

DOSSIER SPÉCIAL

Sport et discriminations en Europe

Sport and Discriminations in Europe

“Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited”.

Article 21, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

The issue of racism in sport has once again dominated headlines in various newspapers after a series of recent fines, incidents and reported comments in England, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Turkey and even in FIFA amongst others. The impact of sport on public attitudes towards racism and discrimination being more than truly demonstrated by the seriousness in which they were all reported. There is, of course, more, sadly more including incidents related to gender and sexual orientation in particular being reported by a host of organisations. These issues reach into the core of our societies and can infect in a corrosive way its cohesion. Sport that great combustible of our emotions, sport which has acted as an existential glue for some of our broken societies, sport which by its nature should teach us about culture, cooperation, respect, fairness, playing by the rules, freedom of expression and, yes, even beauty and human achievement – all things which underpin how we deal and interact with each other in a positive manner. Yet, racism, homophobia and discrimination persist. In an effort to quantify the issues and provide data and information on the situation, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) commissioned a study entitled Racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport: the situation in the European Union. The study aimed to examine many of the more visible factors with a view to improving the information available on the situation, to raise greater awareness of the extent and depth of the situation and to encourage improved data collection. The information in the study gives insight into structural issues which may exist related to sport, particularly

when it comes to tackling racism and discrimination and the underrepresentation of women and minorities in administrative and governance positions in sport. The study also identified those sport organisations which have pro-actively risen to the challenge to embrace diversity and inclusion, to combat racism and discrimination within the powers that they have to govern sport. The picture is therefore fluid and evolving and while it may paint a bleak scene at times, we believe that there is cause for some optimism.

**Diversity and inclusion
are fundamental to the
evolution of society**

As a general finding, the Agency found that almost all European and international umbrella organisations governing sports have adopted anti-racism or anti-discrimination paragraphs in their statutes or similar documents. Most of these provisions, however, lack detailed disciplinary measures that would enforce their implementation. The positive exceptions in this regard are football and cricket organisations. But national level implementation and action by sports bodies to combat discrimination remains a key gap in many sports and countries. The study provides a series of opinions on action that should be taken to reinforce awareness and improve diversity, to tackle structural issues and to encourage cooperation between equality bodies and sports organisations. For example, targeted awareness-raising activities by equality bodies in close cooperation with sports governing bodies are necessary. Such

Morten Kjærum

Directeur de l'Agence
européenne
pour les droits
fondamentaux

*Director, European
Union Agency for
Fundamental Rights*



activities could include the promotion of diversity programmes to encourage the participation of migrants and ethnic minorities. Barriers to accessing leadership and administrative positions by women and ethnic minorities need to be identified and removed. There is a need for greater use and enforcement of existing non-discrimination provisions in law.

Sport plays an important role in the lives of many of us, for that role to be more effective and representative of all of us, its administration and governance needs greater diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion are fundamental to the evolution of society, to its ability to renew itself in a progressive and more comprehensive way, to its ability to address the common and shared challenges related to racism and discrimination. Diversity and inclusion are fundamental for sport. Then sport can be for all and we can all be for sport.

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