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# GENDER EQUALITY AND SPORT: Towards a level playing field for women



Conference – Vilnius, 7 March 2016





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VILNIUS, 7 MARCH 2016

On the occasion of the International women's day and in the run up to Rio 2016 Olympics and Paralympics, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is hosting a conference dedicated to "Gender equality and sport: towards a level playing field for women". The event is held in cooperation with the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee, the Nordic Embassies and the Nordic Council of Ministers office in Vilnius.

## GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORTS – WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Sport – a traditionally male-dominated area - has been for decades shaped by social constructions of femininity and masculinity, hindering meaningful participation of women in numerous disciplines. As shown in the recent EIGE report<sup>1</sup>, despite the gradually increasing participation of women in sport, women remain underrepresented in its decision-making bodies at all levels – European, national or local – and make up only 20-30% of all sport coaches. Furthermore, negative gender stereotyping and gender based violence are deeply embedded in the daily realities of many athletes.

At the same time, sport can contribute to achieving equality through the establishment of general values such as fair play, non-discrimination and teamwork. It can also be used to increase opportunities for girls, if local contexts and gender relations are taken into account and addressed. Sport can give women and girls access to public spaces where they can gather, develop new skills, gain support from others and enjoy freedom of expression and movement. It can promote education, communication, negotiation skills and leadership, all of which are essential to women's empowerment.

In response to the above challenges and opportunities, gender equality in sports is increasingly gaining attention on the EU policy agenda, with a clear commitment from the Council of the EU and specific actions foreseen in the EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport 2014-2020.

## CONFERENCE

While marking International Women's Day on 8 March, the aim of this conference will be to raise awareness of the challenges women encounter in sport, listen to inspiring stories of women athletes and discuss what needs to be done to shape an inclusive and diversity friendly sports culture.

The event will bring together around 60-70 representatives from the International community in Vilnius, Lithuanian sports federations, policy makers, gender equality organisations, media representatives, as well as athletes.

The conference will be held in English, with simultaneous interpretation from/into Lithuanian.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender Equality in Power and Decision- Making. Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, EIGE, December 2015, <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-power-and-decision-making-report>

# Programme

MONDAY, 7 MARCH 2016, 12.30 – 17.00

MODERATOR: Mindaugas Jurkynas

## 12.30 - 12.45 | WELCOME

**Virginija Langbakk**, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality  
**Daina Gudzinevičiūtė**, the National Olympic Committee of Lithuania

*Video message:*

**Marc Tarabella**, Co-chair of the Sports Intergroup, European Parliament

## 12.45 - 14.30 | EMPOWERING WOMEN IN SPORTS – HURDLES AND THE WAY FORWARD

### Panel debate

**Rikke Rønholt**, former professional runner, Denmark  
**Lolita Dudėnienė**, President of Kaunas Judo Club ASAHI, Judo coach, Lithuania  
**Bente Ovedie Skogvang**, football player, referee and associate professor in the Department of Sports and Physical Education, Hedmark University College, Norway  
**Justina Lavrenovaitė**, UEFA referee, football player and coach, Lithuania  
**Rima Valentienė**, basketball player, member and captain of Women's national basketball team, Lithuania

### Discussion with the audience

## 14.30 - 15.00 | COFFEE BREAK

## 15.00 - 16.45 | GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORTS – A EUROPEAN APPROACH

### Panel debate

**Kristina Thurée**, Chair of European Women and Sport (EWS), Swedish Sports Confederation, Sweden  
**Paola Ottonello**, Policy Officer, Sport Unit, European Commission  
**Hilkka Laitinen**, Member of the Executive Committee in the International University Sport Federation, Manager of International Relations at Finnish Olympic Committee, Finland  
**Marko Begovic**, Member of the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) and Gender-Equality Rapporteur, Council of Europe

### Discussion with the audience

## 16.45 - 17.00 | CLOSING REMARKS

**Harri Mäki-Reinikka**, Ambassador of Finland to Lithuania, on behalf of the Finnish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers

## 17.00 - 18.00 | RECEPTION ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

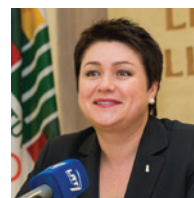


## Virginija Langbakk



Virginija Langbakk is the Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) – a decentralised agency of the European Union (EU), tasked to support the EU and its Member States in promoting gender equality, fighting discrimination based on sex and raising awareness about gender issues. Previously, Ms Langbakk worked as a Deputy Director at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. Over the past 19 years she has served as a gender expert in various capacities and was involved in bringing the gender perspective into the public sector at local, regional and national levels in 38 countries worldwide.

