

Report of the International Meeting on Transgender Eligibility in Competitive Sports

Lausanne, 19th of October 2019

Attended: ADAMI Paolo Emilio (IAAF), ARCELUS Jon (Nottingham University), BAILAR Schuyler (Harvard University), BERMON Stephane (IAAF), BROCK-DOYLE Jackie (IAAF), D'ESPALLIER Annelies (Vlaamse Ombudsdienst), GARRANDES Frederic (IAAF), HARPER Joanna (Loughborough University), LAMBELET COLEMAN Doriane (Duke University), LAVEY Chris (Bird & Bird), McNAMEE Mike (KU Leuven, Swansea University), RADCLIFFE Paula, SAFER Joshua (Mount Sinai Hospital), WILLIAMS Nicola (Fair Play for Women), plus medical/scientific representatives from International Federations.

Elite Sport is a sphere of athletic excellence pursued by ethical means, including the commitment to general norms such as doping free sport, equality, fairness, inclusion and respect, that comprise what is typically referred to as the integrity of sporting competition. Consistent with these values, elite sport seeks specifically to provide opportunities for females that are equivalent to those opportunities provided to males.

Because there is an important physically driven performance gap between male and female athletes, to fulfil this commitment sport is separated into male and female categories, and sports governing bodies have established rules that govern eligibility for the female category.

A growing number of individuals with gender incongruence are involved in competitive sports, some of them at elite levels. The question how to maintain fair equality of opportunity and meaningful competition has been raised with respect to their participation. Most sport federations have limited experience with the subject. Thus, the IAAF held an initial meeting in Lausanne on 19th October 2019, and invited experts from relevant disciplinary fields, representatives of international federations, and cis and trans athlete representatives. Following a full day of informative lectures and discussions, a level of consensus was achieved among the attendees. This is summarised below:

1. It was recognized that sport maintains its commitment to fair equality of opportunity for female athletes, and that inclusion of trans women within the female category should be promoted with meaningful eligibility standards to reinforce this commitment when there is no intolerable unfairness.
2. Each sport is different with regard to the physical attributes that distinguish male from female performances and with regard to their policy preferences for

classifications. Rules or regulations intended to accommodate trans athletes according to their gender identity should be sports-specific and designed by the relevant international federation. So that the eligibility standards remain consistent with the best available evidence, such rules or regulations should always be considered “living documents”, to be updated according to the latest scientific knowledge.

3. It is widely recognised that testosterone (T) distributes bimodally among male and female populations. T is also the primary known driver of the performance gap between males and females. Consequently, while acknowledging that testosterone is not the only physical basis for the performance gap, serum T has been found to be an acceptable proxy to distinguish males from females for sports purposes.
4. If a federation decides to use serum T for this purpose, in order to be consistent with the biological rationale for the female category, and based on current data, rules or regulations on trans women’s eligibility for that category should adopt a fixed threshold at or below 5 nmol/L.¹ Consistent with the fact that healthy female T levels are typically in the range from 0 to 1.7 nmol/L, it was noted that the typical medical target serum T for trans women who choose such intervention is well below 5 nmol/L.
5. If a federation decides to use serum T for the purpose of determining eligibility for the female category, trans women should undergo medically supervised intervention to lower their levels prior to being declared eligible for competition in that category. The minimum interval between the achievement of the target serum T and eligibility for competition should be tailored for the purpose of each sport, and possibly also for events within a sport. Considering currently available scientific knowledge, an interval of at least 12 months remains reasonable; more may be appropriate depending on the sport and event.
6. It is acknowledged that more data are needed regarding the effects of trans-specific medical interventions on the subsequent physical and mental aspects of athletic performance. Such research, conducted in conjunction with trans athletes, specialised medical centres, and sports scientists, should be encouraged by sports federations.

¹ Handelsman DJ et al. Circulating Testosterone as the Hormonal Basis of Sex Differences in Athletic Performance. *Endocr Rev.* 2018 Oct 1;39(5):803-829.

7. It is the responsibility of each international federation to decide at which level of expertise/age transgender eligibility rules or regulations should apply, considering the above recommendations as a valuable norm.

Finally, to further these ends, two working groups were created in order to: (a) help the interested international federations to draft their own transgender eligibility regulations/rules; and (b) establish a medical and scientific network to promote multicentre applied research on transgender athletes, and more specifically to study the effect of hormone therapy along with other transgender-specific medical interventions on the physical and mental drivers of athletic performance and their effects on the integrity of sporting competition.

Report finalised on the 25th October 2019