

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCLUSIVE SPORT EVENTS



iSport

Inclusion in Sport



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of the European Union



Making Inclusion Happen

Making inclusion happen in sport relies on deliberate actions and pro-active behaviours. Making people from all backgrounds, ages, genders, sexualities, and abilities feel welcome and respected and that they belong in sport means consciously focusing on inclusion, and is a first step in the direction of making sporting events accessible and welcoming to as many people as possible.

There is no one right answer to becoming more inclusive, but these recommendations are intended to help you take some steps towards the goal. They are not exhaustive, but rather intended as a tool to help get you started.

Take a holistic approach to inclusion

Any work on inclusion needs to take a holistic approach, by which we mean that all aspects of the event should be taken into consideration. Making the sporting event more inclusive, more diverse, and more welcoming to everyone means investing in people, structures, the communication and image, and methods of work. Mindful reflection on all these aspects of your event is key to making it more accessible.

Hosting an inclusive sport event requires careful planning and implementation to ensure that participants and spectators from diverse backgrounds and abilities feel welcome and able to fully engage. We have broken event planning into elements of preparation and the following tips will help you consider what is necessary to think about at each phase to host a successful inclusive event:

- Inspiration & research
- Promotion
- Registration
- Event: Sports
- Event: Side activities – cultural, political, social
- Medals, Prizes and Ceremonies
- Post Event



Inspiration & Research

Inclusion is broad and intersectional, encompassing gender, race, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion etc. and taking all these aspects into consideration is ambitious and requires careful planning.

Think about what you mean by an inclusive event: Inclusion means different things to different people, so clearly define the event's goals and commitment to inclusivity and make sure everyone involved understands these terms and the event goals in the same way.

How does inclusion fit into the purpose of your event? Think about your event goals – a focus on using sport for social inclusion, where the primary goal is bringing people together, fostering a sense of belonging,

breaking down barriers and prejudices will look different to an event that is focused on sport and finding a place for diverse profiles in the sports.

What already exists? Are there sport organisations already hosting events for distinct communities? Are there community groups that offer sport activities to specific communities? Connect with and listen to them and take their experience onboard. Make sure there are no agenda conflicts with these organisations – they will be key in promoting your event, and for volunteer recruitment.

Build a diverse organising team: Assemble a diverse organising team that reflects the communities you aim to include and the event that you want to create. The principle of ‘nothing about us without us’ is key here – you cannot build inclusion into an event without including the people that belong to the communities that you want to include.

Engage with allies. Develop community partnerships with organisations and enterprises engaged with the communities that you want to include. Think broad and beyond sport – collaborate with local organisations and community groups focused on inclusion and diversity, community helplines, businesses that regularly run specific community fundraisers, charities and health organisations and establishments that work with specific communities. Allies in the local community will be key in promoting your event, and for volunteer recruitment.

Devour grey literature: Someone somewhere has probably done or tried to do what you are doing and maybe they have listed their lessons learned. A comprehensive search for these resources can save you from making painful and expensive mistakes.



Promotion

Clear marketing message. Develop and communicate clear policies that address inclusion, anti-discrimination, harassment, and equal access for all participants and spectators. Have a clear charter on what is and is not acceptable behaviour and language and make this public.

Diversity in marketing materials. Make sure that your imagery and representation in marketing materials reflects the inclusivity of the event – this ensures that people can see themselves in the promotional materials and feel that the event is for them.

Inclusive Language. Make sure that your use of language is clear, adapted, and inclusive in all event communications to make all attendees feel valued and respected.

Diverse marketing diffusion. Be diverse with your choice of promotional networks. Collaborate with profile-specific communication experts and make sure that you are reaching the right people. Consider traditional and digital options.

Collaborate with diverse allies. Contact profile-specific groups and organisations and negotiate co-promotion agreements to leverage their marketing strategies to help promote the event. Many institutions have a person responsible for community engagement/human rights that have robust marketing networks.

Find inclusion ambassadors and role models. Community figures that are role models of inclusivity, or experts in inclusion work can transmit messages of support for your event. Personal narratives and lived experience about the importance of your event and your message are powerful endorsements.

Sensitivity training for communication experts and allies. Make sure any allies and communication experts have training and are sensitised to the values you are promoting and the issues involved.

