



**Sport  
Empowers  
Disabled  
Youth**

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# SEDY<sub>2</sub> project

## Inclusion Handbook for Sports Clubs

Aija Saari, Natalia Szergejev & Vera Dekkers



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## Inclusion Handbook for Sports Clubs

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# Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. What is inclusion?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Terminology and language</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Definitions	10
3.2 Models of disability	12
3.3 Disability sports movements	13
<b>4. Everyone can participate</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 How to start	15
4.2 Finding coaches and volunteers	16
4.3 Education and training	17
4.4 Designing activities	19
4.5 Advertising and marketing	21
<b>5. Everyone is unique</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1 Disability services	25
5.2 Accessibility	26
5.3 Financial issues	28
<b>6. Inclusion is an ongoing process</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>33</b>
Appendix A. van Lindert, de Jonge, Gutter & van Kalmthout (2021)	33
Appendix B. Saari (2021)	41
Appendix C. Disability sports movements: classifications and divisioning	47
Appendix D. 8-step plan from the Netherlands	50



# 1. Introduction

The Inclusion Handbook for Sports Clubs is aimed at anybody involved in running or working in a sports club. You could be a volunteer, a coach or a club member. Inclusion in its simplest form is defined as the state of being included. In an inclusive club, every participant is welcomed, accepted, and feels that they belong. However, the needs of young people with disabilities are often unmet either in terms of the number of available sporting opportunities or their quality. The goal of this handbook is to facilitate disability inclusion among mainstream sport providers by sharing best practices and inclusive ideas from SEDY2 project partners.

The SEDY2 project is a three-year follow-up project (2020-2022) funded through the European Union (Erasmus+). The goal of the project is to encourage inclusion and equal opportunities in sport for children and youth with disabilities. The project is coordinated by the Inholland University of Applied Sciences. It has eight partners from across four countries (Finland, Lithuania, Portugal, the Netherlands) and one European umbrella organisation (the European Network of Sport Education). For more information, visit [the project website](#).

The status of disability inclusion in sports varies across Europe. In general, those countries that have worked longest with disability inclusion at the national level are also most keen to facilitate local-level inclusion development among mainstream sports clubs.

**In the Netherlands** almost all sports are integrated into the regular sports federations. The National Sport Federation (NOC\*NSF) is responsible for structure and policies. SEDY2 project partner **Gehandicaptensport Nederland** (Disabled Sport Netherlands) is the sports federation responsible for disability-specific sports like goalball, showdown, boccia and MATP,<sup>1</sup> and for disability

sports which have not yet been integrated, such as para ice hockey, wheelchair rugby, and five-a-side soccer.

**In Finland**, the situation is somewhat similar, except that the **Finnish Paralympic Committee** (also a SEDY2 project partner) still exists as an independent umbrella organisation. It serves as the national sports federation for disability-specific sports (goalball, boccia, wheelchair rugby and showdown) and for disability sports which have not yet been integrated, such as chess and shooting for the visually impaired, para ice hockey, electric wheelchair hockey and para powerlifting. The committee is also responsible for the Special Olympics and Transplant sports. It also works to improve the opportunities of people with disabilities across all ages to participate in sports and be physically active by developing accessibility and inclusion at the grassroots level.

**In Portugal**, national sports federations are responsible for both mainstream sports and sports for people with disabilities (PWD) where possible. The sports that are yet to be integrated into the mainstream federations and specific sports such as boccia, goalball and wheelchair rugby are affiliated and practised under the **Portuguese Federation of Sports for People with Disabilities (FPDD)**, which is a SEDY2 project member. The FPDD works together with other national disability organisations and delegates the development of sports competitions and the formation of national teams based on the type of disability.

**In Lithuania**, the status is somewhat similar to that in Portugal. **The Lithuanian Paralympic Committee**, also a member of the SEDY2 project, is responsible for elite-level Paralympic sports, but it works in close cooperation with other sports-specific national sports federations. In addition to sports organisations, universities and

1 Motor Activity Training Programme MATP is designed for athletes who are unable to participate in official Special Olympics sporting competitions.

educational institutes<sup>2</sup> are also project partners. This combination of theory and practice is also present in this handbook.

This handbook utilises research but tries to be practical. Surveys from the Netherlands (Gutter, Van Lindert and Van Kalmthout, 2021) and Finland (Saari, 2021) serve as the background data. They show that the number of mainstream sports clubs which organise activities for people with disabilities has increased. In addition, there is growing interest towards disability inclusion among mainstream sports providers. For instance, in the Netherlands, 92% of sports clubs were willing to include people with disabilities (Appendix A). However, sports clubs have problems finding qualified trainers, coaches, volunteers, training and education. They also have difficulties finding suitable facilities and even the target groups. Ambiguous terminology around disability, Parasports and adapted sports seems to be a challenge for many mainstream sports providers.

