

CASE STUDIES

INCLUSIVE SPORT



iSport

Inclusion in Sport



PREFACE

Disclaimer: This document – Case Studies for Inclusive Sport - is written in the context of the project “Inclusion in Sport (iSport)”.

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UNDERSTANDING HOW DISCRIMINATION SHOWS UP IN SPORT

Discrimination refers to the unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on certain characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. Discrimination can occur in various forms, including exclusion, bias, prejudice, or unequal opportunities.

The European Union has an extensive framework of anti-discrimination legislation, and in sport too, European citizens are protected by policies and regulations that are designed to counter discrimination and deliver a level playing field. But we must recognize that this ambition falls short of its goal, and documented cases illustrate the reality of how not all communities have access to sport - through an unperceived bias of privilege, lack of education and sometimes a deliberate lack of willingness to change and be more democratic in approach. Our current sport landscape is not the inclusive, welcoming space it should be and our structures all too often fall short in the claim of offering 'sport for all'.

Some of the ways in which discrimination reveals itself:

Stereotyping	Athletes may be subjected to stereotypes based on their race, gender, or other characteristics, which can lead to biased judgments about their abilities. At a grassroots level, this can affect selection for teams, endorsements, or funding to name just a few examples.
Unequal opportunities	Certain groups may face barriers or limited access to resources, training, or competitions, opportunities to play, access to sport structures, fewer sponsorships, less media coverage, no or unequal or investment.
Pay disparities	While grassroots athletes do not for the most part receive any reimbursement, their coaches and managers sometimes do, and higher salaries for certain profiles, or unequal prize money or endorsements despite comparable achievements and performance levels are often ways that discrimination manifests.
Harassment and abuse	Athletes from non-dominant communities may experience verbal or physical harassment, even abuse, or bullying based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, or other factors.
Lack of representation	Underrepresented groups may face limited representation in coaching, management, or leadership positions, leading to a lack of diverse perspectives and role models.
Hostile environments	Athletes may encounter hostile environments with offensive language, gestures, or actions that create a culture of discrimination and exclusion.

For the purposes of this project, our focus was on communities targeted by:

Sexism/Misogyny: the discrimination or prejudice based on a person's sex or gender. In sports, sexism can appear through unequal pay between male and female athletes, fewer opportunities for women in coaching and leadership roles, or stereotypes about women's athletic abilities.

Gender inequality in sport is the subject of many European publications and is largely addressed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The 2022 publication "Towards More Gender Equality in Sport" factsheet and recommendations ¹ published by the High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport highlights some of the areas of inequalities that result from fundamental sexism that women face in the sporting world.

LGBTQI+ - phobia: is the fear, prejudice, or discrimination against individuals who identify in the LGBTQI+ spectrum). In sports, homo-trans-bi-lesbo phobia is experienced in derogatory language, exclusion of athletes, or unequal treatment based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

The ILGA-Europe Rainbow Map & Index, an annual benchmarking tool, ranking 49 countries in Europe on their LGBTI equality laws and policies illustrates how legal statutes for LGBTQI+ citizens vary, for example, and the reality for individuals that belong to non-dominant, non-mainstream, marginalised communities is that even when laws are in place, they are not fully enforced, and discrimination is something they deal with every day. Discrimination can show up as blatant obstructions, but more often it manifests as minute actions that are often 'let go' because of their smallness. Unchallenged, these microaggressions become major issues to healthy living in equal, non-discriminatory communities.

A comprehensive study of LGBTQI+ phobia in sport in Europe was the subject of the 2018 OUTSPORT survey "The Relevance of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport in Europe" ² which summarized sport as "a fundamentally homo-/transphobic environment" and concluded that 'the vast majority of respondents perceive homo-/transphobia to be a problem in sport and transphobia is perceived to be an especially prominent problem in sport.'

It is important to note here that although treated as a homogenous entity, there is disparity in discrimination, and where homophobia is discussed in sport, often the discrimination against L (lesbian), B (bisexual), T (trans), Q (queer or questioning), I (intersex) and other gender fluid and gender non-conforming members of the community goes largely unaddressed, not to say often completely ignored.

The report "Violence and Discrimination Against LGBTI Women in Sport" shines some light on the issues that LGBTI women face.³

Ableism: the discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities. In sports, ableism can manifest as inaccessible facilities, exclusion of athletes with disabilities, or unequal treatment based on their physical or mental abilities.

1 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VvsZvNea2o2tJYy_s-mVC8ZjnwMJQMb8/view

2 <https://www.out-sport.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OUTSPORT-Report-Relevance-of-SOGI-in-Sport-in-Europe-3.pdf>

3 <https://www.eglsf.info/wp-content/uploads/20210810-violence-and-discrimination-against-LBTI-women-in-sport.pdf>

Age Discrimination: Young adults may face discrimination based on their age, both in terms of opportunities and respect from older athletes, coaches, or administrators. They may be perceived as less experienced or less skilled simply because they are younger. They may also face discrimination with regards to leadership roles. As young adults seeking coaching, administrative, or leadership roles in sports may face barriers such as ageism or prejudice, which can hinder their career advancement.

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on promoting inclusivity and diversity within the sporting environment, and key words such as diversity and inclusion and intersectionality have become of common-use. In some cases, efforts have been made to ensure equal opportunities for individuals of diverse identities and backgrounds to participate and excel in sports.

Significant focus has been placed on gender inclusivity with efforts being made to increase support for women's sports. Many European initiatives are targeted at have aimed to close the gender gap in terms of participation, funding, media coverage, and fan support. Events such as the FIFA Women's World Cup and the recent resounding success of the women's Rugby World Cup along with the growth of women's professional leagues in various sports have contributed to increased visibility and support for female athletes.

In terms of inclusivity for individuals with disabilities, progress has been made to promote adaptive sports and create opportunities for disabled athletes to participate and compete. The Paralympic Games and other adaptive sports events have gained more recognition and support, showcasing the remarkable talents and achievements of disabled athletes.

But while progress has been made, there is still work to be done to ensure full inclusivity in the sporting environment. Challenges such as discrimination, unequal access to resources, and limited representation persist and ongoing efforts by governing bodies, organisations, and individuals are necessary to continue breaking down barriers and promoting inclusivity in sports. Inclusivity in sports is crucial to the sustainability of sport events, and creating an environment that welcomes participants from all backgrounds is fundamental to this goal.

Guidelines on inclusion strategies include the following topics, all of which are paramount in creating events and activities that are open and welcoming:

Educate yourself and your team

Understand the importance of inclusivity and diversity in sports. Learn about different cultural practices, disabilities, and other factors that may affect participants. This knowledge will help you create an inclusive event.

Set clear inclusion goals

Define your event's inclusion objectives. This might include promoting diversity among participants, providing accessibility for people with disabilities, or creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere for all attendees.

Develop an inclusive policy	Create an inclusion policy that outlines your commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment. This policy should be communicated to all stakeholders, including participants, volunteers, and staff.
Ensure accessibility	Make your event accessible to people of all abilities. Consider factors such as wheelchair access, accessible parking, ramps, and accessible restroom facilities. Provide sign language interpreters or captioning services for individuals with hearing impairments.
Provide diverse representation	Encourage diverse participation by reaching out to underrepresented groups, such as minorities, women, and people with disabilities. Actively engage with communities and organizations that support these groups.
Offer training and awareness programs	Conduct training sessions for event staff, volunteers, and participants to raise awareness about diversity, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity. This training can help everyone understand and respect different backgrounds and experiences.
Create a safe and inclusive environment	Take steps to prevent discrimination, harassment, or any form of exclusion during the event. Clearly communicate your zero-tolerance policy for such behavior and ensure there are reporting mechanisms in place for participants to raise concerns
Provide appropriate facilities:	Consider the specific needs of diverse participants. For instance, provide prayer rooms for religious individuals, gender-neutral restrooms, or lactation spaces for nursing mothers.
Communicate effectively	Ensure all event-related information is provided in multiple formats, such as printed materials, websites, and digital communications, to cater to different accessibility needs. Use clear and inclusive language that avoids stereotypes or biases.
Seek feedback and continuous improvement	After the event, gather feedback from participants regarding their experience with inclusivity. Use this feedback to identify areas of improvement and make necessary adjustments for future events.

Many of us have attended training opportunities aimed at how to make sport more accessible and equitable, that englobe these concepts, among other topics. And all too often, in feedback of these events, a recurring sentiment is “that was great, but I still don’t know how to go about this concretely.”



iSport CONCEPT & AMBITION

The ambition of this project was to explore how the communities of the project partners – the LGBTQI+ community, women, disabled athletes, and those involved in youth sport – already produce successful sporting events and simply to expose the elements in the event make-up that contribute to their success.

Our “show & tell” approach was designed to offer concrete examples of good practices that are effective and successful, that can be leveraged by all event organisers who wish to create inclusive sport tournaments.

We approached this by:

- offering each partner the in-situ experience of participating in an event that is targeted to these specific communities so they can feel and live first-hand the specificities of these events to better understand how they can adjust in their own events to improve inclusivity across the board.
- harnessing the expertise that these partners have in practical hands-on hosting of sport events that serve a diverse grassroots sports community, offering lived experiences of the considerations, the challenges, the pitfalls, and the success that can be leveraged by others in the future
- sharing the learning beyond the project coalition, with other mainstream and profile-dedicated sport organisations to help build a more equitable and accessible sport community.

The ‘activation’ partners in this project were selected because they have expertise in hosting events, or licensing the hosting of events targeted at their specific community:

LGBTQI+

EGLSF (European Gay & Lesbian Sports Federation) licenses a 4-day multisport event, hosted annually in a different European city by one of its European member clubs. EuroGames have been creating affirmative, participatory, and celebratory spaces in sport for LGBTQI+ people in Europe for 30 years now. From 300 athletes taking part in 4 sports at the pioneering first edition in The Hague in 1992, EuroGames has become Europe’s largest open, inclusive multi-sport tournament, EuroGames provides the opportunity to:

- fight against discrimination in sport on grounds of sexual preference or orientation
- stimulate integration in sport and emancipation of LGBTQI athletes
- enable and support the coming out of LGBTQI athletes
- support the founding of new LGBTQI groups

EuroGames has served to create communities in sport since its beginning as participants, empowered by their experience of finding a welcoming space in sport, return to their home cities and countries with the ambition of developing and improving opportunities for their local LGBTQI+ sporting communities.

Disability

The Finnish Paralympic Committee and the European Paralympic Committee are the project partners who focus on creating events that are destined for athletes with disabilities.

The European Para Youth Games (EPYG) is a biennial sport event for young para-athletes aged between 13 and 23 from the member countries of the European Paralympic Committee. Organised by the European Paralympic Committee, the goal is to contribute to the growth of Para sport and give up-and-coming athletes their first taste of international competition, to take part in educational activities and connect with their peers.

The sixth and largest edition in 2022 edition drew nearly 400 athletes from 29 countries in Pajulahti, Finland. They competed in eight sports - athletics, swimming, table tennis, boccia, goalball, judo, wheelchair basketball and showdown.

Women

Panteres Grogues Sports Club - Donasport run an amateur women's tournament every year in Barcelona, to promote the practice of sport among women and the inclusion of LGBTI women in sport. Now in its 12th edition, this tournament takes place on weekends, kicking off in March to celebrate International Women's Day and running through to May. Its focus is on participation and not competition.

Donasport goals are the following:

- To foster gender equality and promote the visibility, participation and integration of women in sport through an inclusive sports project that empowers women as active participants and leaders.
- To promote sport as a tool to achieve equality for women in the world of sport.
- Provide the necessary facilities and equipment for women to practice sport in a safe, inclusive, and equal environment.
- Facilitate access to all women who want to practice sport at any level
- To provide enhanced opportunities in sport and physical activity for everyone identifying in the LGBTQI+ community, in particular for those identifying as lesbian, non-binary, trans and intersex.
- To become a benchmark event in the fight for the equality of women's sport.
- To become a reference in reporting unfair situations of women in sport.

