

# GENDER JUSTICE, CITIZENSHIP AND SPORT: AN ANALYSIS OF UK SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN GENDER EQUALITY DIRECTIVES, AND SPORT POLICY

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## Abstract

The European Sport Framework can be considered to consist of the European Sports Charter (Council of Europe, 1992/2001) and the White Paper on Sport (European Commission, 2007). Both of these define sport as “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels”.

In 2004, research requested by the European Commission investigating gender inequalities in sports participation across Europe’s 25 member states, found significant gender differences in sports participation in 12 countries (Van Tuyckom et al 2010). In Belgium, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Spain, and the UK, men were more active; whereas, conversely, in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands, the reverse was true. The researchers concluded that in “some European countries more efforts must be undertaken to promote the original goals of the Sport for All Charter” and that “to achieve more female participation in sports will require different policy responses in diverse European member states”.

This paper utilises feminist philosophy and citizenship theory to explore the extent to which the policy discourse of sporting citizenship and gender mainstreaming in Europe and the UK, addresses gender justice. It argues that despite the widespread adoption of gender mainstreaming, a discourse of gendered sporting citizenship has captured UK physical education and sport policy and practice, and this is hindering further progress towards gender justice conceptualised as redistribution, recognition and representation (Fraser 2009).

Sporting citizenship or a big sporting society has been theorised within a framework of three generations of rights.

Thus, first generation rights are civil and political, second generation rights are economic, social and cultural, and third generation are collective rights to, for example, land and water. However, a wealth of research documents the extent to which the cultural practice of sport is gendered terrain. In addition, the meaning of gender justice or gender equality in relation to physical or movement culture is contested. Nevertheless, in the UK, the Equality Act 2010 encapsulates four EU directives on gender equality and Equality Impact Assessments (EIA’s) require public bodies or those providing public services to systematically assess the likely (or actual) effects of policies on people in respect of disability, gender and racial equality.

A number of feminist and political theorists have mapped the contested landscape of gendered citizenship, gender justice, gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The three different approaches to gender justice are conceptualised as: equality (redistribution), difference (recognition), and critical synthesis or transformation (emancipation). Adapting this analysis it is argued that formal sporting citizenship rights might be accorded to all individuals and regarded as gender neutral, but that inequalities of opportunities and power derive from both the sexual division of labour, and the sexual division of play. Further, that women are more likely to be second class sporting citizens than men. Thus gender justice in sport policy could aim at a citizenship of equality but in relation to the normative universal sportsman (cooption into “male” sport, or cultural imperialism); and/or a citizenship of difference involving sport/movement parity (but a sexual division of play); or aim at a critical synthesis or transformation and a universal movement citizenship.

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