

INTERNATIONAL FLOORBALL FEDERATION POLICY FOR THE ELIGIBILITY OF TRANSGENDER ATHLETES IN INTERNATIONAL FLOORBALL COMPETITIONS

The most important parameters used in developing this Transgender policy has been the determination of how inclusive the policy is for transgender athletes and how fair it is to all athletes involved in international competitions. This balance between upholding inclusivity without compromising fairness provides a conflict which is difficult to resolve.

The International Floorball Federation (IFF) acknowledges that this policy, while providing inclusivity for some, will also rule others ineligible for international representation. However, the IFF recognises that at lower competitive levels of floorball, and especially at community floorball level, the possibility for a more inclusive policy may be possible. National Floorball Federations are responsible for developing their own transgender policies for competitions under their jurisdiction, and the IFF will work with all of its member countries to help them develop policies that offer the greatest level of inclusion possible, while still maintaining a level of fairness for all participants.

National Floorball Federations are encouraged to apply these international rules when building their international representative teams and development pathways, to minimise the issues of athlete eligibility when submitting team lists for international competition.

JURISDICTION

This policy applies only to international floorball competitions in which the eligibility of players falls under the direct jurisdiction of the International Floorball Federation (IFF). For the purposes of this policy, International Floorball Competitions refers to all current and future events which are governed by the IFF Competition Regulations for National Teams; IFF Competition Regulations for Friendly Internationals; IFF Champions Cup Regulations; IFF Competition Regulations for EuroFloorball Championships; IFF Competition Regulations for EuroFloorball Cup & EuroFloorball Challenge. This includes the following events for both Men & Women:

- IFF World Floorball Championships and qualifying events
- IFF U19 World Floorball Championships and qualifying events
- IFF Champions Cup
- IFF EuroFloorball Championships (planned to start in 2025)
- IFF EuroFloorball Cup
- IFF EuroFloorball Challenge
- Friendly International matches between member association national teams (U17, U19, U23, or adult)
- Asia Oceania Floorball Confederation (AOFC) Cup
- Africa Floorball Cup

TERMINOLOGY

IFF recognises that various terms may be used when referring to transgender people therefore, within this policy, the following terms have been adopted:

Transgender: an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth.

Cisgender: Often shortened to CIS, is a person who has a gender identity that matches their sex assigned at birth. A person whose sex was assigned male at birth and identifies as a boy or a man, or someone whose sex was assigned female at birth and identifies as a girl or a woman, is considered cisgender. The word cisgender is the antonym of transgender.

Gender-affirming surgery: a person who is undergoing or who has undergone treatment with the objective of changing their assigned gender.

FTM (Female-to-male) athlete or trans male: An athlete assigned the gender of female at birth who is undergoing hormonal therapy with testosterone for diagnosed gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria and/or Transsexualism. They may, or may not have, undergone gender-affirming surgery.

MTF (Male-to female) or trans female: An athlete assigned the gender of male at birth who is undergoing hormonal therapy with anti-androgens to block male hormones for diagnosed gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria and/or transsexualism. They may, or may not have, undergone gender-affirming surgery.

POLICY CRITERIA

In developing this policy, the three main criteria of fairness, safety, & inclusion in relation to all athletes were considered.

As a gender-effected sport, the IFF already separate competitions based on gender as we recognise the medical evidence that males have a general natural advantage in sport – strength, speed, physical build, reach. We separate to create more equal and fair playing fields. In mixed versions of Floorball there are still often rules, based on gender, which are for the purpose of trying to create a balanced environment of fair play between the teams. There will always be a difference of skill level between players, but the advantage / disadvantage of ability based on gender should be minimised.

Fairness

IFF strives for fairness in all aspects of Floorball. Our FairFloorball campaign actively promotes this. We reward fairness with our FairFloorball player awards. We promote equality in our events – the same events for both men and women in all age categories. In events with prize money, such as Champions Cup or EuroFloorball Cup, the prize money is always the same for men or women. The IFF rules apply to all members – big or small, old or new. All members have an equal vote.

Participation of transgender athletes' consideration: Medical studies show that trans female athletes who have undergone male puberty have an enduring advantage over CIS female athletes even when testosterone is brought into the female range.

Safety

Floorball prides itself on being a safe sport. Our rules aim to minimise the risk of injury to players – whether that is by limiting the amount & type of body contact between players, by regulating the free space around the court, by limiting the height at which the stick can be lifted, or by introducing safety equipment regulations. These are just some of the examples of how Floorball prioritises the safety of participants.

Participation of transgender athletes' consideration: In Floorball, upper body strength is an advantage. Trans female athletes are generally faster and heavier increasing the risk of muscle-skeletal injury and concussion in body-contact situations if they are competing in the female category. In the context of a trans male athlete competing in the male event they are unlikely to have competitive physical advantage over a CIS male, however, an increase in safety issues is likely to be against the trans male athlete.