Youth

EUSA Institute - European University Sports Association – governs university sports competitions under the title of the European Universities Championships (EUC) as well as the European Universities Games (EUG). They represent the largest European multisport student event, combining also education and culture. The championships have been organised annually since 2001, and since 2012 they are organised on a biannual basis, in odd years, with European Universities Games (EUG) being organised in even years as a multi-sport event. Participants primarily represent their universities.

In 2019 a total of 21 different sports were included in the Sports Programme of the Championships.

University Sports Association of Poland - AZS' key competitions include the Polish Academic Championships (AMP) – the largest series of sports competitions addressed to the academic community, comprising 35 sports disciplines, with almost 20 thousand participants each year. The AZS Polish Championships for People with Disabilities (IMP), a project aimed at students with disabilities from various academic environments, are growing every year. Currently, it is already a dozen or so events a year, attended by several hundred people.



TAKING ACTION

Running any sporting event is a daunting task, regardless of its scale. The planning, management, framing, funding, communication, production, and follow-up elements of the event are time-consuming and demand focus and dedication. So when, as is increasingly the case, hosts are asked to take into consideration elements that may take them out of our comfort zone, elements that have not been traditionally thought of as the remit of sport, elements beyond the purely technical that Sport Management programs are designed to teach, the result is often a feeling of being overwhelmed, of not knowing where to start and the conclusion is that strategies of inclusion get put on a back burner, to be dealt with on one of our 'tomorrows'.

iSport started with what is already being done and extrapolated the learning, presented here as Use Cases.

We started with a data collection survey sheet as a primary tool for collecting feedback on how we develop our events. To create this, we collectively brainstormed and agreed on a list of tasks that build our events event and explored the ways in which we innately incorporate our specific inclusion strategies into the planning, production, and reporting of our events. The project broke event planning and production into operational blocks, or phases, then explored the tasks that compose each block and noted down observations and reflections from partners, planners, and host organisers for each phase to see where and how specific aspects that make our events unique to our sporting community – our take on inclusion and diversity elements - were addressed.

While our partner events do not resemble each other in their final productions, the steps to hosting a successful sport event are similar and so there are many parallels with the reflections necessary. Event organisation phases were defined as:

Table 1: Data Collection Sheet

EVENT PHASE	LEARNING OR EXPERIENCE OR OBSERVATIONS
Inspiration / research	Certain groups may face barriers or limited access to resources, training, or competitions, opportunities to play, access to sport structures, fewer sponsorships, less media coverage, no or unequal or investment.
Promoting event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting your event to attract the numbers necessary to ensure the success of the event ▪ How to ensure that the accompanying message of your community and the inclusiveness you are targeting is conveyed ▪ This includes language and graphics used for promotional materials and supports, and the channels that you will use to promote the event.
Registration	How does your registration tool / process consider specific requirements of your event?

Welcome – Club/Event	As participants arrive at your club, or the event, what do you do to show that it is an inclusive event?
Preparation, Running & engagement of 'Target' community for official and 'demonstration' events	<p>In the preparations and running of your events, what steps do you put in place to ensure that the sporting community you are targeting is properly catered for?</p> <p>Think about the structural aspects of your event organisation, safety measures.</p>
Ceremony activities Medals & Prizes	<p>How do you ensure that the ceremonial elements to your event - the medal and prize award ensure that your sporting community is made to feel included?</p> <p>What steps do you take in framing this part of your event to ensure inclusivity?</p>
Side events Cultural, political, educational, social side events	If your event encompasses these elements, how do they add to the global success of your event, what role do they have, how are they used to carry the message of your community and reflect your values?
Post event reporting	<p>How is your post-event communication carried out?</p> <p>What points are you careful to convey in your press interviews?</p> <p>How do you use post-event articles or other post -event publicity?</p> <p>How do you ensure that the message of inclusiveness for your sporting community is conveyed?</p>
Evaluation / Debrief / Legacy	How do you evaluate & share findings and learnings and how do you ensure a legacy?

In analysing the returns that project participants, event hosts and organisers and SMEs offered to our EVENT PHASE / LEARNING OR EXPERIENCE OR OBSERVATIONS survey, we recognized that many overall themes are similar with any differences lying in the details of for specific communities.

We have collected the overarching themes here:

Table 2: General Learning Themes

EVENT PHASE	LEARNING OR EXPERIENCE OR OBSERVATIONS
Inspiration / research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with sport clubs who target the same profile to understand the needs, realities, and desires of the community ▪ Feedback – use all the feedback that you can find on sport events in your community ▪ Engage with – and listen to! - individual sport experts at an early stage to evaluate the requirements and needs ▪ Engage with previous event organisers and experts to solicit advice ▪ Ensure there is a local community – sporting or otherwise – that focus on your target profile that is willing to help promote and host the event ▪ Check for clashes with other same-profile or potentially ‘competitive’ events occurring at or around the same date. Think about joining efforts or reschedule if this happens. ▪ Prepare sport ‘redbooks’ that highlight any adaptations to mainstream sport operations ▪ Make sure that any non-mainstream sport adaptations are recognised and understood. Facilitate communication between mainstream and profile-specific experts to achieve this. ▪ Prepare guidelines and training for all officials / volunteers / security & medical staff ▪ Ensure the availability of ‘averted’ medical staff as volunteers & referents ▪ Ensure that you have developed and shared any specific policy adaptations, such as an event-specific gender policy ▪ Plan for demonstration events to showcase your profile-specific sports ▪ Remember to cater for everyone in the community that you are targeting ▪ Make sure that you have taken into consideration adapted funding/outreach routes ▪ Engage with local service stakeholders such as transport hubs to harness their expertise ▪ The local profile-specific community is part of the steering committee
Promoting event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure that your promotional materials – traditional and digital - offer a clear message about and to the community that you are targeting

- Use meaningful visuals that are known and understood in your community and 'real' models for graphics
- Contact other same-profile groups and organisations to help promote the event – private and public institutions often have a person responsible for community engagement/human rights
- Use profile-specific press experts to write interest features about your local community, athletes, organisers, similar events
- Make sure that your promotional materials showcase the diversity that you are promoting
- Reach out to related profile-specific events in the run-up to yours to promote & talk about common issues
- Find role models and ambassadors to do promotional clips to explain why the event is important; Personal stories have great impact
- Use local and targeted media opportunities & events (podcasts, talk shows) to develop a regular presence leading up to event
- Make sure that your logo / mascot / icon reflects the values you are promoting
- Make sure any allies (promotion companies, graphic designers, for examples) have training and are sensitised to the values you are promoting and the issues involved
- Have a clear charter on what is & is not acceptable behaviour and language and make this public
- Make sure your language is inclusive – focus on the person and not the 'category', or ability. Check correct use of pronouns.
- Promote your event but also the values of the community that your event is targeted to & associated with
- Use profile-specific national and international dates & events to promote and create awareness
- Work with corporate associates that support your values and your community
- Use travelling promotions – leverage similar events – sport & non sport – to promote yours and attract participants. Offer promotional immediate sign-up fees at these events.

Registration

- How does your registration tool / process account for inclusiveness?
- Be aware of profile-specific protocols when developing your tools
- Be conscious of the language that you use and focus on the person
- Consider any specific authorisations participants will need
- Find ways to easily integrate potentially confusing or controversial country-specific requirements
- Be transparent and provide reference & links to any specific policies that will be enforced
- Offer flexibility where needed to adapt to profile-specific needs
- Offer payment facilities and outreach opportunities

Welcome – Club/Event

- Ensure that there are volunteers from your community and that all volunteers are sensitized to the values of the community targeted
- Make sure that signage is sufficient and clear and simple. Integrate graphical instructions where possible.
- Make sure that welcome pack includes safeguarding information
- Make sure that a clear code of conduct and safeguarding referents are posted in relevant locations
- Promote associated fringe events, conferences, shows and parties and offer info hubs to these stakeholders
- Work with transport stakeholders to ensure event visibility & accessibility. Think about posting volunteer stands at strategic hubs
- Place experienced & sensitized staff & volunteers in strategic positions & locations
- Ensure that designated spaces for specific community members are offered, easily accessible and clearly signposted

Preparation, Running & engagement of 'Target' community for official and 'demonstration' events

- All the participants, officials, volunteers are sensitized to community values
- All the participants, officials, volunteers have signed value & conduct charters where necessary or available
- Public spaces are adapted to community needs
- Signage takes in to account community values
- Clear code of conduct and safeguarding information is available and is posted at strategic locations
- The officials and volunteer handbook provides a clear behaviour and code of conduct and sanctions where necessary
- Events are run or sanctioned by the local profile-specific community
- Any fringe events are included in the program
- Adapted funding or outreach opportunities are made clear
- There are no barriers

Ceremony activities Medals & Prizes

- Language is adapted and suitable
- Dignitaries, notaries, prize awarders are sensitized to community values and schooled in appropriate behaviour and language
- Decoration for the location is adapted to, representative of and celebrates community values
- Speakers and presenters are drawn from the profile-specific community
- Attention is given to diversity in speakers and presenters
- Prizes are adapted to community values and inclusive of all profiles in the community
- Celebrate the diversity and inclusivity in the medal design and ceremony organisation

Side events
Cultural, political,
educational, social side
events

- Side events hosted alongside the main event must be complementary in message and values conveyed
- Side events promote the main event and vice-versa and there is a cross-over of speakers / entertainers to amplify the message of both and plan for future co-working possibilities

Post event reporting

- Plan for post-event publicity
- Invite press to all events and to a post-event press conference to plan for legacy
- Emphasise the highlights of your event and the successes / originalities
- Prepare a post-event press dossier with statistics, ambassadors, quotes and photos that convey the legacy you want to create
- Leave open access to information about the event

Evaluation / Debrief /
Legacy

- Prepare post event satisfaction surveys for participants, volunteers and organisers to be sent immediately after the event while memories are still fresh.
- Prepare a post event press release highlighting the successes, linking this to previous event history
- Prepare a post-event press dossier with statistics, ambassadors, quotes and photos that convey the legacy you want to create
- Prepare the post-event website to include the summary of the event and provide details for future articles
- Follow up the event with post-event social posts to highlight your successes and legacy achievements
- Research future opportunities that you can present the success if your event
- Connect with event organisers of similar future events



USE CASE GUIDANCE FOR SPORT EVENT ORGANISERS

USE CASE: LGBTQI+

To examine what LGBTQI+ inclusivity looks like in reality, our main reference was the EGLSF annual multisport event - EuroGames.

For data and observations, we focused on learning from EuroGames Copenhagen 2021, and EuroGames Nijmegen 2022.

Under the title 'Copenhagen 2021', EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 was hosted alongside the World Pride event and took part at the tail end of the pandemic in August 2021.

EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 in Copenhagen was managed by the local LGBTQI+ sport organisation Pan Idraet. With over 40 years existence, this ELGSF member club counts over 1600 members, and offers 20 regular sport activities as well as cultural and social events for its members. Pan Idraet had already hosted a EuroGames in 2003, and World OutGames in 2009, so their experience of running mega sport events as well as LGBTQI+-focused events and framing regular sport activities was extensive. EuroGames was organised largely with and by their regular engaged club members.

EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 Nijmegen was billed as a small EuroGames. Hosted in a non-capital European city, its vision was to simply offer a solid sport experience to the LGBTQI+ community.

EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 offered 17 sports and the city and other cultural associations of Nijmegen used the occasion to provide LGBTQI+-focused side events. While the bid was presented and carried by EGLSF member club Gay Sport Nijmegen, the project was carried by mostly mainstream clubs and organisers.

