



**SECRETARY GENERAL  
COMMISSIONS AND COUNCIL MEETINGS**

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**Women and Fencing Council**

**08 May 2026**

**Online**

Present:

Gulnora Saidova	FIE Secretary General
Nathalie Rodriguez	FIE CEO
Rusni Abu Hassan	Representative of COMEX in the Council
Melissa Alvarenga	President of the Women and Fencing Council
Georgina Usher	Member of the Council
Mike Stafford	Member of the Council
Maria Christina Bate	Member of the Council
Asa Anderson	Member of the Council
Meirav Ofri Heirshkovich	Member of the Council
Lorena Arroyo	Member of the Council
Medhat Hassabelnabi	Member of the Council

Absent:

Alfozan Lama  
Hammoudi Mohamed Samir

Agenda:

1. Sofia Meeting – Plan and Strategic Outlook
2. Gender Equity in Fencing: Results of the Survey
3. Progress Since the Previous Meeting
4. Action Plan and KPIs Until Year-End
5. Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives
6. Questions and Answers

**1. Opening Remarks**

The meeting was opened by Gulnora Saidova and welcomed all participants. General Secretary emphasized the importance of the Council's work and the need to continue strengthening practical initiatives and long-term development strategies.

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**2. Gender Equity Survey Presentation**

Presentation Speaker: Georgina Usher

Georgina Usher presented the preliminary findings of the gender equity survey conducted among National Federations.

## Survey Overview:

- Response rate reached approximately 75% of National Federations.
- Data sources included: FIE database (2024–2025 season), survey responses, additional desk research

## Key Findings:

### Athlete Participation

Women’s participation as athletes remains relatively strong, with female athletes representing approximately 41% of licensed athletes.

### Referees and Coaches

Female representation decreases significantly within refereeing and coaching structures:

- Female referees account for approximately 23.4%.
- Female coaches remain the largest identified gap within the research.

### Leadership Representation

Leadership representation varies depending on the role:

- Female representation at president level is approximately 23.7%.
- Overall leadership representation at National Federation level is stronger, with women occupying approximately 41% of leadership positions.

### National Federation vs FIE Pipeline

The survey highlighted that National Federations demonstrate a higher percentage of female referees and coaches than at FIE international level.

The discussions emphasized that the issue is not the lack of women within the system, but the limited progression to higher international levels.

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## 3. Recognition of the Work Completed

FIE Secretary General Gulnora Saidova expressed strong appreciation to Georgina Usher and all members involved in collecting survey responses and preparing the research. The Secretary General highlighted that the survey demonstrated strong teamwork and delivered meaningful and important results for the future strategic development of fencing.

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## 4. Congress Strategy and Governance Discussions

The Council discussed the importance of carefully presenting certain preliminary survey data before Congress discussions. It was noted that:

- positive figures regarding female participation in some national leadership structures should be communicated carefully,
- such findings should not weaken support for the proposed 40% representation measure.

Proposed Governance Change Nathalie Rodriguez informed the group that the Executive Committee had prepared a proposal to increase women’s representation within the Executive Committee and commissions to 40%, subject to Congress approval.

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## 5. Leadership Development and Education

The Council emphasized the importance to continuing:

- leadership education programs for women,
- long-term development pathways,
- mentorship and training initiatives.

Examples of leadership development initiatives from the USA and Panama were shared during the discussions. Members agreed that practical implementation and structured support mechanisms remain essential for increasing female participation at higher levels of governance, coaching, and refereeing.

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## 6. Next Steps and Action Priorities

### Interim Report

A draft interim data report will be prepared for internal review. Council members will:

- provide comments,
- suggest additional analysis,
- contribute to refining the findings.

The draft report is intended for internal use only and not for public circulation at this stage.

### Second Targeted Survey

A second and more targeted survey will be launched with focus on:

- identifying good practices,
- understanding successful national approaches,
- exploring barriers faced by federations with lower female participation

### Initial Action Priorities

The following strategic priorities were identified:

- women's coaching pathways,
- leadership pipelines,
- international referee progression,
- sharing best practices across federations.

### Non-Responding Federations

The Council discussed concerns regarding lack of engagement from some federations and misunderstanding of the survey objectives.

Suggested actions included:

- increased follow-up through Confederations,
  - improved communication and trust-building.
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## 7. Sofia Meeting Preparation

The Women and Fencing Council confirmed that:

- an internal Council meeting will be organized in the coming weeks;
- a structured plan for Sofia should be shared in advance with leadership and the FIE Office for coordination purposes within one week.
- proposals from all commissions will be distributed by the FIE Office no later than 25 May;
- coordination meetings between relevant Commissions and Councils may be organized to support review and feedback processes.

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## **8. Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives.**

The Council also discussed the importance of promoting sustainability and environmental awareness within the framework of women's development initiatives in fencing. Members highlighted that the Women and Fencing Council can play an important role in:

- promoting sustainable practices through educational and leadership activities;
- encouraging environmentally responsible approaches during events and projects;
- supporting awareness initiatives among athletes, coaches, referees, and National Federations;
- contributing to the broader sustainability objectives of the FIE.

The discussions emphasized the importance of integrating sustainability principles into future Council activities and development programs, including communication, education, and event-related initiatives.

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### **Secretary General's Closing Message**

FIE Secretary General thanked all participants for their active contribution, professionalism, and collaborative spirit and emphasized that the work of the Women and Fencing Council is important, impactful, and should continue to be strengthened through practical initiatives, cooperation, education, and long-term strategic vision for the future development of fencing.