



EUROPEAN DRAGON BOAT FEDERATION

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Introduction

With the establishment of four Vice Presidents on the EDBF Board, the Vice Presidents were asked to identify a focus for their individual attention. I chose to focus especially on Women's Issues in dragon boat sport and proposed that I be assigned the Women's Commission portfolio.

Current Status

According to the 2016 update *Women on Boards Gender Balance in Global Sport Report*:

“ there has been no real progress with regard to the number of women on sports boards at international level and variable progress within individual sports and at country level.

- The number of women in elite governing bodies of the Olympic movement remains below 30 per cent.
- Female representation on National Olympic Committees has fallen a further one per cent from 17.6 to 16.6 per cent.
- Female representation on International Sports Federations has remained static at close to 18 per cent.”ⁱ

The good news is some countries and sports are doing better, coming closer to the IOC goal of 30% representation on sports management boards and 50% participation in IOC sports.ⁱⁱ On a European level, the EDBF has been doing historically better with its small board exceeding the 30% IOC goal, moving from an all-male board in 2005 & 2006, to 40%, 28.6%, 50% and 57% representation on the board from women over the past twelve years. While EDBF looks quite good on paper when comparing the percentage of women on our board to the international sports federations average of 18% (according to the Women on Boards report), the participation of women as commission heads is dismal, with a high of only 20% (keep in mind that only three “active” commissions exist and the one with the highest activity, ComSpec, was headed by a woman for 10 of the 13 years measured!). If we add the commission chairs to the board statistics, EDBF's statistics still look okay vis a vis IOC goals (with 40% women in board or chair positions currently), but EDBF has a very small organization, rendering the statistics an unreliable indicator of women's actual equality in our sport. Furthermore, of the women on the EDBF Board or in commission positions, only one has represented the EDBF in any way at international sport forums/congresses (GAISF/SportAccord, WADA, etc.). More attention should be paid to the causes and solutions of this in order to ensure that the outward appearance of the EDBF represents the aim of parity for women in the sport.

There is a danger in relying on statistics as a measure of women's empowerment in sport boards (and participation). The statistics do not answer a number of crucial questions that reflect real equality in sport. Do women actually have power and status to make and influence decisions on board level? Do they have authority to act within the board? Are they moving up through the board ranks? Are they adequately represented and accorded authority similarly to male coaches and officials? Are opportunities to move up the ranks as officials equally distributed among men and women in our sport? Do women have equal resources enabling them to participate in various roles in the sport equally with men? Are women's sporting achievements valued and profiled equally to men's sporting achievements? Are women experiencing sexism, sexual discrimination and/or sexual harassment in the boat and in governing bodies and how can this be curtailed?

In order to promote a more equal environment for women's participation at all levels of dragon boat sport (and to comply with IOC/Sport Accord recommendations), it is desirable to establish an EDBF Women's Sport Commission. While the commission currently has no active members, as portfolio holder, I have undertaken the following actions since proposing to take on this portfolio back in 2016.

Activities to date:

- Contact with IDBF to discover aims of IDBF women's commission with eye to coordinating and supporting each other's aims.
- Initial review of data pertaining to women's participation in the EDBF Board and commissions.
- Review of literature on women in sport, especially the Women on Boards 2016 "Gender Balance in Global Sport" report.
- Recruiting for Women's Commission participation.
- Developing draft vision for EDBF Women's Commission to help guide initial WC efforts.

Activities planned:

- Recruiting
 - for women's commission members at EDBF championships (via individual contact with female athletes and supporters)
 - online recruiting for women's commission members
 - note: potential commission members will be screened by EDBF Executive Commission and Women's Commission Portfolio Holder
- Networking
 - with Women on Boards and similar women's sports empowerment organizations
 - with IDBF and national federations
 - with groups and individual paddlers
 - with related formal and informal organizations
- Research
 - Review papers and articles on women and sport issues and develop relevant library
 - Extract relevant information and make recommendations for implementation in dragon boat sport

- Investigate and report on women's participation in db sport/management at European/national level (EDBF board review 2005-2016 complete, next project to review female athlete participation percentages, together with IDBF look at women's parity in officials and coaching development)
- Promotion
 - Media coverage of women/women's events in db sport
 - Improve women's visibility at IDBF and GAISF/Sport Accord and related sport organizations
 - Increase status and funding of women's dragon boat sport at all levels: racing, management, coaching & training, etc.
 - Add Women's Commission page to EDBF site
- Compliance
 - Ensure compliance with IDBF, IOC, Sport Accord and other relevant sports bodies' recommendations and guidelines on women in sport
 - Remove systematic and social barriers to women in dragon boat sport such as sexist behavior, undervaluing of women's sport and gender "compensation" gaps (remuneration, status, influence, etc.)

Guiding principles

The EDBF Women's Commission will use the IDBF (draft 1/2017) Women's Commission as guiding principles in developing the commission and its activities.

IDBF WOMEN'S COMMISSION

General Areas of Responsibility

- 1. To create a culture which facilitates and values the full participation of women in dragon boat racing and to promote participation in women's events.*
- 2. To set in place strategies and policies to promote the education and training of women in dragon boating.*
- 3. To identify, strengthen and promote women in administration, coaching, officiating and research.*
- 4. To oversee all areas of women's activity in dragon boating.*
- 5. To collaborate with other organisations on joint projects for women and sport.*
- 6. To take an active role in international forums and conferences devoted to the place of women in sport.*

Objectives and Activities

- 1. To establish better communication with IDBF Member organisations and Affiliated Festivals and to meet with Club Crews and National / Territorial Teams at both World and Continental level..*
- 2. To assist the IDBF in promotion womens dragon boating and public relations.*
- 3. To co-operate with other international sport federations.*
- 4. To co-operate in the IDBF Development Programmes.*
- 5. To evaluate both national and international regatta results, numbers of participants in both the Womens' and Mixed competition classes.*

6. *To establish and maintain contacts with people responsible for women's dragon boating in each IDBF Member federation.*
7. *To organise seminars.*
8. *To report to each IDBF Member's Congress.*
9. *To collect material for the publicity and promotion of women's dragon boating.*

Data

I have compiled a short spreadsheet overview of the history of women's participation in the EDBF Board and commissions from 2005 to 2017. See attachment 1.

Conclusion

While on the surface, the EDBF exceeds the IOC goal of 30% female participation in the board, there is much work to be done to make that board participation truly visible, influential and attractive. Furthermore, some basic research needs to be done into the other areas of equity in our sport. To achieve this, more hands are needed to assist with this work. Therefore, the upcoming focus will be on recruiting the team to populate the Women's Commission and secure financial support from the EDBF (and possible sponsors) to hold a kick-off meeting once there are a number of volunteers willing to take on this work.

For more information or to refer volunteers to the commission, please feel free to contact me.

Yours in sport,



Kim Beckwith
Vice President, Women's Commission Portfolio Holder

Att: [Gender Analysis EDBF Board 2005_2017.xls](#)

ⁱ <https://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/AU-Reports/2016-Gender-Balance-In-Global-Sport-Report.pdf>, visited 20 June 2017

ⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/mar/08/women-in-sport-fa-rfu-ecb-boardroom-diversity>;
<http://www.smh.com.au/sport/sports-dragging-the-chain-on-womenonboards-target-20150510-ggy8kk.html>, visited 21 June 2017