This handbook tries to address the needs of grassroots sports providers by presenting basic information about inclusion (Chapter 2) and terminology and concepts (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, we provide step-by-step guidelines for launching activities so that everyone can participate. There is also a short description of disability services and accessibility, as well as finances, in Chapter 5.

Appendices A and B provide more detailed information about sports clubs, based on survey reports from the Netherlands and Finland. *Integration of persons with a disability into mainstream sports clubs in the Netherlands* (Appendix A) is based on a Dutch report (Gutter et al., 2021) which has been edited in English by Caroline van Lindert, Maxine de Jonge, Kirsten Gutter and Janine van Kalmthout from the Mulier Institute. *Disability sports and inclusion of PWD in Finnish Sport Clubs* (Appendix B) is written by Aija Saari from the Finnish Paralympic Committee. In addition, Appendix C, edited by Natalia Szergejev, summarises the various disability sports classifications and divisioning, as well as eligibility requirements broadly for different competition events. This resource aims to enable coaches/professionals and athletes to navigate and find the most suitable competition group they are eligible to compete in.

This handbook is a co-production of several disability sports practitioners and researchers from the Netherlands (Afke Kerkstra, Vera Dekkers, Joris van Impelen, Dos Engelaar, Lisa Snooy), Lithuania (Vaida Pokvytyte, Jurate Pozeriene), Portugal (Hugo da Silva, Nuno Pimenta), Finland (Nina Peltonen, Tiina Siivonen, Fanny Juvonen, Natalia Szergejev and Aija Saari) and Louis Moustakas from the European Network of Sport Education (ENSE). Special thanks to you all for your input.

*In Helsinki/Haarlem, March 2022*

<sup>2</sup> Other partners in the SEDY2 project are the InHolland University of Applied Sciences (coordination of the SEDY2 project, the Netherlands), the Pajulahti Sports Institute (Finland), Lithuanian Sports University (Lithuania), the Escola Superior de Desporto de Rio Maior (Portugal) and ENSE, the European Network of Sport Education (Austria).

## 2. What is inclusion?

Inclusion is a broad concept. Here in this handbook, we focus on disability inclusion in sport(s). However, “an inclusive community is one that actively seeks respect all its citizens, values diversity, ensures access to resources and opportunities and engages people in decision-making processes that impact their lives” (Inclusion solutions, n.d.). Thus, inclusion of disability cannot be separated from the broader concept of social inclusion.

The question, what is inclusion? was posed by the SEDY2 project researchers to 55 people in autumn 2020. There were 12 focus group interviews in Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Portugal. Participants included youth with disabilities (n = 16), families of youth with disabilities (n = 18) and sports professionals (n = 21). The core results are presented in the SEDY2 inclusion statement (Figure 1).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Article 30 (2006), states that people with disabilities should have the same right to participate in play, recreation, leisure, and sporting activities as their non-disabled peers. In the disability sports context, inclusion in sport means that people with a disability can access and participate in any sport they like, to the same degree as the rest of the population and in the manner of their choice. The key here is that people are given the same opportunities and options, but ultimately have the autonomy to choose for themselves. For example, one person might be in a team for people with a specific type of disability, and another might choose to exercise at a mainstream sports club.

A rights-based approach to the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport covers the spectrum of opportunities from participation in mainstream