The inspiration/research phase

The motivation for hosting EuroGames for both organisations comes from putting their city or town on the LGBTQI+ map as a 'rainbow city' – Nijmegen's hope was to 'enhance its character as an open and tolerant city', and Copenhagen's goal, having secured the WorldPride event in October 2017, was to create history by 'uniting WorldPride and EuroGames' for the first time. In both host cities there was a movement of engagement from local government to showcase their city as a rainbow city.

The European LGBTQI+ sporting community are aware of the date of EuroGames 3 years in advance, once the bid is awarded to the host city by the EGLSF Assembly, so agendas are set accordingly regarding other events. All events hosted by European clubs are logged in the ELGSF sport calendar, a service offered without charge to the community, to ensure tournament clashes are avoided.

At the research stage, EuroGames hosts are made aware of core components of the event and the tools necessary for hosting a successful event. EGLSF makes the following available to EuroGames hosts:

- sport redbooks that frame the way sports should be run
- ceremonies redbooks that detail the protocol and the requirements for the opening and closing ceremonies
- sport specialist's directory. This is a list of LGBTQI+ sport experts in Europe, who have experience of EuroGames, and national LGBTQI+ tournaments, who offer their services to host cities to ensure that adaptations to mainstream events (format, protocol) are understood.
- A list of LGBTQI+ sport federations such as GLTA (Gay and Lesbian Tennis Association) for tennis, ES-

SDA (European Same Sex Dance Association) for dancing, IGLFA (International Gay & Lesbian Football Association), who host European or World championships and have a network of experts including referees and judges, their own set of redbooks that frame championship events. Other sports, such as athletics have informal organisations and work together and with EGLSF (through the sport specialist network), and hosts to ensure that events make sense and ensure that they are adapted to all attendees at EuroGames.

- a standardized registration tool (in the case of EuroGames Nijmegen 2022).

The EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 organising committee had significant experience with EuroGames. The format of sport events for EuroGames, defined by the EGLSF sport redbooks, was already understood by EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 organisers: many of the organisers of EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 were regular EuroGames participants, familiar with events and how they are set up and run and with a large international LGBTQI+ sport contact network, which they could leverage for both promotion and planning.

Having already hosted mega-LGBTQI+ sport events previously and benefitting from comfortable conditions of access, participation, and funding for local LGBTQI+ athletes, EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 organisers' goal was to engage beyond the LGBTQI+ community, in line with the Pan Idraet club vision to "focus on the inclusion of people with a special focus on sexual orientation and gender diversity".

The planning for this included a wide scope of events to engage the sporting community as well as the general public:

- 29 different sports tournaments over a four-day period across Copenhagen and Malmö
- Sports to the People: drop-in sports in parks, squares, and venues across the city for all the people living and visiting Copenhagen and Malmö during Copenhagen 2021.
- a Sports Leader Conference: a two-day event that centered around organizational development, human rights, and inclusion strategies.
- Sports Village events here were varied to cater for the different profiles of the community (see the program [here](#)).

In these events, the diversity of the LGBTQI+ community was catered for by planning specific categories but also focused social events such as the Fluid Festival, that offered an inclusive space for female-identified, non-conforming and non-binary people.

All these events were scripted into a comprehensive [press programme](#) that started with the opening of registration, a year before the tournament, and included regular [podcasts](#), [press articles](#), social media posts and so on.

The organisers worked early on with local and national government and private sponsors to secure funding including a generous outreach package for athletes that would otherwise not be able to attend.

The EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 final organisation members had a more limited experience of EuroGames, so adopted an approach of buddying closely with a previous EuroGames organiser (Dusseldorf 2020 – cancelled due to COVID), adopting templates for operation from them. They attended EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 and took advantage of the opportunity to leverage ideas for in-situ operation and organisation as well as to build and confirm relationships with members with experience of running EuroGames and start reaching out to participants. The vision of EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 was limited to offering a good sports competition and the organising committee focused entirely on this, leaving side events, cultural and political opportunities to external organisations, and taking on only the obliga-

tions of the event stipulated in the bid book – the opening and closing ceremonies.

With a restricted pool of readily engaged LGBTQI+ sports people, EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 relied on the local mainstream sports community and recruited volunteers from the LGBTQI+ community at large. Connections with local government helped nurture the sport relationships, and secure the funding necessary, and hiring a professional local sports event manager with direct links to the sporting community was the approach chosen for securing the sport operation. The volunteer base was the greatest success of this EuroGames, with over 500 members of the local and surrounding area LGBTQI+ community and allies mobilised.

Promoting the Event

The gambit of co-hosting EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 with WorldPride paid off and this enabled organisers enough funding to hire a communications professional - a long-standing member of the European LGBTQI+ landscape with substantial experience in marketing other events for the community. A [comprehensive communications plan](#) was developed.

EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 started with a clear understanding of how to promote inclusion. Their event motto #YourAreIncluded made sure that the fundamental message was conveyed, efficiently and simply. And an [associated campaign](#) ensured that the motto was linked to the event very early on.

The communications team guided the promotional copy and their experience ensured community values were integrated - inclusive language, graphics covering all profiles of the community for example. The #YouAreIncluded motto was evident in language and visuals and reinforced by the reality of the community as copy and shoots were often inspired from conversations and photo shoots with local members from the LGBTQI+ sporting community – “The film was cast entirely from members of the LGBTQI+ community in Copenhagen and Malmö.” A true “nothing about us without us” approach was adopted from the start which is important in offering an authentic vision for the EuroGames event rather than an imaginary reality developed by an agency that misses the importance of authenticity and inclusivity in representation. EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 organisers reached out to and included the LGBTQI+ sporting community at all stages of the planning and worked closely with them in the run up to and during the event.

Connections with the local LGBTQI+ community, including the commercial structures, were strengthened, and the known previous allies were contacted. For example Hummel, who had previously taken part in a campaign to raise funds for the LGBTQI+ community during the Men’s FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018, stepped up to offer their help in funding the event with their [inclusive football jerseys](#).

One of the mediums that the EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 organisers chose to publicise the event was a [podcast](#), which started 6 months ahead of the event, and interviewed key actors from the LGBTQI+ community in the runup to the event. Participants to this podcast also included event ambassadors: the Danish Royal Princess did interviews (and was the keynote speaker at the opening), as did openly out footballer Antonio Hysén, using his platform to explain why Pride and EuroGames are important.

Copenhagen 2021 leveraged mainstream reports to promote the city itself, highlighting opportunities such as CNN’s travel article : [Copenhagen: Europe’s new capital of cool](#). EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 organisers also reached out to ambassadors, such as Laura Aarts, gold medalist at the 2018 Women’s European Water Polo Championship, to help them promote the event.

An effective method of engaging the public with the LGBTQI+ ‘cause’ is a “call to action”. EuroGames

Copenhagen 2021 organisers created the [Øresund Declaration](#). Named after the sound and the bridge that connects the host cities Copenhagen and Malmö, this is a multi-level manifesto of goals for global LGBTI+ equality to be achieved by 2030, and was integrated as part of the event and a way to bring in human rights organisations.

Both host cities used important dates in the LGBTQI+ calendar to promote the event:

- May 17 is International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia ([IDAHOBILIT](#)),
- [World Pronouns Day](#)

And both host cities adopted the strategy of using important world events for the LGBTQI+ community, such as the Pulse bombing anniversary, which shook the worldwide LGBTQI+ community, or [political decisions that affect the community directly](#) to highlight the need for such events.

EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 leveraged the Pride event in 2020 as an opportunity to invite key press contacts to visit the city and meet with key EuroGames actors to kick off interest for the event in mainstream and LGBTQI+ -dedicated media. Then three weeks prior to the opening of EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 the organisers called an [official press briefing](#) 'to update media on our plans, share details of the artists, athletes and speakers appearing at the events, and answer any questions ... [and]. ... give details of the Media Centres in both cities and the facilities available'. This kicked off a series of articles dedicated to the event in the days prior to the opening in [LGBTQI+ -dedicated press](#), as well as articles from mainstream media partners such as Timeout and several media companies in Denmark.

Other promotional actions included:

- A [teaser video](#)
- [Countdowns](#) and pushing highlights.
- Using [life stories](#) and personal narratives to talk about the impact and importance of such events and this from the EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 podcast : [Reed Edwin Peggram](#)
- As registration opened, videos promoting the city and the [highlights of the event to come](#) were efficient promotional tools.
- Host cities relying on [previous host cities for an initial 'push'](#), and a relationship that continued up to the event opening was another engagement tool.

EuroGames Copenhagen 2021, by virtue of offering a world event, carried out worldwide promotion, and contact was made with LGBTQI+ allies in several European countries (DIVA magazine, UK for example), where the EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 promotional efforts relied mainly on local mainstream media (Gelderlander) and translating and publicising this via socials for European LGBTQI+ clubs to pick up and diffuse.

Registration

At both events, the registration system was inclusive, offering categories for men/women and non-binary: "Copenhagen 2021 affirms and supports the rights of athletes to compete as their true selves and to compete in the gender category that accords with their gender identity":

- Male – Participants who identify as male
- Female – Participants who identify as female
- Non-binary – Participants who do not identify with the binary definition

Certain sports were transparent around the [participation policy](#) they would be using if this differed.

The gender policies were highlighted during the registration process and in promotional materials.

A 'sign-up as 1 and play with many' policy was adopted by both events, enabling individuals to find a team, play their sport if their teams could not come. This fosters networking and greater inclusion as teams are created from participants from all over Europe and future exchanges can be built on.

The Welcome

Why this is so important is illustrated by one participant's comment:

"We landed in Malmo and just walking in the city, we were stunned by how many rainbow flags there were around. There were rainbows even on the churches, which is unbelievable - that would never happen in Hungary. Here, you feel that sense of freedom with every second that passes."

Both host cities relied heavily on volunteer engagement to create an initial impact of welcome. At both events, the volunteers, in distinguishing t-shirts, were immediately visible and well-informed. EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 created a name for their volunteers – "Includers" – to convey the message that the focus was on everyone finding a place in these games, and developed a separate Facebook community for them to connect through and make contacts and friendships. Both cities developed targeted training and social activities leading up the event to make sure that there was a strong sense of cohesion among volunteers, and essential training – safety, safeguarding - was carried out:

- Volunteers were [publicly recognised](#) for their work and their [actions transmitted 'live'](#), such as how they were welcoming participants.

At EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 "Volunteers for EuroGames: Venue Managers (VM) were recruited during the month of April when the restrictions were loosened slightly. They were introduced and brought into the project by the Sports Tournament Coordinator, as these were essential for the management and conduct of the tournaments at the various sports venues. The VMs were primarily recruited from Pan Idræt (local LGBTQI+ sport club) but also from sports-interested volunteers. We recruited 19 VMs spread over the eight main venues in Copenhagen, and these worked together with primarily sports managers from the City of Copenhagen, but also venue managers from the commercial places we had rented directly."

Other important factors ensuring that the initial meeting with the event was successful included:

- Making sure everyone felt safe by [publishing safeguarding](#) information.
- Working with the city to [create the rainbow feeling](#).
- [Promoting all the fringe events](#), conferences, shows, and parties and offer info hubs to these stakeholders.

The events

At EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 most of the sport events were hosted by local LGBTQI+ clubs, who all work under the local banner of Pan Idræt. Pan Idræt runs regular events in more than 25 sports and all were included in the EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 programme. They relied on help for volunteer numbers only from mainstream sport organisations.

EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 relied heavily on mainstream sport organisation for event running and planning, offering only badminton, swimming, running, football, and volleyball as LGBTQI+ dedicated sport regularly themselves. Being in the Netherlands, which has an active LGBTQI+ sport network, they were also able to leverage help from groups in Amsterdam (for tennis, for example), and clubs from further afield hosted certain sport in their entirety for the hosts, such as the padel competition, which was organised, promoted, and run by Panteres Grogues from Barcelona. Reaching out to LGBTQI+ members in mainstream clubs was also an effective way of bridging the two communities.

