



Opening statement

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media

October 11th, 2023

Ref: JCM-I-1446

Firstly, I would like to thank the Chairperson, deputies, and senators for inviting the Federation of Irish Sport to make a submission on inclusion in sport.

For those who may not be familiar with the work of the Federation, we are an independent representative body for 110 sporting organisations across Ireland including 81 National Governing Bodies and 29 Local Sports Partnerships.

The Federation of Irish Sport' briefing statement on inclusion in sport referred to all the themes outlined below as well as referring to participation in sport, leadership structures, officials, coaches, players, and spectators/audiences.

- a. Sport and women
- b. Sport and disability
- c. Sport and LGBTQIA+ communities
- d. Sport and ethnic minority
- e. Grassroots sport and socioeconomic diversity
- f. Sport and older people
- g. Intersectionality in sport

However, our opening statement will broadly touch on these topics and outline recommendations to be considered to further ensure that inclusion in sport in Ireland is enhanced.



One of the core values of the National Sports Policy 2018 -2027 is the promotion of inclusion: "Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all. We will promote inclusion to deliver our desired outcomes focusing on addressing social, disability, gender, ethnic and other gradients."¹

The accompanying Sports Action Plan 2021 – 2023 has several dedicated actions on inclusion and participation, including delivering an information campaign highlighting the unacceptability of prejudice, racism, homophobia and all forms of discrimination in sport, and focusing campaigns to increase participation.

In 2020 Sport Ireland commissioned specific research relating to diversity and inclusion in sport. Such as, Sport and disability, Sport and LGBTQIA+ communities, Sport, and ethnic minorities

In May 2022, Sport Ireland launched their first Diversity & Inclusion Policy in Sport which expresses its vision for a sport sector that celebrates diversity, promotes inclusion, and is pro-active in providing opportunities for lifelong participation for everyone.

The policy identified a number of strategic pillars to guide the implementation of the policy. Those Pillars are: Change, Communication, Access, Capacity & Leadership.

It would be important that 12 months on from its publication that an update on the outputs of that policy so far be published and in addition that the evidence from the Sport Ireland Irish Sport Monitor (ISM) launched in September 2023 (a large population study undertaken to provide trends in participation in sport and physical activity in Ireland) be reviewed to ensure targeted actions.

For example, the ISM in relation to inclusion revealed that;

- The active sport gradient between women and men is .3% higher than it was in 2017.

¹ National Sports Policy pg.19



- The difference in sports participation rates between people of upper and lower socio economic status and people with or without disabilities have increased since 2021 and are the widest on record. The disability gradient was 20% in 2022.
- One in ten women who experienced verbal or physical harassment stopped participating in sport, while 39% made changes such as when and where they participated.

The Federation of Irish Sport have the following recommendations

- Funding be provided for NGB's to recruit Sport Inclusion officers to target inclusion of underrepresented groups. Currently they are not included for this funding unlike LSP's.
- That diversity and inclusion training be undertaken by all professional staff of NGB's and LSP's
- That diversity and inclusion training be incorporated into existing coach and official education courses.
- That all NGBS be supported to use the code of conduct template as an opportunity to review their existing policies and procedures for handling code breaches in respect of abuse towards referees, officials, coaches and players and to help promote good practice within all sport.
- Action 2.1 of the Sports Action Plan 2021 – 2023 be commenced, to focus especially on delivering an information campaign highlighting the unacceptability of prejudice, racism, homophobia, and all forms of discrimination in sport, and focusing campaigns to increase participation of minority communities, people with disabilities and communities with lower levels of participation.²
- Action 7.2 be commenced for the 2023 Sports Monitor; In line with the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy and in order to better understand the barriers for LGBTI+ people in sport, expand the reach of national research tools such as the Irish Sports

² Government of Ireland (2021) *Sports Action Plan 2021 – 2023* <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/93232-sports-action-plan-2021-2023/> pg.8



Monitor and other sources to refine our understanding of the issues around participation / non-participation in sport among marginalised groups such as persons with a disability, ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTI+ community, etc.

Finally, The Federation believes that inclusion is about being pro-active and enacting actions to make people from all backgrounds, ages and abilities feel welcome, respected and that they belong in Irish Sport and physical activity.

Thank you.

Ends