Inclusion

Floorball for All. One ball – One world. IFF aims to be highly inclusive – whether that is based on gender, age, ethnicity, or physical ability. Floorball can be played by the young, the old, men, women, children. Whether you are in a wheelchair or participate in the Special Olympics, whether you have a 10,000 seat venue or a carpark, there is a possibility to play Floorball. Although the IFF does not apply gender quotas, for example for committees or team staff, we do strongly encourage the equal participation of genders in all aspects of Floorball, and proactively work to balance gender inequity when it is identified.

Participation of transgender athletes' consideration: IFF does not wish to exclude transgender athletes entirely from the sport, and will work to ensure the opportunities for their participation at community level, but considers their participation at international level to impact on the integrity of competition, especially in the women's category.

ELIGIBILITY

IFF recognises the fact that decisions about participation must be taken on an individual basis as the integrity of men's and women's Floorball must be respected. All applications for eligibility of transgender athletes will be assessed by the IFF Medical Committee (MC). The MC shall base their decision on available medical studies related to the participation of transgender athletes in elite sport, as well as the guidelines of other international sports governing bodies and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In some cases, there may also be the requirement of a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) according to the World Anti-Doping Association (WADA) regulations for the use of hormone therapy medications.

Trans male athletes

A trans male / female-to-male (FTM) athlete who wants to compete at international level on a male team must apply to the IFF Medical Committee for approval. This application must include a TUE application for treatment with testosterone related to a diagnosis of gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria and/or transsexualism. If the application is approved, the athlete may compete at international level on a men's team.

Trans female athletes

A trans female / male-to-female (MTF) athlete who wants to compete at international level on a female team must apply to the IFF Medical Committee for approval. Criteria that may be considered in the assessment process may include, but not be limited to:

- Diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder or gender dysphoria and/or transsexualism
- Length and type of hormone treatment undergone
- Levels of testosterone over a certain period

Trans female athletes using medication to suppress testosterone levels may also require a TUE.

If the application is approved, the athlete may compete at international level on a women's team.

The IFF acknowledges that trans female athletes who have undergone any period of male puberty prior to the start of hormone treatment may have an enduring advantage over cis female athletes, in which case it is unlikely that such an athlete would be approved for participation in a female category.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications for participation of a transgender athlete at international level must be submitted to the IFF no later than four (4) months prior to participation in an international event for FTM athletes, and no later than six (6) months prior to participation in an international event for MTF athletes.

The preliminary application should be submitted to the IFF on behalf of the athlete by the National Floorball Association that the athlete intends to represent. By submitting the application, the National Floorball Association confirms that the athlete meets all other eligibility criteria for international representation, aside from the criteria included in this policy.

The preliminary application should provide a short summary of the athlete's gender identity and current medical treatment, as well as defining the international event they want to be considered eligible for. Based on a review of the preliminary application, the IFF MC will advise what further actions / information is required.

The IFF Medical Committee will review all applications and provide confirmation of approval or denial of the application no later than two (2) months prior to the starting date of the international event in which the athlete is applying to participate in.

DISCRIMINATION

The IFF recognises that discrimination in any form, direct or indirect, on the grounds of gender is unacceptable and may result in sanctions according to the IFF Juridical Regulations &/or disciplinary proceedings. All those involved with Floorball, irrespective of their gender, shall be treated in an equal, fair, open, and respectful manner. Therefore, all those participating or involved in IFF international events have a responsibility to follow, respect, and advocate this Transgender policy.

POLICY REVIEW

The IFF commits to review this policy at least every two (2) years. The IFF acknowledges that their own resources limit the amount of performance analysis or medical study that they can do in direct relation to the inclusion of transgender athletes, and that current policy relies on general medical studies in this area, as well as policies and guidelines developed by other sport governing bodies.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All applications for participation of a transgender athlete, and in particular all athlete information provided to the IFF under this policy, will be always dealt with in strict confidence. All medical information and data relating to an athlete will be treated as sensitive personal information and the IFF Medical Committee will always ensure that it is processed as such in accordance with applicable data protection and privacy laws. Such information will not be used for any purpose not contemplated in this policy and will not be disclosed to any third party save (a) as is strictly necessary for the effective application and enforcement of this policy; or (b) as is required by law.

REFERENCES

IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity & Sex Variations (2022)

International Hockey Federation, Gender Equality Policy (Updated 22 October 2020)

US Military Study: Effect of gender affirming hormones on athletic performance in transwomen and transmen: implications for sporting organisations and legislators – Drs Timothy A Roberts, Joshua Smalley, Dale Ahrendt (7th December 2020).

<https://www.scienceforsport.com/the-laurel-hubbard-debate-the-science-behind-transgender-athletes/> - James de Lacey (23rd July 2021)

<https://www.sportandeu.com/post/right-to-compete-transgender-women> - Joanna Harper (7th July 2020)

World Athletics Eligibility Regulations for Transgender Athletes (Effective as from 1 October 2019)