Sport schedules are announced once registration is closed (at the end of May for a July event) and EGLSF redbooks stipulate that sport schedules must be put up in good time for participants to prepare properly. Adjustments can be made depending on participant feedback from this announcement.

In contrast to mainstream events, and in keeping with the ethos of EuroGames where participation is the guiding principle, participants at EuroGames can take part in several sports if the timetable allows, and many do. In athletics in particular, participants often do different running events, as well as other disciplines on offer such as long jump, high jump, shotput, javelin, and care is taken where possible to prepare the schedule so that participant choices are considered and they are left time to rest between events.

An important element of LGBTQI+ sport is also the minimisation of regulations. Where the tournaments are framed for fairplay and safety by the redbooks, they are also left free in many aspects, including regulations around dress code. Athletes are free to play in clothes that they feel comfortable in – there are no regulations for swimwear for example.

Fringe events, such as the [Zero Flags Project](#) on display in Nijmegen are included as an integral part of the event program, and [promoted at the same level](#).

Adapted funding or [outreach opportunities](#) are made clear and promoted by EGLSF as well as the host in an effort to include as many people as possible, especially those who are most marginalized in the LGBTQI+ community (trans, women, CEE members). And where possible, members who have skills (photography, for example) can be offered opportunities to use these skills for EuroGames in return for bursaries.

Cultural, political, educational, social side events

The approach to hosting side events at EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 and EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 were different.

EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 hosts planned and executed many of these events themselves:

- Sports to the People: drop-in sports in parks, squares and venues across the city for all the people living and visiting Copenhagen and Malmö during Copenhagen 2021.
- a Sports Leader Conference: a two-day event that centered around organizational development, human rights, and inclusion strategies.
- An inclusive sports Forum: a 2-day event highlighting the importance of inclusion in sports with a mix of keynotes, panel debates and discussions with representatives from the local sports associations, directing the spotlight toward inclusion of the LGBTI+ community in sports.
- [Sports Village](#): events here were varied to cater for the different profiles of the community,

whereas EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 took the approach of outsourcing side events but included any-

thing planned around the EuroGames in their program. They did not have any involvement in the planning or hosting of these events and relied on the individual organisers to ensure that the message was adapted and appropriate.

The planning of EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 organisers to host a [Human Rights conference](#) at the same time as the EuroGames, as well as the host the [Sports Leaders conference](#) as an integral part of the event ensured that crossover discussions occurred – sport was talked about at the Human Rights conference and human rights was an important element of workshops and presentations at the Sports Leaders conference, for example. This overlapping of narratives is important to make communities that are usually otherwise focused, aware of implications beyond their direct daily involvement. In the current socio-political climate, a discussion of human rights in sports is essential, and educating human rights leaders about the implications of human rights issues as is how they affect sport and those that practice – at all levels.

EuroGames can also be an important opportunity for impromptu topical actions, and EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 was used to highlight the such the restrictions being imposed on the LGBTQI+ community in Hungary, with a solidarity march and a [meeting with the Hungarian Ambassador to carry a flag](#) signed by Hungarian participants and a letter of protest.

The 'political' element of EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 was introduced by the Zero Flags Project being shown, otherwise, as EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 host focus was just sport, side events were either additional physical activity opportunities – a erg rowing initiation for example, or moments that offered leisure opportunities to the participants – park picnic, cultural moment with the local LGBTQI+ choir, or workshops that were hosted by individual organisations such as the "Disrupting the Discourse – Women in Sport" activity offered by EGLSF.

To celebrate diversity of the LGBTQI+ community, effort was made to ensure that women had safe spaces to meet and ways to find community. The EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 website offered a separate '[women only tab](#)' to access events and meeting points for women.

The official Opening and Closing ceremonies were part of the EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 program and managed by the hosts, and insight into the side events that associate LGBTQI+ organisations put on were [communicated through official communication channels](#).

Ceremony Activities Medals & Prizes

[Medals](#) themselves are great ways to get a message over and hosts often promote the LGBTQI+ community through these. EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 opted for a rainbow lanyard and made sure that [rainbows were visible](#) decoration at the ceremonies.

At both EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 and EuroGames Nijmegen 2022, effort was made to include figures of the local sporting community, the EGLSF, and local LGBTQI+ celebrities or leaders to award prizes. For EuroGames, EGLSF board members presented rowing, basketball, padel medals for example, and local members from the [Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence](#) were also asked to the rowing medal ceremony.

Medals are available for all categories equal and the same medals are given.

Post event reporting

EuroGames Copenhagen 2021's press planning was comprehensive and extensive. Accreditation was

offered to major European press channels as well as specialized local press outlets – Komotid, DIVA for example, and several opportunities during the event were tagged for press representation – the ceremony at the City Hall, the Sports Leader conference, as well as the opening and closing ceremony and sport meets. Speeches from all speakers were the opportunity to highlight the discrimination that is still very real for the LGBTQI+ population. EuroGames is a sporting event where the political aspect of sport is recognised, openly addressed, and included as in the reality of the event.

A post-event press conference was held: EGLSF, EuroGames hosts and local actors key to the success of the event were invited for a Q&A session with local and international press representatives – an opportunity to address the success of the event, but also the political context in which it takes place in Europe.

EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 hosts' post-event follow-up of their event continued until the end of the 2021 year, culminating with the [publishing of the official report of the event](#), and proprietary media tools such as the website and social media were instrumental in reporting the event's success. Progress and success of key actions were highlighted:

- [Over 100 signatories](#) to the Øresund Declaration:
- The [Hummel Rainbow shirts campaign](#): "Everton Rainbow shirts, designed by technical partner, Hummel to mark Copenhagen 21 WorldPride and EuroGames have raised £12,472 which will fund Everton in the Community's LGBTI+ awareness workshops for primary and secondary age pupils."

Transparent [post-event statistics](#) and reporting openly include a breakdown of participation by gender – and sometimes non gender.

And the importance of this event in creating change is highlighted by the comments of a swimming participant:

"And together we make history. For the first time in the Netherlands, during competition swimming at the EuroGames [sic] there was the opportunity to qualify in the non-binary category. Swimming records have been set for the first time in this category. I wonder when they will be disconnected. The first time in the world is the first day of the year."

Evaluation / Debrief / Legacy

Both hosts created a post-event survey, and thanks to the registration forms also collected a breakdown of profiles attending EuroGames.

Even in LGBTQI+ sport we notice from both surveys an overwhelming participation from gay males: cis men 68.02%, cis woman 23.63%, other/prefer not to say 4.06%, non-binary 2.86%, and Trans women and Trans men both at 0.72%, so we see that even in LGBTQI+-dedicated events, men are dominant in presence, and there is still a great deal of effort that needs to be done to bill these events as truly inclusive – the skeleton is present but socio-political and economic barriers are still strong and present barriers to participation for many in the LGBTQ+ community.

Among the final comments from participants, detailing regular aspects like transport, sport organisation, accommodation and so on, the following stand out:

'The option of a non-binary category was appreciated.'

'The atmosphere with the posters for EuroGames all over the city and rainbow flags in evidence was a wonder-

ful welcome. I really felt from the moment I saw the big flag at the town hall on arrival welcomed to Nijmegen. The Mayor talking felt like an important aspect to letting the attendees know that Nijmegen cared a lot about this event.'

The hosts concluded from the survey that participants '... found the atmosphere welcoming for the LGBT-TI* community, friendly and open, loving and welcoming; they felt welcomed and supported by the town authorities. The flags and festive atmosphere in town, and friendliness of people are appreciated' which is testament to what makes a good event for the LGBTQI° sporting community.

The legacy of ELGSF EuroGames is created by the success of its events and the desire of the community for the event to continue. One way of measuring this is by recent bids, where the process has been fiercely contested with several bids for each year. As we write, EuroGames are secured for 2024 (Vienna, Austria) and 2025 (Lyon, France) and as bidding opens for 2027 there are already solid bids in the pipeline. EuroGames and Gay Games will join forces for Gay Games Valencia 2026.

Another point of evaluation is the legacy created by the EuroGames itself in the host countries. And here we have more distance from EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 than EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 for evaluation purposes.

On a club level, EuroGames has had an impact, as Christian Bigom, President of Pan Idræt highlights, with *"Pan Idræt standing stronger as a club and as a community on the other side. At the same time, we have become better at being welcoming as a club, and we have gained greater attention to being able to welcome the target groups that do not just come by themselves. It has happened in both established and new communities, the latter concretely via a highly sought-after TransFitness team, but also both in Pan Basketball and Pan Gaming.*

The impact for future development is also important to note: *"At the same time, we have established a number of constructive partnerships externally, not least with DIS – Study Abroad in Scandinavia in 2022. And there are now several clubs and organizations that are approaching us with a view to cooperation – they want to play with us! – instead of us having to be outgoing. After all, we have experience with approaches to diversity and inclusion, which they would like to learn more about, and some will, for example, would also like to be part of the Pride Cup this summer. I think it is very positive that things have moved on."*

The goal of working with mainstream clubs is foremost to Pan Idræt and thanks to the visibility of EuroGames is making inroads: *"... we must also remember to work with diversity and inclusion in grassroots sports. If we have to change a culture, then it is in the breadth. DIF and DGI, the Danish sports organisations, are fortunately turning more attention to the width now..."*

In 2023, as part of the Pride festival, Pan Idræt had the backing, including financial participation, to host a 3-day Rainbow Sports Fair in the town center, spotlighting inclusive sport activities, with open and free access to everyone, and [the event was on the Danish Prime Minister's agenda](#).

Copenhagen 2021 WorldPride and EuroGames was [recognised by the Danish Rainbow Awards](#) with an honorary prize awarded by the judges.

Direct results from the city of Nijmegen are still to be evaluated, but will likely not have the same fallout, and benefits from the event will be more subtle. This difference can maybe be found in both the vision and the organisation. The vision of EuroGames Nijmegen 2022 was simply to host a successful LGBTQI+ sport event. To do this the hosts founded a working organisation composed of people from mainstream organisations or who identify as LGBTQI+; and this organisation was disbanded after the event. This

setup meant that the impetus generated by hosting the event was not carried on afterwards, in comparison to EuroGames Copenhagen 2021 where the local LGBTQI community was heavily involved and built on the momentum created to actively reach out to mainstream sport further and use the learning from the event for their approach with the mainstream sports world as well as in their own organisation.

The learning from these two approaches is important for working on inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in sport: inclusion cannot be achieved overnight with a single event, but rather requires the effort of adding small blocks at a time. In the mainstream world, this is important in understanding that without someone with a dedicated role to move this agenda forward and constantly find opportunities to platform challenges, and highlight the importance of inclusive sport, change is unlikely.

Thinking change through and following up is essential to making meaningful advances as the [learning from Finn Boyd](#), a member of Glasgow Frontrunners illustrates:

"Yesterday I made history, the first ever non-binary person to run the @scotathletics National Cross Country Championships, thus making me the National Champion. However....: I'm incredibly disappointed and disheartened that despite the category being available, there was a distinct lack of recognition for the category, only referring to the day's final race as the "Men's" race. Lack of prize for 1st place doesn't bother me as much as the disregard for the NB category as a whole. If we want the category to grow and more entrants in the future, it's existence has to be mentioned by the governing body. This includes on social media. Please do better."

USE CASE: WOMEN

To examine what inclusivity for women's sport looks like in reality, our reference was the Donasport Women's tournament, hosted in Barcelona and managed by the local LGBTQI+ sport organisation Panteres Grogues.

<https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/home/>

For data and observations, we focused on learning from the 12th edition of this tournament in 2023 and attended a sport weekend hosted in Platja d'Aro, as well as returns from the other Donasport 2023 events hosted between March and May.