Diverse marketing mediums and approaches. Tools for promotion are abundant now so you can leverage many with a single element. An ambassador podcast interview can be recycled with an impact quote for social media, as a personal narrative transcribed in a newsletter, and so on.

Promotional offers. Promote the event by leveraging profile-specific calendar events and associating 'special offers'.



Registration

Inclusive forms. Think about offering registration forms with multiple formats and options (online, telephone, text phone etc.) for individuals with different needs, including adaptive categories and gender-neutral choices.

Alternative details. Offer a space in the registration process to enter preferred names and pronoun choices.

Content processing. Ensure that any ID card processing aspect of the form references preferred data and not required data such as names and pronouns.

Custom information space. Offer a space in the registration process where participants can list specific needs such as support staff requirements or medical needs.

Include specific authorisations. Any specific authorisations should be directly uploadable and not require additional data entry.

Contact person. Provide details for a contact person for any follow-up with questions.

Inclusion and anti-discrimination policies. Be transparent and provide references and links to any policies that will be enforced.

Payment options. Offer facilitated payment options and outreach opportunities.

Accommodation. Offer links to a variety of accommodation options to cover all budgets. Setup a participant forum for organising ride-sharing and shared housing options.

Maps, directions, and transport. Indicate directions and routes that are clear to and between venues. Provide local transport and access details such as accessible taxi companies, public transport, accessible entrances, reserved parking bays.

Support animal consideration. Indicate dog toileting facilities, water outlets, animal-friendly accommodation, and transport.



Event Planning & Running

Venue Selection: Choose an accessible venue with features such as ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. Ensure it meets the needs of individuals with disabilities. Think about venue safety measures for attendees, such as well-lit and obstacle-free parking areas, locations that are safe for everyone – no ‘no go’ locations for any of the communities you want to include.

Facilities: Ensure that seating, restrooms (including portable restrooms), changing rooms, and concessions and refreshment areas are accessible. Clearly label gender-neutral restrooms. Some important considerations are:

- Parking places are clearly signed, and at least 3600 mm wide.
- No floor level differences, or there is a ramp or elevator, or an alternative accessible route has been clearly signed. Ramp gradients don't exceed 8% indoors, and 5% outdoors, and the ramp must be at least 1000 mm wide. Elevators are at least 1200 mm x 2300 mm and the doorway at least 1000 mm.
- Doors are easy to open and doorways are at least 900 mm wide or 1000 mm for sports facilities.

Transportation: Provide information on accessible transportation options and offer shuttle services for attendees who may require them.

Equipment. Ensure that equipment available is adapted, including sport-specific equipment (basketballs for women for example) and accessory equipment for speeches and presentations (portable ramps, height-adjustable lecterns, roving microphones).

Signage. Make sure this is clear, contrasted and placed where everyone can see it (be careful of height for wheelchair users).

Inclusive and adapted activities: Offer sports and activities that target the communities you want to attend and plan for different abilities and interests, including both competitive and non-competitive options. Think outside the box – there are other ways to categorise sport other than gender-segregation. Integrate mixed-team activities.

Cultural Sensitivity: Ensure the activities are sensitive to various cultural practices and beliefs and respect and acknowledge the cultural backgrounds of participants and spectators. Access is both physical and attitudinal. Make sure your sporting environment is welcoming in both ways.

Timetables. People with mobility issues require sufficient time to move between venues for activities. Support staff may require breaks and time-distanced events to avoid fatigue. Disabled athletes may require physiotherapy sessions between activities.

Sensory/Safe Spaces. Provide quiet spaces that enable athletes, and support staff to rest and recuperate from noise and crowds. Provide gender-specific/safe spaces for members of the LGBTQI+ community, women, non-binary to come together.

Training: Train event staff and volunteers on diversity, inclusion, and respectful interaction to ensure that everyone feels safe and welcome. Place volunteers in concession and refreshment areas to help service staff with mobility-reduced athletes.

Medical support. Ensure that medical personnel do not make assumptions about participants and are averted to and sensitised to potential issues (medication, physical specifics).

Safeguarding. Ensure that safeguarding information is transmitted to participants and publicly displayed.

Policies. Make your commitment known and have policies readily available on anti-discrimination, gender inclusion for example.

Sport red books. Prepare sport 'red books' that highlight any adaptations to mainstream sport operations and ensure that adaptations are recognised and understood. Facilitate communication between mainstream and profile-specific experts to achieve this.

