



Women in Paralympic Sport Leadership Summit Report and Action Plan

- Europe -

Bonn, Germany • 22-24 June 2007

Supported by:



Bundesministerium
des Innern



Change

Some people watch it happen
Some make it happen
Others wonder what happened
Be one of those who makes it happen
-Unknown-

Background

At the end of June 2007, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Women in Sport Committee (WISC) with assistance from the IPC Development Department hosted a Regional Women in Paralympic Leadership Summit (Summit) in Germany. Twenty six participants attended the Summit, from over 14 European countries. Delegates included IPC Management Team, WISC members and Summit facilitator Nora Sheffe from Canada.

IPC Overview and Delegate Presentations

To start the Summit, participants heard presentations about the IPC, the WISC and the IPC's commitment to gender equity. Following the slide shows, delegates took turns to introduce themselves and discuss the current women in sport projects in their countries. The following summarizes a list of successes mentioned by the delegates:

- Increase in the number of women involved in recent years in all capacities (e.g. athletes, administrators, coaches, classifiers, etc.)
- Various 'women-specific' projects summits, sport events, research, committees, recruiting and support)
- Athletes are giving back to their sports in different roles
- Building legacies from various events hosted in Europe
- Strong male allies and strong, competent women involved
- Some examples of accountabilities for funding based on women's participation (e.g. if a club wants funding, it needs to show they offer programs for women)

The delegates went on to identify a number of needs in their countries. These included the need to

- Further increase the number of competent women (leaders, coaches, officials, athletes)
- Increase in funding, promotion + awareness
- Build the network by sharing information
- Hold more events for women to get competition experience
- Have larger numbers of women's teams at games (e.g. more teams for basketball and goalball)

Leadership Workshop - Influencing Change

During the Summit there were 2 half-day leadership workshops. On the first day delegates participated in "Effective Networking" and then in the evening attended a reception where they could practice their networking skills. On the



second day the leadership workshop focused on “Influencing Change”. Through the morning delegates discussed their beliefs for women in sport, the characteristics of effective advocates, and identified some tangible actions that could be taken to influence change. The following lists summarizes the main responses:

We believe

- Women need opportunities to participate in sport
- Women should have a welcome space
- We are ready to make a change
- We are willing to work to make change
- Women will be more competitive
- Women have no limits
- We need to increase the number of women leaders
- Women need to be invited to join
- Women need “different” sports and events
- Women need “specialized” support to be involved

Effective Advocates are:

- Aware of subject
- Trustworthy and honest
- Good networkers
- Committed
- Not quitters
- Clear with their message
- Dedicated
- Experienced
- Good listener

Participants recognized that not all effective advocates have all of these characteristics and that by having an “advocacy team”, as a collective, the group will have all of these characteristics.

The participants discussed 8 scenarios where girls and women were being unrepresented and treated in an unfair manner. The following suggestions were raised by the participants as actions that could be taken to ensure more opportunities for girls and women to be involved in sport

Tangible Actions

- Ask questions to find out “why” a decision was taken and then discuss the problem with the people involved
- Use your network
- State both your needs and your goals
- Invite others to your events
- Give people profile (e.g. people who are both inside and outside your organization)
- Host clinics and workshops for girls and women
- Allow women to share jobs + be assistants – apprentices
- Explain the value of being involved in sport
- Invite women specifically to be involved
- Offer prize money for women’s events



- Give women meaningful roles
- Give the media photos and stories + information on the female Paralympic athletes
- Use female role models
- Be clear and realistic
- Make personal contact

Participant Activities

After the group generated this list of suggestions, each person was asked to identify an activity that they could take back in their home country to increase opportunities for girls and women. The list of planned activities includes:

Sweden – As a member of the elections committee, recruit women leaders

Denmark – Contact retired athletes to find out why they decided to stop competing - try to address their specific needs to get them back involved

Turkey – Contact the NPC and encourage them to create a women in sport committee

Iran – Organize women in leadership sessions in various provinces and adapt the information from this Summit for the culture

UK – Tell athletes about other programs and encourage them to be active ambassadors for their sport

Austria – Initiate “female only” training days for specific classes and encourage women coaches to lead these sessions

Sweden – The NPC has an equal number of women and men, but in the districts, there are more men in leadership positions than women – Host a meeting of all the current and former “female” district presidents to discuss how to get more women involved