The inspiration/research phase

Donasport was established in 2009, as part of the legacy of EuroGames Barcelona 2008. Women's participation in EuroGames Barcelona 2008 was less than 20%. In addition, the membership of Panteres Grogues was male-dominated, with just 12% women's participation in the running of the organisation. A Women's Commission, and the Donasport initiative was created to address this imbalance.

Even with its own 'brand' and activities for LBTI+ women and non-binary people, part of its strategic focus is also promoting a space for reflection and with the aim of achieving a greater presence within the different sections of the main club.

The first women's multi-sport tournament was hosted in the founding year. The sporting activities and tournaments, as well as various cultural and social activities bring together the underrepresented profiles in sport - women and the LBT+ community, as well as providing shared sporting experiences and opportunities to learn and engage in a common empowerment cause.

Data from the time, as well as recent local data, and statistics gathered on women's participation in sport in Europe emphasise the need for focusing on the gender imbalance in sport. The recent 'Rubiales affair' brought to light the treatment of women in sport in Spain, and data corroborates that sport is still not a space that women are welcomed in. Recent data from local studies in Spain reflects, women only represent around 20% of the total number of technical staff. The presence of women in sports training is very low due to the existence of feminized qualifications and masculinized qualifications that lead to discriminatory behavior in access to education, which is a basic right. Women represent just over 15% of the total number of female coaches and trainers in Spain, and although the number of women on club boards has increased over the last 20 years, their presence still stands at 20.7%. Only 11% of sports clubs are chaired by women. The jobs less accessible to women always represent spheres of responsibility or power. The [employment of sports coaches](#) and staff of sports clubs continues to be a male domain.

Now in its 12th year, the continued success of the Donasport tournament is testament to the fact that tournament is necessary and that its format is adapted to the needs of the participants.

The structure of the event, as a local tournament, counts in its success. As a series of weekend events between March and May, kicking off on International Women's Day, March 8, it allows participants to take part and respect their work-life balance, not missing working time. Different events are organised on different weekends so participants can pick and choose according to their time constraints. It also provides several opportunities for women to meet and share time and space and advantages extended 'bonding time' more than a one-off event.

The activities that are chosen are done so by popularity with women – padel is a sport that has success in women's groups and has been added specifically. Similarly, SUP is an addition, and hiking, a popular activity in women's groups always, was present for the first edition.

Donasport is a self-managed project, organised by a team of volunteers that has grown both the number of activities offered and the number of participants. In 2023 more than 400 women athletes participated in more than 10 sports disciplines. Women's club registration has increased from 12% in 2009 to 22.7% in 2023, participation in Panteresports is at 25% and the Donasport tournament participation increased 300%.

Promoting the Event

As the focus of Donasport up to now has been to promote the participation of and offer a safe space to women in sport locally, diffusion activities concentrate on local media and social media channels as well as re-diffusion by partners.

While Donasport is a part of Panteres Grogues, they have created their own brand, setting off the women's tournament from the annual LGBTQI+ event, which is also open to women. This is important as it offers an exclusive space to women looking to do sport. It sends the message that the sport is designed with them in mind and they will be central to the event, not a 'sub-brand of the main event'.

Each sport has its separate logo, which also emphasises the number of sports on offer and expands the footprint of the event. And each logo can be used to send out a separate message, creating volume for marketing opportunities, as well as creating communities around the individual sports as well as the main event. The logos themselves are sober and gender-free, making it possible for everyone to identify.

The graphic charter has defined purple as the main color, with gold and white, identifying the graphism of the event solidly in colors connected with the modern history of the women's movement.

The Donasport marketing approach uses real images from events, creating an authentic feel and illustrating women being active and enjoying sport, conveying the message that women do sport and enjoy it – and that women's sport is entertaining also to watch. Where women's sport offers a great platform for purpose-driven stories and cause-promoting, it is also important to highlight that they do sport for the same reasons as men – it's fun, it's an opportunity to come together, it's a way to keep fit and healthy.

<https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/trekking/>
<https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/basketball-tournament/>
<https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/football-tournament/>
<https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/table-tennis-tournament/>
<https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/launch-event/>

Organisers chose to use an [easy-access communication tool](#) – MeetUp – to bring women together digitally and create efficient ways to share information about the tournament.

They [use local media platforms](#) to multiply interview opportunities as the event nears its opening to both promote the event, and [link it with a directed message](#) of the challenges that women face in sport today.

A [campaign on Instagram](#) runs throughout the event to promote the event itself as well as the individual activities.

An Important part of the promotion of the event is also the pre-event communication with individual athletes. Personalised contact is made with each athlete as soon as they are registered, providing them necessary information, such as schedules, accommodation details, and event details to make them feel valued and prepared.

Registration

Participants register for activities in the Donasport tournament as a two-step process – firstly an identification login for personal details and then for each activity separately.

The information required for the identity login is all based on self-identification – your name as you prefer for example, contact details and the club membership information. All FLINTA¹ people are welcome, and the assumption is that if you are registering then you have self-defined in this spectrum and have your place at the event.

For all sports, [participants can register](#) as a team, or individually, in which case the organisation finds a partner or team for them, depending on the sport. This makes it possible for everyone to play, and fosters networking and greater inclusion as teams are created from participants from different places.

There are also several categories for the different sports, allowing women with different performance levels to participate in their preferred level. Beginners are welcomed, and women are encouraged to come along and try.

The social and cultural events are included in the registration process, so as well as making the organisation easier, it sends the message that you do not even have to do sport to be part of the event. You can take part by coming along to the social events only, which allows women who are new to the organisation or area, or who are not confident in the ability to take part in physical activity a no-risk option of participation and the chance to meet people before engaging.

As participation and accessibility are paramount to this tournament, all effort is made to keep costs to a minimum. It has a low-cost policy, and strives each year to offer some activities free of charge. All activities are run on a non-profit basis, charging just to cover costs. In 2023 participation fees for sport averaged 10€ for non-members and 15€ for members. Entrance to all the cultural activities was free of charge.

There is a policy of hosted-housing for out-of-state participants, where local members house visitors. As all activities are easily accessible by public transport, travel costs are minimum.

4 FLINTA : a German abbreviation that stands for “Frauen, Lesben, Intergeschlechtliche, nicht-binäre, trans and agender”, meaning women/females, lesbians, intersex, non-binary, trans and agender people. The asterisk represents all non-binary gender identities. To explicitly include queer individuals, the term FLINTAQ is sometimes used, expanding on the FLINTA acronym. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FLINTA*

The Welcome

The Donasport ambition is to offer more than just the activities, so events are treated as celebrations of talent, determination, and human spirit. The organisation strives to make athletes feel welcome and appreciated from the moment they arrive.

Personalised welcome packs are created for each athlete comprising an event t-shirt (size and model (women's size or unisex option) decided upfront, their sport schedule, local goodies, and other interesting information focused on women.

A team of friendly and knowledgeable women volunteers are present to greet and assist athletes as they arrive at each event.

Each location is clearly signalled and easy to find and the events take part in safe areas in the city making accessibility.

As it is a not highly competitive event, emphasis is placed on participating, socialising and discovering new sports.

To provide a safe environment in Donasport, they foster comfort, security, and inclusivity by:

- Implementing safety measures like emergency protocols, first aid kits, accident insurance, and easily accessible help.
- Offering inclusive and accessible facilities.
- Cultivating a culture of respect and support among all the people involved in the event, with zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or bullying, and clear [reporting mechanisms](#) for any such incidents.
- Encouraging diversity both at the organisational and participation levels. Seeing diverse role models can inspire and empower women in sports.
- Creating a supportive community for women. The club has created a "Women and Diversity Commission" to support women's groups and teams. They hold regular meetings to promote and prepare different actions and activities for women, such as fundraising, women-focused sponsorship opportunities, promoting women's activities and achievements on the club social media, organising specific activities for women, organising actions to support women without resources, etc.
- Offer a survey for feedback and suggestions from women to continuously improve the Donasport event, including questions such as:
 - How did you find out about the event?
 - Did the event meet your expectations?
 - Was the registration easy?
 - How would you rate the cost of registration fee?
 - What did you like the best about the event?
 - What can we improve for next edition?

The events

All events are run by Donasport/Panteres Grogues volunteers and it is clear upfront that the ethos of the activities is participation and not performance. While the activities are run as a competition, this is not the overriding motivation and a lot of emphasis is placed on providing a fun event.

The activities are categorized by ability level (in hiking and cycling, for example the distance and elevation is set for beginners so everyone can take part), ensuring everyone finds a space adapted for them, and the activities themselves are varied.

The sports are chosen by popular demand from local women and new sports are added as demand appears and there is a team of volunteers to frame it.

Regulations are kept to a minimum and where they exist center around safety and non-discrimination – a ‘protective’ [protocol](#) is used for all activities. There are no dress codes or uniforms required for playing any of the sports; athletes play in the clothes they feel comfortable in. All religious and cultural considerations are accommodated.

The activities take place in accessible and safe areas. Despite the need to economise, no shortcuts are taken with safety, and both locations and timing of activities are results of reflection of what is possible and safe for women. Consideration is given to facilities so the peripheries of doing sport – changing rooms, bathrooms – do not present a barrier, ensure privacy and help to combat potential concerns related to body image for example, a recurrent theme in discussions about why women do not do sport.

The event the iSPORT partnership attended in 2023 offered the following, which all partners participated in, and took advantage of the consequential timings to take part in several of the activities:

SATURDAY	8:00-9:00-	Paddle Tennis Tournament, at Club Tennis d’Aro
	9:00-11:00-	Start of the Race (running or skating). Distance of 4.83 kilometres
	11:00-13:00-	Basketball (Palau d’esports de Platja d’Aro) and Beach Volleyball (Riuet area)
	11:30-13:00-	Volleyball (Palau d’esports de Platja d’Aro and multi-purpose hall) and Football (Platja d’Aro municipal football field)
	12:00-13:00-	Rugby match at the municipal football field.
	13:00-16:00-	Functional training (Palau d’esports de Platja d’Aro, outdoors or indoors if it rains)
	16:00-18:00-	Barbecue at the Club Tennis d’Aro facilities
	18:00-19:00-	Archery (sports field, at the end of the municipal football field)
	19:00-20:00-	Swing Master Class (Club Tennis d’Aro swimming pool)
	20:00-21:30-	Salsa Master Class (Club Tennis d’Aro swimming pool)
	21:30-23:00-	Dinner and party. If the weather is good, at the Restaurant “El golf”, the old minigolf in Platja d’Aro, but if it rains, at Aromar hotel on the Passeig Marítim.
23:00-	Drinks and party	

SUNDAY	8:30- 11:30-13:30- 16:00-	Hiking departing from Camping Riembau Kayak activity Return by bus from the Riembau campsite.
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The 2023 edition offered 11 sports over 11 weekends from March through May.

Ceremony Activities Medals & Prizes

While excellence is recognised at Donasport, the organisation has opted to not offer medals, but useful sport material as a way of encouraging sport participation and also helping towards the financial burden of doing sport.

Every activity had its own prize ceremony for winners and finalists, and prizes are sport-specific.

Cultural, political, educational, social side events

Cultural events are selected to have a gender perspective, and starting the event close to International Women's Day is a deliberate message, signalling events that the theme of the events has a strong anti-discrimination focus.

The goal of Donasport 2023 was to reach as many diverse women as possible, and [the programme](#) for this included a wide scope of events to engage the sporting community as well as the general public.

The kick off hosted the EGLSF Against the Rules LGBTIQ+ sport exhibition: An exhibition that aims to break taboos and open a debate on how to eliminate prejudices and avoid discrimination against sexual minorities in the field of sport.