Monitoring, Evaluation tools. Integrating ways to evaluate your event and eventually monitor progress is essential to producing inclusive action. Clearly define indicators (such as attendance data or participant demographics, policies in place) that will be used to evaluate inclusivity. Make sure the data collection methods are respectful and non-intrusive. Conducting an accessibility audit of event facilities and identifying any barriers or challenges faced by in situ observers and feedback from event support staff will also help provide data for evaluation.

Feedback Mechanisms: Create channels for participants to provide feedback on their experiences related to inclusivity: comment cards, online feedback forms. Providing some incentive to completing these may help participation rates.



Side events – cultural, political, social activities

Running social, cultural, and political events alongside sports events can enhance the overall experience and offer a more meaningful dimension for participants and spectators to the sporting occasion, as well as engage a broader audience, and provide opportunities for awareness-raising.

Reinforce messaging. Ceremonies, discussion panels, forums, and seminars are great educational opportunities for highlighting social and political messages, as well as promoting the message of inclusion and diversity.

Collaboration opportunities. Hosting parallel forums, cultural festivals or social impact initiatives are opportunities to create bonds with organisations and enterprises to build future working networks.

Networking platforms. Hosting discussions and forums that bring together policymakers, activists, and experts to address political and social issues relevant to sport (gender equality, inclusivity, or the role of sports in society) at sport events is a practical way of placing the topics in situ.

Fundraising opportunities. Combining sports events with fundraising activities can help raise funds for the event and support local social causes or/and communities in need. It may offer a way of giving back to the community for help in organising the event.

Showcase heritage. Opening and closing ceremonies can help to showcase local culture and community-specific artistic performances, offering participants an insight into culture, art, music, dance, cuisine, and linking sport with community and social inclusion.



Medals, Prizes & Ceremonies

Inclusive awards and recognition: Celebrate and recognise the achievements of all participants and athletes, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, and avoid gender or ability biases in awards.

Diverse award categories: Create award categories that recognise achievements across various dimensions, such as age groups, gender, ability levels, and skill divisions. This ensures that a wide range of participants can be celebrated.

Inclusivity in award design: Consider incorporating symbols or designs that represent diversity, and the spirit of inclusion. These symbols can convey the event's commitment to inclusivity.

Inclusive Language: Use inclusive language when announcing winners and presenting awards. Avoid assumptions about gender, age, or ability and use neutral terms.

Inclusive medal presenters: Have a diverse group of individuals, including participants from profile-specific groups, present medals, and awards. This allows for a more inclusive representation in the ceremony. Consider inviting 'dignitaries' from communities that you want to include.

Sensitivity training for presenters: Where necessary, make sure that medal presenters and award announcers are aware of inclusive language and the community values and diversity of participants.

Acknowledgment of effort: Recognize not only the winners but also the effort and dedication of all participants. This can be done through certificates, honorable mentions, or participation awards.

Highlight personal stories: Share personal stories of athletes who have overcome challenges or barriers to participate in the event. This can inspire and motivate others.

Recognition of supporters: Acknowledge the support networks of athletes, including coaches, mentors, and allies who have helped them along the way.



Post Event

Reporting. Plan for post-event publicity about your event success and inclusivity achievements. Organising a closing event press conference will help with event reporting and start building for the event legacy.

Press dossier. Prepare a post-event press dossier with statistics, ambassador images, quotes and photos that convey messages of inclusivity to start building the legacy you want to create.

Feedback mechanisms: Create channels for participants and spectators to provide feedback on their experiences related to inclusivity. This could include surveys, comment cards, or online feedback forms.

Evaluation: Conduct an official post-event evaluation to assess how well the event achieved its inclusion goals and gather feedback for future improvements.

Available post-event communication supports. Leave open access to information about the event via your website and other online information points and update these with post event success stories, quotes from participants, feedback from post-event surveys.

Lessons learned. Be transparent and public about the lessons learned as a way of remaining accountable and incentive to continue progress.

Speaking opportunities. Research future opportunities that you can present the success of your event. Connect with event organisers of similar future events to share and highlight inclusivity successes.

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

2021-2023. The project was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

The European Commission’s support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Publisher: EUSA (European University Sports Association) Institute, Slovenia, www.eusa.eu

Translations: This document has been translated from the English original version into ten languages, including Catalan, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Polish, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish, for informational purposes. In case of any discrepancy, the English version shall prevail.

Year: 2023

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