France – Encourage more participants in both Paris and the Ivory Coast

Delegates were invited to tell the network about both their plans and their progress. Information for the network can be sent to the Women in Paralympic Sport at wips@paralympic.org



Creating an Action Plan for Europe - Environmental Scan

In the afternoon of Day 2, delegates turned their attention to creating a regional plan to increase the opportunities for girls and women in Paralympic sport. The planning discussion started with an analysis of the current strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. The following summarizes the lists generated by the delegates:

Strengths

- We have good, educated, experienced women
- There is a possibility to attract funding
- There is a good population base (e.g. there are more women than men)
- Women are good organizers and managers
- Women bring different points of view
- Several women Paralympic athletes
- Women have a big capacity for work – more than men
- Women want to compete and want to be the best
- Women have strong female role models
- Women in Paralympic Sport (WIPS) Network – is already established

Weaknesses

- Women need encouragement to move forward
- Women don't always support other women trying to climb to the top
- Communication – it is difficult to keep in contact
- Low representation from some countries at this Summit
- Financial limitations
- There are different cultural norms and opportunities and responsibilities
- The delegates here don't know the current state of affairs
- There is a lack of athlete representation and interest
- There are few initiatives for women in some places
- Tradition – women do the work even if women aren't elected leaders
- Current situation is very unequal

Opportunities and Threats

- Attending both short and long term academic courses
- Classifier, coaching, umpiring and management courses
- Participation in European competition, world championships and Paralympic Games
- Knowledge
- Threat – we do not make a strong group (women) and our message and needs are not clear



Creating an Action Plan for Europe – Initial Brainstorming

Following the discussion on the current environment, the group discussed what it wanted for Europe in 5 years time. The suggestions are grouped under 3 headings.

Administration and Leadership

- A strong, proactive regional committee (European Paralympic Committee – EPC)
- More women in leadership positions (e.g. officials, coaches and leaders)
- Women’s working group in Europe
- Women leadership programs (educational opportunities and summit follow-up)
- Women to step forward and become more involved
- Link with existing EU programs

Competitions and Events

- Development events (regional championships only for European competitors and – not just events that are open to any person)
- More introductory programs for girls to be involved as participants, officials and volunteers
- Increase the number of countries sending women to Paralympic Games and increase the total number of women athletes

Discussion of Barriers for Women

- A discussion on the barriers that women face and an attempt to address some of the barriers

Creating an Action Plan for Europe - Success Factors

Before the group focused on action items, they discussed a number of “success factors” that would have to be taken into account as they identified how to achieve their vision for Paralympic sport in Europe. The following success factors were agreed to by the group.

- Dream big – start small (select activities within our control)
- Use available resources
- Align with priorities and activities of the WISC
- Use our networks
- Ensure on-going Communication

Creating an Action Plan for Europe - Specific European Activities

Taking into account the current environment, the success factors and the long list of suggestions on “what” they wanted for Europe, the group identified their top priorities. For their 4 priorities, they discussed specific actions for moving forward – these actions were summarized first on a flip chart, and then captured on a slide. The following information is from both the flip charts and the slides:

Priority #1 – Create a “Summit Women’s Working Group”



- **Members:**
 - o Formed a group with 5 women (Nevin = TUR, Lena = SWE, Marie = GBR, Teresa = ESP and recruiting Lieske = NED) will expand
 - o Communicate by e-mail and SKYPE and 2-3 conference calls/year

- **Purpose:**
 - o Ensure the Summit action plans are implemented
 - o Communicate with Summit participants and others on the progress
 - o Encourage and support others
 - o Provide a link with both WISC and NPC's

Priority #2 – Develop a Strong, Proactive Regional Council

- **-Work to get a time slot during the Sept '07 EPC conference on day 1**
 - o Focuses on youth and development
 - o EPC Executive Committee to meet on July 14 in Rome to discuss the conference plan
 - o Potential presenters – Nelly = Netherlands Cycling or Swedish project or ITTF model

- **Involvement in the Sept. EPC Conference + General Assembly**
 - o Summit participants to tell their NPCs about the Summit and our interest in being included in the Sept '07 EPC Conference in Greece
 - o Annica to encourage the Swedish Paralympic Committee to put forward a motion for Day 2 to accept the Summit outputs and the work the WIPS Network
 - o Tine to talk to Ioanna about having the EPC Executive Committee to put forth a similar motion