The 2023 edition proposed:

- a [documentary forum](#) with the projection of 4 short documentaries related to women and sport, and debates to exchange opinions afterwards
- a [book presentation](#) of "Un vacío impertinente" in presence of the author, Elena Mars.
- Closing party: Gathering to celebrate and projection of images of the whole event.

The organisers worked with local government and private sponsors to get help in order to make the sport events as cost-effective as possible. All the cultural activities were free, so that they were accessible to everyone.

Evaluation / Debrief / Legacy

A [post-event survey](#) is created for every activity and sent to the participants in the week following their activity.

The 2023 edition returns were positive, and participants highlighted the friendly atmosphere and the fact that could try a lot of different sports at very low price, and they could meet new people. There were also very positive comments concerning the socializing opportunities.

"I loved to see so many women practicing my favorite sport"

"There was a good atmosphere and a lot of people"

"The organization prior and during the event was perfect, there were a lot of teams registered and the atmosphere was great all day"

"I liked to have a place to meet my friends and people I know while practicing sport. Nice atmosphere"

The 2023 edition of Donasport builds on its legacy as successful event. The social aspect of the event has drawn attention from local women's event organisers who are eager to collaborate, offering help for parties and events: hosts of FLINTA-dedicated events such as Candy Darling, and Me siento extraña are particularly motivated to join forces for future events, and links are being made with other local women's sport groups, like Almas Libres, Queer Pong Club, Fem Bike, as well as other national groups like "Samarucs Dones". There is a slowly-increasing network of FLINTA-dedicated exchanges and event collaborations being developed.

The impact of these initiatives is not limited to the sports arena alone. The Donasport project has become a source of inspiration for other sports clubs, setting an example of how gender equality can lead to success on and off the field. For example, in Valencia Samarucs, the local LGBTQI+ sports club was inspired to set up Samarucs Done, a similar women's sports grouping. Last year all this work was recognised by the Barcelona City Council, which awarded the club the "Dona i esport" prize ("Sports Club" category) for its work promoting and raising the profile of women's sport.

While funding remains a significant difficulty, some women-centered sponsors such as a fertility clinic, a feminine-hygiene startup have contacted the organisers to enter discussions for future event. For the most part, the event is subsidized by Panteres Grogues global funding, one-to-one personal connections for individual donations or help with equipment and so on. self-funded and organised activities.

YOUTH

Ambassadors for successful activities directed at the youth in this project are EUSA and University Sports Association of Poland (AZS). While both EUSA and AZS' efforts are primarily directed towards university students, aiming to provide them with sport participation opportunities, personal development and international exposure, the fact that they cater to the 18-30 age range enables us draw some conclusions from these events about youth participation in sport in general.

In 2022 both EUSA and the University Sports Association of Poland (AZS) were involved in organising the 6th edition of the European Universities Games in the City of Lodz, Poland. Held over 15 days from July 17-30, 2022, the offer was 20 sports, an opening and a closing ceremony, as well as educational, social and cultural activities. 4459 participants, representing 422 universities from 37 countries. Additionally over 800 volunteers contributed to the success of the event. A program for leaders and volunteers, as well as part of the event dedicated to student athletes with disabilities was supported through Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission.

The inspiration/research phase

As with EuroGames, the market for the EUSA European Universities Games (EUG) is established. The challenge is to maintain the event and work to keep it valid. Important aspect is to cooperate with universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) that are directly sending their students to the event, as well as National University Sport Associations (NUSA) that are supporting the process of registration. As young adults between 18-30 engaged with sport are keen to participate and compete, and eager to take advantage of opportunities, it is vital to ensure support for them in the process of participation in student sport on the European level. Mainly it is provided in the form of logistical and financial support from the organizations, although it is also possible for the participants to fund their own participation and only ask for registration through the national university sport association.

Successful cooperation between higher education institutions, NUSAs and EUSA help increase participation in the competitions, and raise the quality and prestige of the events. It is important for the HEI's to appreciate and value the importance of university sport and bring programs that will promote the participation in university sport.

From conversations with young athletes, ways to retain their engagement include:

- Making sure that they are included in the decision-making and running of events and actions; actively asking, involving, and empowering them with positions of responsibility at events is a key motivator. While organising the EUG, young athletes were actively involved as various actors in the Organising Committee. They supported main departments of the event and provided insight into the athlete's perspective.
- Young people were important part of every department in the organising structure. It is important to provide young people the opportunities to gain experience in the field of international sport events.
- As with the LGBTQI+ sporting community, creating welcoming and social environments is an important aspect to sport for youth today, as well as being competitive. At EUG, additional cultural and educational events were organised to provide youth with innovative opportunities for development and growth.
- As a tech-savvy generation, youth sport events need to address this by incorporating technology and gamification elements. Using mobile apps, wearable devices, or virtual challenges to enhance the sports experience, track progress, and foster friendly competition work well. An event-tailored app was provided to enrich the experience of the participants. The app had the following tools:

schedules and results of the sport competitions, educational and cultural events schedules, and integrative functions – possibilities to find other participants as well as add them and message them.

Promoting

The Lodz European Universities Games incorporate the issues addressed above in their promotion phases, showcasing their events well before the opening with past events' photos, videos, and success stories to demonstrate the unique experience participants can expect. Due to the bi-annual character of the event, it is possible to use the previous events for the promotional purposes. Promotion of the event starts at the closing of the previous event, as happened in Lodz at the closing ceremony, where a sneak preview of what can be expected at the next European Universities Games in 2024 was part of the ceremony.

Community and a sense of belonging is important to the young adults that are the participants of the EUSA and AZS-governed events, and while competition is important, the university spirit and camaraderie that the events foster are promoted to attract interest. Highlighting the 'togetherness' aspect of the event, and that fun element of the competition encourages engagement for future events.

Additional promotional elements include a mascot of the games, which supports the visibility and identification of the event. In Lodz, a mascot EUGenio was introduced, a colorful unicorn making a reference both to the organising city's symbol (unicorn) as well as to the event.

This profile audience is active and eager to be involved, so European University Games is promoted via user-generated content marketing techniques:

- encouraging participants to generate and share their sports-related content and using the event hashtag #EUG2022.
- running the "Poland. Challenge accepted." contest to increase engagement, foster a sense of community, and simultaneously amplify the marketing message:

"What do you associate Poland with? Then, take the competition challenge "Poland. Challenge accepted." organized on the occasion of the next edition of the EUG (European Universities Games) from 11.07.2022. Find out how to win the contest and get tickets to a Polish city of your choice with an overnight stay and breakfast in a 4 hotel."*

- Personalization techniques in marketing campaigns, such as tailored recommendations based on user preferences, interactive quizzes, or personalized incentives helps create a sense of individualized engagement and encourages participation.
- Gamified aspects of the marketing strategy, like challenges, leaderboards, or reward systems enhance engagement and foster healthy competition among the target age group.
- Utilizing visually appealing content – high-quality images, videos – in the social media posts to capture attention. In case of EUG in Lodz, promotional campaign was launched to promote the country, city and particular sports already over a year before the event.

Participants of these events are tuned into European programs, such as Erasmus, and the market messaging that emanates from European institutions hits home with them so leveraging some of these, such as the HEPA, and promoting health and wellness are effective techniques. European University Games 2022 emphasised the physical and mental well-being aspects of participating, and underlined the holistic experience of sports, teamwork, and cultural interactions contribute to making them

attractive. Thanks to European financing, a series of cultural and education events were organized. For example, interactive physical activities, open to all, at the event's campus devoted to the promotion of inclusion in sport.

They also leveraged messages of social impact and authenticity, emphasising the 'worthwhile' aspects of events to draw support: messages of commitment to diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and community engagement. Series of workshops and meetings has been organized in those topics to showcase their importance and engage the target groups.

Influencer marketing was also an important factor in promoting the event. Collaboration with [sport ambassadors](#), popular sports influencers, university bloggers, and local celebrities who resonate with the youth population and who have a significant following with the youth athlete group helped endorse the event and reach a wider audience of followers.

And for authenticity, reaching out to event alumni who share their positive experiences and encourage others to participate is a way of using readily-accessible, credible, and accessible role models to promote the events. Reaching out to alumni was used both in terms of participants as well as volunteers for the event.

For channels, with youth, mobility is crucial and all aspects of the event - marketing materials, website, and registration processes - were optimised for mobile devices so participants could use their smartphones to access information and engage with content.

The website chronicles every event leading up to the hosting of the event, and creates interest with the 'live' documentary, from [choosing the mascot](#) to [volunteer selection](#) to a [local 'open day'](#) designed to engage the community right up to detailed technical information.

The social media also provides a vivid, graphical recounting of the lead up to the games recounting each step and to [broadcasting live the opening ceremony](#) to documenting competitions as they took place.

Open public participation events and celebrations helped bring awareness of the Games to the local community, with [a procession through the centre of Lodz](#) town and the Erasmus Run. The Erasmus Run was a 10K race with 100 teams of 4 people. Children in different age categories could compete individually on 6 shorter distances.

Registration

[Registration](#) is open to all students whose organisation is a member of EUSA, and fees are staggered, being calculated in how many participants are entered.

Fees are all-inclusive (board, lodging, local transport, event participation), and costs are minimized (2022 was 70€/person), so once registration is covered there are no extra costs, apart from personal spending.

Registration for all sports was open to both male and female participants.

Welcome

The Welcome starts well before the arrival at the games, engaging participants ahead of the event, with a [comprehensive information website](#) that leads you to detailed information on all aspects leading up to the event:

- General information: is provided via two downloadable digital documents and an app that cover everything from local services, events & ceremonies, sports & venues and more.
- Transport: to the country and in-country options. And highlighting that greeters will be in place at the airport to direct participants.
- Accommodation including check-in and check-out information
- Catering details about who goes where for meals
- And a comprehensive [FAQ](#).

The [website](#) is designed to be the living recording of the event and is updated with each step.

Arriving at the airport, volunteers were present to welcome and help participants with transport and arrival details.

After transportation from the airport, participants were welcomed in the accreditation center – where they could get their cards, allowing them entrance to all venues of the event. They were also presented with a welcome bag that included basic gadgets, cosmetics and basic information needed for participation. In case of need, a significant number of volunteers and organizers were present to help and support the participants if needed – at all venues of the event, including the accommodation. Participants were then transported to their accommodation campus – two main accommodation campuses accommodated a few thousand participants.

The Events

Participation is selective and qualifiers are managed by through their NUSA who nominate participants. Participants of the EUG are universities and each university forms a delegation of competitors and officials. Participation is competitive and competition is the ethos of the games.

European University Games 2022 LODZ offered 20 sports: 3X3 Basketball, Badminton, Basketball, Beach Handball, Beach Volleyball, Chess, Football, Futsal, Handball, Judo, Karate, Kickboxing, Sitting Volleyball, Sport Climbing, Swimming, Table Tennis and Para Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Volleyball, Water Polo.

They took place over a period of 2 weeks, with events happening every day and many events taking part over several days.

Sport is governed by international federation rules, and European federation rules, and EUSA defines the sport regulations in its regulations handbook, made available publicly.

Aside from the mainstream university sport action, European Universities Games is also about values in sport, promoting equality, integration, and inclusion, and to this end three disability sports were also showcased as part of this year's event: sitting volleyball, para table tennis and para weightlifting. See <https://eug2022.eu/sport-for-people-with-disabilities/>.

Cultural, political, educational, social side events

EUG is an opportunity for knowledge sharing and learning beyond sport, and alongside the sport competitions, the Games focus on educational and social aspects of university sport in Europe. The educational, cultural, and social activities are an integral part of the event agenda.

The platform is an important one for sharing values and educational side events are core to the EUG sport agenda. In 2022 there was a [conference on volunteering](#), workshops on social skills, anti-doping, disabilities and inclusion, as well as a [roundtable on dual career](#) as part of the offer.