## Daina Gudzinevičiūtė



Daina Gudzinevičiūtė is the President of the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee and former Olympic Champion in trap shooting at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. She is an active opinion-maker and advocate of gender equality in sports. Ms Gudzinevičiūtė is the Chairwoman of the European Olympic Committee's (EOC) Gender Equality in Sport Commission, a position she has held since 2014, and also chairs the "Women and Sport" commission at the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee. Ms Gudzinevičiūtė is dedicating a lot of work and her personal time to promote sports among women in Lithuania.

## Rikke Rønholt Albertsen



Rikke Rønholt is a former professional 400m and 800m runner. She is a Danish record holder in the 400m distance. Throughout her career, Rønholt has been engaged in advocacy activities related to her sport. Ms Rønholt has held numerous keynote speeches on the important link between sport, education and development, exemplified by her own experience, and that of her parents for whom sport was a powerful catalyst for social mobility. Ms Rønholt currently sits in the government appointed consortium charged with mobilising Danish civil society around the Women Deliver Conference to be held in Copenhagen in May this year.

## Lolita Dudėnienė



Lolita Dudėnienė is an internationally certified judo coach and the Chair of the Lithuanian Council of judo coaches. Ms Dudėnienė has worked as a judo coach for more than 29 years and since 2002 serves as the president of judo club "Ryto saulė". She is also a lecturer at the Lithuanian Sport University.



### Bente Ovedie Skogvang

Bente Ovedie Skogvang is a former football player, FIFA referee and Associate Professor in the Department of Sports and Physical Education at Hedmark University College, Norway. She was the referee at the historic Olympic Final in Atlanta 1996, when women's football became an Olympic sport for the first time. Ms Skogvang was the first director of the elite female football clubs organisation in Norway and a member on the Executive board of the Norwegian Football Association (NFA). She has conducted research and produced publications about gender equality in football.



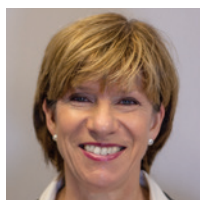
### Justina Lavrenovaitė

Justina Lavrenovaitė is a football player and a FIFA referee. She is a former member of the Lithuania women's national football team. She once scored 9 goals in a single match. Justina Lavrenovaitė has received several awards, including Best Lithuanian Forward, as well as the Top Scorer award in the Baltic States football championship. In 2015 she refereed a U23 match between Japan and United States.



### Rima Valentienė

Rima Valentienė is a Lithuania women's national basketball team player, a member and captain of the Lithuania women's national basketball team. Ms Valentienė was voted the best female basketball player in 2011. She was a champion of Lithuania 5 years in a row playing for Vilnius "Lietuvos telekomas" and in 2005 her team finished 3rd in Euroleague. During her career she has been trying to bring more attention to women's basketball.



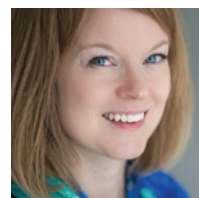
### Kristina Thurée

Kristina Thurée is the Chair of European Women and Sport – an international network, bringing together representatives of gender equality in sports organisations in 41 countries – a position she has held since 2013. She has previously been a member of the Executive Committee of the Swedish Sports Confederation, and responsible for gender equality. She was also a member and chair of local sport clubs from 2001 to 2005.



### Paola Ottonello

Paola Ottonello works for the European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture unit responsible for sport policy and programme. She is responsible for gender equality in sport and follows all EU developments in this field. Ms Ottonello also works with the secretariat of the Council Expert Group on Good Governance, which deals, among other things, with gender equality in sport.



### Hilikka Laitinen

Hilikka Laitinen is a Member of the Executive Committee in the International University Sport Federation, where she has served since 2015. She is also the manager of international relations at the Finnish Olympic Committee and Sport Confederation. Her background is in university sports, where she spent five years working as the Secretary General of the Finnish Student Sports Federation. From 2011 to 2015, Hilikka Laitinen worked at FISU's Gender Equality Committee. She is especially interested in gender equality in sports, international cooperation and national sports politics.



### H.E. Harri Mäki-Reinikka

H.E. Harri Mäki-Reinikka is the Ambassador of Finland to Lithuania and Belarus, a position he has held since 2013. Mr Mäki-Reinikka has been a diplomat for more than 30 years of which 20 years have been spent abroad. Before being sent to Lithuania, Mr Mäki-Reinikka served as the Ambassador of Finland to Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. He has been Deputy to the Minister for Nordic Cooperation, Chief of the Secretariat for the Nordic Cooperation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He was also Chair of the Finnish Students Sports Federation from 1982 to 1983.