officials should be adaptable and able to handle various event situations, including high-pressure environments and unexpected challenges. They should demonstrate resilience and the ability to make quick and informed decisions under pressure.

**8. Commitment and Availability:**

Officiating often requires a significant time commitment, including attending practices, training sessions, and games or events. Women sport officials should be willing to dedicate the necessary time and effort to fulfil their officiating responsibilities. They should also demonstrate reliability and punctuality in meeting their commitments.

It's important to note that the expectations for women sport officials should be the same as those for their male counterparts. Equal opportunities, support, and recognition should be provided to women sport officials to ensure their successful pathway in officiating sports.

**Top Tips**

1. Ensure your women sport officials have all the required, skills, knowledge and experience to carry out the role.
2. Leadership and communication are key skills all women sport officials are required to have and display.
3. Ensure women sport officials are committed to progress through the development pathway.
4. Ensure clarity of communication of what progression means to the individual woman sport official.
5. Ensure expectations are fair and equitable and can be realistically achieved.





## >> CONTENT AREA 4: HOW TO DEVELOP PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN SPORT OFFICIALS

Developing pathways for women sport officials requires a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges they may face in entering and progressing within officiating roles.

👉 **Here are some strategies to help develop pathways for women sport officials:**

### **1. Create a supportive and inclusive environment:**

Foster a culture that values and promotes gender diversity and inclusivity in officiating. Ensure that policies, practices, and language used within the organisation or sport are inclusive and non-discriminatory. Encourage open dialogue, respect, and equal opportunities for all officials, regardless of their gender.

### **2. Identify and address barriers:**

Identify the specific barriers that may hinder the participation and advancement of women sport officials. These barriers can include gender biases, limited representation, lack of visibility, access to training opportunities, or discriminatory practices. Develop strategies and initiatives to address these barriers and create a more equitable environment.

### **3. Identify what your sport needs:**

Ensure the pathway you create for your sport fits your levels of competition and geographical needs. This will ensure there is fairness in women sport officials being appointed to the correct level of event.

### **4. Identify achievable realistic levels of operation:**

It's important when looking at building a development pathway you ensure the levels of operation are relevant to the sport competition and map across all competition fairly.

### **5. Establish and build in mentorship and networking programs:**

Create and build into your pathway mentorship programs that pair experienced women sport officials with aspiring or junior officials. Mentors can provide guidance, support, and advice to help women sport officials navigate their officiating careers. Additionally, networking programs can facilitate connections and opportunities for women sport officials to learn from and collaborate with their peers and leaders in the field.





### **6. Promote visibility and recognition:**

Increase the visibility of women officials by featuring them in promotional materials, media coverage, and recognition programs. Celebrate their achievements and contributions to the sport. This not only provides positive role models for aspiring officials but also helps challenge stereotypes and biases.

### **7. Establish clear pathways and progression opportunities:**

Create clear pathways for women sport officials to progress within officiating roles. Develop guidelines or criteria for advancing to higher levels of officiating and provide transparent information on the requirements and opportunities available. Establish support systems, such as performance evaluations, feedback mechanisms, and performance-based promotions, to ensure fair and equitable progression.

### **8. Collaborate with stakeholders:**

Collaborate with sport governing bodies, leagues, and associations to advocate for the inclusion and advancement of women officials. Engage in conversations and initiatives that promote gender equality in officiating. Encourage partnerships and collaboration with other organisations or sports that have successfully developed pathways for women officials to share best practices and learn from their experiences.

By implementing these strategies, you can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that enables the development and progression of women sport officials in sport officiating. It is essential to foster an equitable culture that values diversity, provides equal opportunities, and recognises the unique contributions of women sport officials.

### **Top Tips**

1. Ensure the pathway you develop is fit for purpose for your sport by looking at geographical spread and competition requirements.
2. Work in collaboration with clubs, leagues and competitions to ensure the inclusion of women sport officials is fair and equitable.
3. Set clear criteria for women sport officials to move from one level to another in progression.
4. Build in support mechanisms for the women sport officials to ensure their progression is seamless.
5. Communicate to all to ensure open and transparent progression through the pathway is achieved, to ensure there is no unconscious bias.



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