EUG2022 featured workshops in the topics of Anti-Doping, Dual Career, Inclusion, and Volunteering. These are hands-on opportunities for participants to work with members from other universities, acquire skills and also have some fun.

Values-based participation is important as part of the youth experience and the ECO workshop enabled volunteer to take part in activities related to recycling, environmental issues and awareness of nature and taking care of it. They got the chance to do some arts and crafts activities related to the topic and used the time to share their experience on European Universities Games 2002 and have fun.

Other fun activities such as EUG Quiz attracted over 50 participants from both participants and volunteers were included to ensure the games also carried the fun element of participation that youth community appreciates and values.

As the event in Lodz was an opportunity to promote also the Integrative Polish Championships – a series of competition and events for people with disabilities, it was also an important subject during workshops, seminars and educational events.

Medals and Ceremonies

EUSA presents awards to the winners during a designated Awards ceremony.

The first three top ranked teams / competitors, get cups and medals.

As well as individual awards , there are team prizes, and the winner of the competition (team and individual tournaments) is awarded with the title “European Universities Champion”.

To encourage participation, EUSA also presents following awards:

- the Most Active NUSA,
- the Most Successful NUSA,
- the Best University,
- the Enno Harms Fair Play Award.
- the Most Active University

Post Event reporting

The official event website remains active post-event and the EUSA Newsletter presented a [concluding article](#) on the event. Information about the event as well as the projects connected to the event has been updated throughout the months after the end of the competitions, mainly through the communication of University Sport Association of Poland. The event has been presented during various occasions to showcase the good example as well as provide information about possibilities of participation in the university sport in Europe.

Evaluation, Debrief, Legacy

The Polish Postal Service launched a stamp for the European Universities Games Łódź 2022. It was available in post offices across the country from Friday 15th of July in an edition of more than 120.000 pieces. The stamps were available at several points of sale located on Łódź student campuses, while keeping in mind athletes from all around Europe.

After the event, an evaluation was carried out to determine the results and success of various parts of the event. Different groups – participants, officials and volunteers were asked to share their experiences and findings. It is especially important considering the bi-annual character of the event, which makes it valuable for the future organizers of the European Universities Games.

An internal evaluation was also carried out to be able to evaluate which tools and systems worked out during the organization of the event.

DISABILITY SPORT

To examine what inclusivity looks like in reality for disabled athletes, our main reference was the European Para Youth Games, and the European Universities Games Lodz 2022 (described in fuller detail in the Youth section of this document).

For data and observations, we focused on learning from the 2022 edition in Pajulahti, Finland, and some reflections brought from the EUG Lodz 2022.

The European Para Youth Games are a multi-sport competition for Para athletes.

They are organised by the European Paralympic Committee with the aim of contributing to the growth of Para sport.

Nearly 400 up-and-coming athletes from 29 countries gathered in Pajulahti, Finland, for the 2022 European Para Youth Games.

The inspiration/research phase

People with a disability may encounter additional barriers to participating in sport compared with people without a disability, barriers which are present from their earliest age and prevent disabled youth from the same pathway as many of their peers.

As participants in the [BeST Inclusion Erasmus project](#) highlighted, sport “focuses on people’s capabilities and functioning in communities. And it’s the picture we portray from sports - it’s about capabilities, it’s about abilities, it’s about competition, excellence, so, if you do not fit into this picture, then you might be excluded.” And “The lack of knowledge within the clubs and local places hinder people with disabilities to come into sport. And this issue goes up the hierarchy...” Excellence needs to start somewhere, and this is the focus of the European Para Youth Games.

Developed to counter the barriers that disabled youth encounter in participating in sport, the inspiration for the European Para Youth Games is to give up-and-coming athletes their first taste of international competition, take part in educational activities and connect with their peers. They create a pathway for disabled youth, offering them an opportunity to be active discover their potential in physical activity, to benefit from the same advantages that sport and physical activity offer all children and young adults.

In 2022, EYPG were hosted by the Finnish Paralympic Committee at the Pajulahti Olympic training center for para sports in Finland. This was a great place to organise this event as accessibility was at an excellent level.

Hosts for future EYPG can assess their interest in bidding for the event by attending an [observer programme](#), which serves both to showcase para games and inform potential future hosts. As part of the observer programme, they can speak to organisers, ask questions, hear from previous hosts and take part in guided tours, as well as visualising the impact the event could have on athlete development in the host regions.

This programme was hosted in Rotterdam as part of the inaugural European Para Championships in August 2023.

Much of the research phase is concentrated on the potential barriers to hosting which include

environmental barriers imposed by facility design and transport considerations (ramp gradients, accessible toilets, adapted lighting and contrast), as well as production barriers such as all materials and event notifications being multi-channel (Braille, clear text, tactile map, etc.), standard microphone use (people with hearing aids can use an audio induction loop).

An accessibility assessment guide to judge whether or not the facilities, and the event itself, were accessible, and to assess if it was possible to take part in an event was used to gauge this:

Is the venue accessible?

- The signs are clear and easy to read, and there are enough of them.
- The passageways are even, hard-surfaced, not slippery and sufficiently wide.
- The parking places are close by. Accessible parking places are clearly signed, and at least 3600 mm wide.
- The drop off is located near an accessible entrance.
- The entrance is covered, well illuminated and easy to find. The assistants and guides have free admission.
- There are no floor level differences at the venue or a ramp or elevator has been built in addition to any stairs, or an alternative accessible route has been clearly signed.
- The gradient of any ramp is at most 8% indoors, and 5% outdoors, and the ramp must be at least 1000 mm wide.
- The stairs are easy to use and have handrails on both sides.
- For main premises with differences in floor level, the size of the elevator must be at least 1200 mm x 2300 mm and the doorway at least 1000 mm.
- The venue has an accessible toilet. For large events, several accessible toilets are needed. When using portable toilets, some of these must be accessible.
- In addition to the main premises, any other facilities (e.g. storage rooms and restrooms) are accessible.
- The lighting is sufficient and without glare.
- The doors, walls, furniture and fittings have enough contrast to be distinguishable from their background.
- The doors are easy to open and doorways are at least 900 mm wide; 1000 mm wide for sports facilities.
- The main premises must be fitted with a functional audio induction loop system and marked with the induction loop symbol.

Is it possible to participate in the event?

- The premises are clearly marked, and pictures and signs are used to help with the sports instructions.
- The start and finish points of sports tasks have been marked clearly.
- The assistance and service dogs have been taken into consideration in the event organisation, e.g. with designated places.
- The event organisers are prepared to assist and to guide, or there are general assistants available on site.
- Event organisers and general assistants are clearly distinguishable from guests, e.g. by wearing special clothing.
- All materials and event notifications are multi-channel (Braille, clear text, tactile map, etc.).
- A microphone is used at the event (people with hearing aids can use an audio induction loop).
- The person in charge of the activities is prepared to describe any visual material, e.g. photos.

- The rescue plan has taken into consideration people with mobility issues and reduced functional ability.

Consideration of whether the facility is accessible, both in terms of traveling to and entering the venue. With the selected site in Finland, the facility is well-known so no site visit was conducted.

It is important to organize sport events for athletes with disabilities also in the form of joint events with the sport for athletes without the disabilities. And this is the focus of the University Sport Association of Poland.

The background and motivation for the University Sport Association of Poland, as the co-organizer of the EUG Lodz 2022 is their belief it is crucial to also involve sport disciplines dedicated to student-athletes with disabilities. Since 2015, national competitions are organized for this target group, inviting hundreds of students with disabilities to get involved in sports. "Integrative Championships" series of competitions include sports like: athletics, badminton, table tennis, boccia, bowling, goalball, swimming, shooting sport, chess and sailing. All students with disabilities are eligible to participate, having to cover only the transportation to the city of competition. Accommodation, catering and sport expenses are covered by the organizers. For EUSA, this integrated approach to youth sport is also important and sport discipline for students with disabilities has been a part of European Universities Games since 2016, where the concept was first introduced in Croatia.

At the EUG in 2022, para-table tennis was chosen as a full-programme discipline because of its popularity of those sport disciplines and the chances for the highest participation. To emphasize the importance of sport for persons with disabilities, two additional disciplines were also added – sitting volleyball and para-weightlifting.

Promoting

The EYPG target a specific community and promotion of the event is channeled through National Paralympic Committees.

Promotion for the EYPG in Finland started on the official EYPG social media channels a year ahead of the opening, and the EYPG social media channels posted preparations of the young athletes competing: in [Italy](#) and [France](#) for example.

The promotion of these games through the national networks is important, as [highlighted by Olivier BUSNEL](#) of the French delegation:

«L'enjeu numéro 1 de cette compétition est de faire vivre à la délégation les premiers émois d'un grand rendez-vous sportif et de faire prendre conscience aux jeunes de la notion collective. Dans le sport, nous avons souvent tendance à être enfermés dans notre discipline, dans notre couloir de la performance, dans notre pratique. Les Jeux Européens Paralympiques de la Jeunesse sont l'occasion pour ces jeunes de vivre pour la première fois en collectivité avec des sportifs issus d'autres fédérations sportives. Notre rôle est de leur faire comprendre qu'ils doivent vivre pleinement cette expérience, à la fois avec toute la délégation française, mais aussi et surtout avec les autres nations présentes sur cette compétition. C'est une confrontation culturelle très riche pour eux.»

The host organisations - [Finnish Paralympic Committee](#) and the [Pajulahti Olympic training center for para sports in Finland](#) also promoted the event widely through its social media, making sure to thank partners and also highlight athlete profiles.

The [official website](#) carried event information and news articles about the athletes taking part: “EPYG22 will be the biggest event in EPYG history!! Read more: <https://epyg2022.fi/epyg22-biggest-event-in-epyg-history/>” but it is unfortunately discontinued after the event itself.

For the disability discipline sports at EUG 2022, the target group of the competitions was the same as for the rest of the event – students under 30 years old, both male and female. National University Sport Associations could register the participants for the para-table tennis competition. The flow of information was directed at the NUSA and it was important to encourage them to promote this initiative on their national level.

The Events

Youth para athletes at the 2022 edition of the EPYG competed in eight sports – athletics, swimming, table tennis, boccia, goalball, judo, wheelchair basketball and showdown (as a demonstration sport).

The first three days of the event are given over to training sessions where the athletes participate in the events with the objective of determining their classification. This classification is a first essential step for disabled youth athletes for their future international sporting career as it constitutes a guarantee of fairness between athletes. It is also important for the staff who projected classifications for each athlete, that are either confirmed or changed here, enabling the coaches and staff to best support athletes towards future performances.

Events differ from mainstream sport events in the sports that are offered – sports like goalball are not found in mainstream competitions, and also adapted versions of similar sports such as boccia - a precision ball sport, similar to bocce, and related to bowls and pétanque.

Considerations for adapting physical activity events and sport for people with a disability are documented comprehensively. A publication that talks to the youth sector is “[University Sport of Persons with Disabilities](#)”.

For the EUG 2022 in Lodz, as well as the official para-table tennis competition, additional competitions in sitting volleyball offered the chance to invite people involved in sitting volleyball in Poland and Europe. A few professional athletes came to Łódź to promote the discipline and showcase the possibilities in sport that are open for people with disabilities. Sitting volleyball is a sport focused on integration of athletes with disabilities and those without – everyone can play it and become part of the team.

The para table tennis competition is a popular event in the series of Integrative Championship organized in Polish university sport. As the rules in the EUSA regulations are quite strict about the disability classes, an idea with including also other classes came up. An additional integrative competition took place, at the same time as the para table tennis. This offered participants the chance to play more matches and engage in an additional event during their stay. Student athletes with disabilities arrived and took part in the competition and integrated with the rest of the participants. This was also an exceptional chance for coaches and delegations to exchange practices and exchange good practices.