Priority #3 – Increase the number of women officials, classifiers and coaches

- o There may be an opportunity for funding certification courses through the 2012 Games (e.g. Athletics UK)
- o Connect with IPC's Athlete Council to encourage them to include the message to "know your NPC" and "stay involved after you retire from competition" (Marie to talk with Lilo)
- o Link with Summit Working Group to share progress + information
- o Consider adding a chapter on "recruit retired athletes" to stay involved – to the WISC tool kit (Marie and Jean)
- o Create a list of European officials



- **Other suggestions that were suggested, but not discussed in detail include:**
 - o Encourage National Paralympic Committees to nominate more women to Sport Technical Committees and European Paralympic Committee
 - o Instead of focusing on one organization nations should nominate women to all sports organizations such as IBSA, IWAS, INAS, CP-ISRA, IWBF, etc
 - o Women assistant coaches should be increased
 - o More educational opportunities for women to be certified
 - o Look to able-bodied sports to “hand-pick” women and recruit them to Paralympic sports
 - o Link with athlete reps on NPC’s to get NPC’s to nominate women
 - o Invite women from our countries to be involved – target retired athletes

Priority #4 – With an interest to increase the number of countries sending women athletes, conduct research to identify the barriers to participation for women.

- o Collect data from the IPC on the number of women each NPC sent to the games (Diane to lead with links to Summit working group)
 - o Link with EPC to get support for the “European Women at the Paralympics” survey
 - o Send a survey for the NPC’s to identify why they don’t send more women to the Paralympic Games
- **Other suggestions that were suggested, but not discussed in detail include:**
 - o Consider creating new sports that would interest women
 - o Host special training times for women
 - o Host exhibition events for women to “come and try different sports national and international levels

Summit Closing and Evaluation

At the end of the Summit, all delegates received certificates of participation. Also, delegates completed a detailed evaluation where they ranked most aspects of the Summit as either good or excellent. All the respondents indicated that the Summit was of benefit to them. Also, some participants offered some suggestions for improvements that will be used by the WISC for planning future regional summits.



**Women in Paralympic Sport Leadership Summit – European Region
Action Plan for Europe – June 2007**

What - Activities	When - Timeframe	Who
Priority #1 – Create a “Summit Women’s Working Group”		
1.1 Expand the existing Summit Working Group	July '07	Lena talk to Lieske
1.2 Maintain regular communication (emails, Skype + 2-3 conference calls/year)	quarterly	Working group
1.3 Communicate with Summit participants and others on the progress	Semi-annually	Working group
Priority #2 – Develop a Strong, Proactive Regional Council		
Work to get a time slot during the Sept '07 EPC conference on day 1	Early July	
2.1 Contact Potential presenters – Nelly = Netherlands Cycling or Swedish project or ITTF model		
Involvement in the Sept. EPC Conference + General Assembly	Early July	All Summit participants
2.2 Summit participants to tell their NPCs about the Summit and our interest in being included in the Sept '07 EPC Conference in Greece		
2.3 Encourage the Swedish Paralympic Committee to put forward a motion for Day 2 to accept the Summit outputs and the work the WIPS Network	Early July	Annica
2.4 Discuss having the EPC Executive Committee to put forth a similar motion	June '07	Tine to talk with Ioanna
Priority #3 – Increase the number of women officials, classifiers and coaches		
3.1 Connect with IPC’s Athlete Council to encourage them to include the message to “know your NPC” and “stay involved after you retire from competition”	July '07	Marie to talk with Lilo



3.2 Provide progress reports to Summit Women's Working Group	quarterly	Marie
3.3 Consider adding a chapter on "recruit retired athletes" to stay involved - to the WISC tool kit	Dec '07	Marie and Jean
3.4 Create a list of European officials		
<p>Priority #4 - With an interest in increases the number of countries sending women athletes, conduct research to identify the barriers to participation for women.</p>		
4.1 Collect data from the IPC on the number of women each NPC sent to the Games		Diane + Working Group
4.2 Link with EPC to get support for the "European Women at the Paralympics" survey		Tine
4.3 Consult with the IPC on sending a survey for the NPC's to identify why they don't send more women to the Paralympic Games		Diane