A para weightlifting sport discipline social inclusion event was also organised during EUG 2022 to showcase the sport and highlight the importance of variety of sports that are available for athletes with disabilities. Especially, as in this case, an example of a discipline that is not very popular in community of people with disabilities. A one-day event was organised at the Technical University of Lodz, and participants, officials and volunteers from EUG were invited to join and observe the competition. As well as showcasing the sport itself, a secondary goal was also to contribute to the campaign for a return to

physical activity after COVID-19.

All eight events of the EPYG were livestreamed on the [official website](#) (no longer available), as well as [YouTube](#) where events can be found with the EPYG tag.

[National federation social media platforms](#) carried the successes of the athletes as well as the official event channels.

Side Events

Workshops were offered as part of the event: "[How to prepare for and interview](#)" and "Anti doping matters" for example.

Evaluation / Debrief / Legacy

Evaluation of the EPYG was quantitative, with statistics gathered for number of participants, and media access (website, streaming), mainstream press articles, and by means of a survey to participants.

Legacy and success for European Para Youth Games (EPYG) resembles that of EuroGames and EUG in that it is judged mainly by interest in bidding for future events. And European Paralympic Committee President Raymon Blondel has spoken of his optimism over the future of the European Para Youth Games (EPYG), revealing interest from seven countries as potential hosts for the 2025 edition.

It will be the seventh edition of the multi-sport event for Para athletes aged between 13 and 23 that was launched 12 years ago.

For the disability events at EUG 2022, the legacy is ported by the continued collaboration with AZS and the establishment of disability sport as part of the standard competition. The evaluation was carried out in the same frame as the other events.



FIND OUT MORE...

This section provides examples of good practices, events and organisations that you can reach out to for help, advice, and inspiration in planning to make your sports event more inclusive.

ORGANISATIONS

EGLSF	<p>The EGLSF, or European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation, is an organization that promotes and supports the participation of LGBTQI+ individuals in sports throughout Europe. It is an umbrella organization that represents and works with LGBTQI+ sports clubs, teams, and athletes across the continent.</p> <p>The EGLSF's primary role is to advocate for equality and inclusion in sports, striving to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. It works to create a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQI+ athletes, coaches, and officials, encouraging their participation at all levels of sport.</p> <p>The organization supports the development of LGBTQI+ sports clubs and teams, providing resources, networking opportunities, and guidance to help them thrive. As well as its annual showcase sports event – EuroGames – EGLSF promotes European LGBTQI+ tournaments, championships, and conferences, offering a platform for LGBTQI+ athletes for competition and advocacy.</p> <p>Additionally, the EGLSF collaborates with national and international sports governing bodies, as well as other organizations involved in LGBTQI+ rights and sports, to raise awareness and advocate for policy changes that support the inclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals in sports.</p> <p>Website: https://www.eglsf.info/</p>
Federation of Gay Games	<p>The Gay Games and its international Federation exist to serve the needs of athletes, artists, and advocates. The mission is to promote equality for all, and in particular for LGBTQ+ people throughout the world.</p> <p>As the world's largest sports and cultural event open to all, the Gay Games have created and nurtured a movement that has become among the greatest forces for community empowerment and social change.</p> <p>Website: https://gaygames.org/</p>
LEAP Sports Scotland	<p>LEAP Sports Scotland (Leadership, Equality and Active Participation in Sports for LGBTI people in Scotland) works for greater inclusion for LGBTI people in sport and against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in a sports context.</p> <p>Website: https://leapsports.org/</p>
Pride Sports UK	<p>An advocacy-focused organisation in the UK.</p> <p>Website: https://pridesports.org.uk</p>
Seitenwechsel	<p>Seitenwechsel is a sports club for women/lesbians/trans/inter* and girls. Seitenwechsel aims to help its members gain varied athletic experience, regardless of their skin colour, social and ethnic background, physical condition, age or sexual identity.</p> <p>Website: https://www.seitenwechsel-berlin.de</p>
Discover Football	<p>Discover Football advocates for women in football. In football, as in many other areas of society, women are discriminated against in many ways. Projects, make the discriminatory structures in football and in society visible, give women worldwide a space to exchange ideas and encourage them to continue to be active and a role model in women's football context!</p> <p>Website: https://www.discoverfootball.de</p>

Panteres Grogues - Donasport	Panteres Grogues – Donasport hosts a set of non-competitive sporting activities with the aim of promoting sport among women. Website: https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/home/
Finnish Paralympic Committee	The Finnish Paralympic Committee raises awareness of the Paralympic Games as an elite sports competition and broadens the view of elite sports. Established in 1994, it represents Finnish top athletes with disabilities, and it is responsible for selecting and sending a Finnish team to the Paralympic Games. It disseminates information about disability sports and promotes research and training in this field as well as doing important work to encourage young athletes locally and to raise awareness of disabled people. Website: https://www.paralympia.fi/in-english
European Paralympic Committee (EPC)	The EPC promotes and defends the collective interest of European athletes with disabilities as represented by their National Paralympic Committee (NPC) or equivalent national body, International Organisation of Sports for the Disabled or International Paralympic Sport Federation in membership of EPC, without discrimination on the grounds of religion, economics, disability, gender, language or ethnic origin. The EPC aims to provide sports programs and initiatives for sports for persons with a disability for example by holding a Para-disability European Youth Games each second year and to increase the participation rates in a sport in the less Economically Affluent zones of Europe. The strategy is also to increase participation rates of women in sport throughout Europe. Website: https://www.europaralympic.org/
EUSA	EUSA - EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY SPORTS ASSOCIATION: a non-profit, non-governmental association that is umbrella association and acts as the governing body for University Sports in Europe Website: https://www.eusa.eu/eusa
AZS	University Sports Association of Poland is one of the biggest sport organizations in Poland and the biggest sports students organisation, that exists from the beginning of the 20th century. At present the AZS has around 30 000 members, associated in more than 250 clubs, who trains in about 3 000 sections – mainly involving young people from higher educational institutions. AZS is based on a Statue, which includes our main purposes such as: promotion of volunteering, national identify and European integration, actions for handicapped and against pathologies or addictions. AZS also encourages to take responsibility for the local environment and social matters. It is involved in both common and professional sport. Website: https://azs.pl/

EVENTS

EuroGames	EuroGames, also known as the European Gay & Lesbian Multi-Sports Championships, is an annual multi-sport tournament, licensed by the EGLSF, and hosted by EGLSF members in a different European city each year. Previous hosts can be contacted through ELGSF at eglsf@eglsf.info .
Gay Games	The Gay Games is a worldwide sport and cultural event that promotes acceptance of sexual diversity, featuring lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) athletes, artists and other individuals. More: https://gaygames.org/
Pride Youth Games	Pride Youth Games (PYG) is a yearly weekend residential for 16–25-year-old lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, non-binary, queer and other diversely identifying young people. Pride Youth Games rotates between Scotland, Wales and England and is held in a different place each year. More: https://leapsports.org/activities/pride-youth-games
Out & Wild	A UK-based Wellness and Activity Festival designed for queer, questioning, and curious women and those who are non-binary. An annual event, taking place in June. More: https://www.outandwild.co.uk/
DonaSport	A women’s multisport tournament organized by Panteres Grogues – Donasport that hosts a set of non-competitive sporting activities with the aim of promoting sport among women. More: https://donasport.panteresgrogues.com/en/home/
Deaflympics	An Olympics type event for deaf athletes, held every four years.
IBSA World Games	The world’s biggest sport event for athletes with visual impairments. With various names over the years including the ‘World Blind Sports Championships’ and ‘IBSA World Championships and Games’, the multi-sport competition is held every four years. The World Games are a chance for new and established athletes to compete against a strong field of their peers in both Paralympic and non-Paralympic sports. Many athletes who competed have gone on to win medals at the Paralympic Games, or reach the highest heights of success elsewhere.
Special Olympics World Games	Winter and Summer events held every 4 years for athletes with intellectual disabilities.
International Wheelchair & Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS) World Games	A multi-sport competition for wheelchair athletes, formerly known as the Stoke Mandeville or World Wheelchair Games.
Invictus Games	An international Paralympic-style multi-sport event for wounded soldiers, first held in 2014.
Integrated Championships	A series of events designed for students with disabilities for the recreational trainings in various sports. Over 15 sport disciplines is organized each year to promote sport and encourage students with disabilities to take up on new physical activities. Since 2019, additional festivals, camps and events are organized for children with disabilities.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

European Equality in Sport	<p>European Sports Charter (link)</p> <p>Code of Sports Ethics (link)</p> <p>Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) Recommendation on lesbians and gays in sport (1635(2003))</p> <p>Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) Resolution 2465 (2022) - The fight for a level playing field – Ending discrimination against women in the world of sport (link)</p> <p>The EU Work Plan for Sport (2021-2024) (link)</p> <p>International Olympic Committee [IOC] (2021). IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion, and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations (link).</p> <p>Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (link)</p> <p>The EU White Paper on Sport (link)</p>
EU commission HLG gender Equality in Sport	Towards More Gender Equality in Sport: Recommendations and Action Plan (link)
EQUIP Index of Top Policies & Practices	A comprehensive list of equality-focused European policies and good practice examples collected for the EQUIP project.
Report on Non-Binary People, Sport & Physical Activity	Pride Sport UK Policy guidance for non-binary inclusion in grassroots sport and physical activity. The report discusses several recommendations related to spaces, activity, binary competition, representation & visibility, language and sport at school.
LGBT Inclusion in sport	<p>Good Practices handbook, N° 4 –</p> <p>Website: https://edoc.coe.int/en/people-with-disabilities/6958-disability-sport-in-europe.html</p>
NOC*NSF guidelines	Guidance-on-gender-and-sex-diverse-individuals (link)
Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030	<p>The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 intends to tackle the diverse challenges that persons with disabilities face. It aims to progress on all areas of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both at EU and Member State level.</p> <p>Website: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes</p>
The Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023	<p>The Strategy guides and supports the activities of Council of Europe member States to implement the UNCRPD and Council of Europe standards regarding disability.</p> <p>Website: https://rm.coe.int/16806fe7d4</p>
Disability sport in Europe	<p>Good Practices handbook, N° 3.</p> <p>Website: https://edoc.coe.int/en/people-with-disabilities/6958-disability-sport-in-europe.html</p> <p>https://azs.pl/Uploads/erasmus-university-sport-for-people-with-disabilities-deliverable-d23.pdf</p>
World Health Organisation	<p>YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION /PHYSICAL ACTIVITY/SPORT IN AND OUT OF SCHOOLS: TECHNICAL REPORT FOR THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION</p> <p>https://www.icsspe.org/sites/default/files/YOUNGPEOPLE.pdf</p>

UN systems Action Plan on Youth	Website: https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/02/Youth-SWAP.pdf
ENGSO Youth policy papers	Position papers and statements on the current issues, affecting youth and sport in Europe. ENGSO Youth also provides updates, information, and good practices on European developments in the youth and sport sector through publications, newsletters and website and helps its members develop their own youth structure. Website: https://engsoyouth.eu/resources/policy-papers/
Brighton Declaration Women & Sport	International treaty that has become a road map to support the ongoing development of a more fair and equitable system of sport and physical activity, fully inclusive of women and girls (link)
Dossier Dones i Esport Català	A document with relevant data and statistics on physical activity and sport from a gender perspective to better understand the situation of women in sport and promote the path to achieve effective equality (link).
Sport, inclusion and LGBTI diversity	A guide with resources and guidance for the inclusion of lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual and intersex (LGBTI) people in sport (link)
Gender equality and inclusion report 2021	Gender equality and inclusion report 2021 from the International Olympic Committee (link)
Gender equality and inclusion objectives 2021-2024	Gender equality and inclusion objectives 2021-2024 from the International Olympic Committee (link)
IOC Portrayal Guidelines	Implementation of gender-equal and fair portrayal practices in all forms of communication (link)