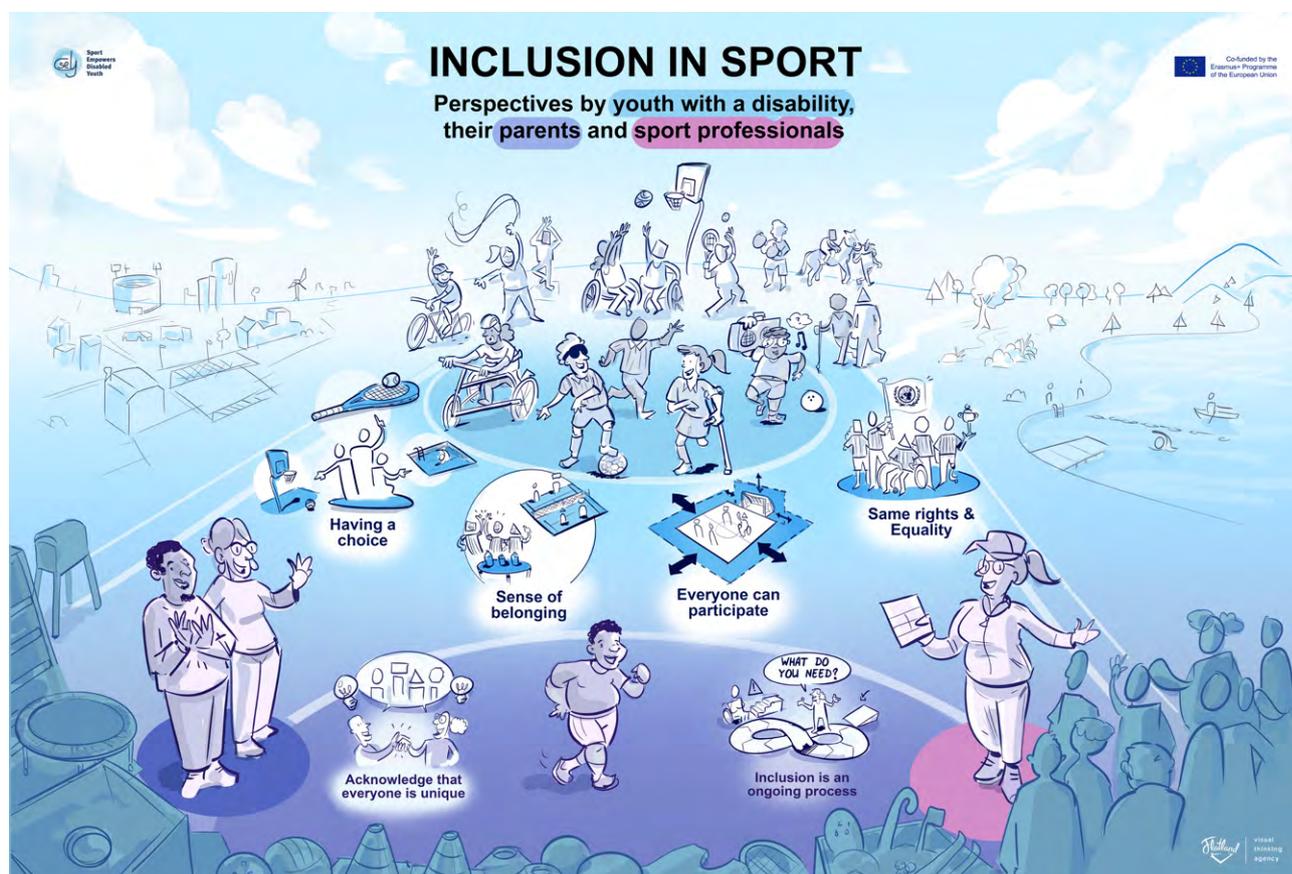
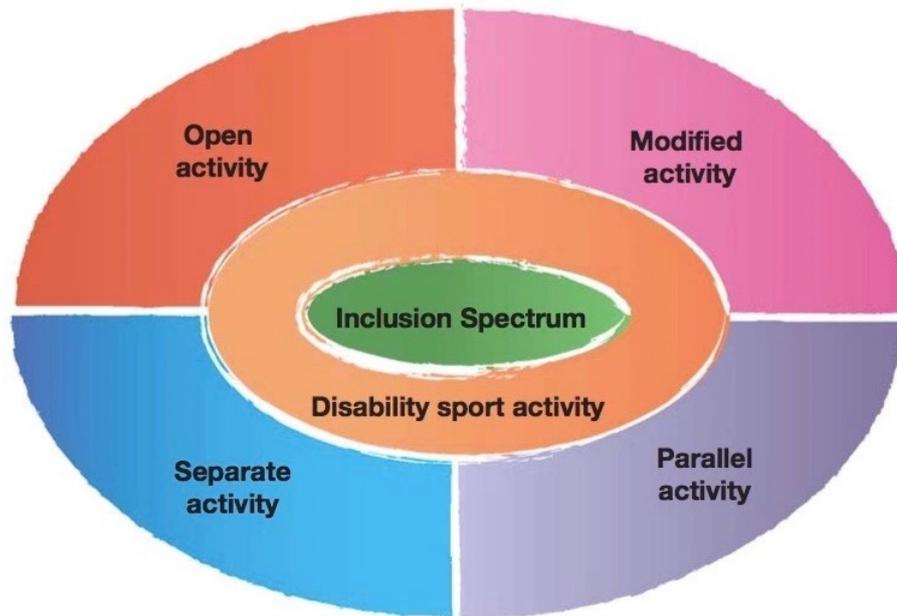


Figure 1. SEDY2 project Inclusion statement: <https://www.inholland.nl/inhollandcom/about-inholland/sedy2/inclusion/>



**Figure 2.** The inclusion spectrum (Stevenson and Black, 2011)

settings to disability-specific settings. It is a right to have access to and participate in sport. It is a question of the individual choice of a sporting activity across a continuum of segregated, integrated and inclusive approaches. The inclusion debates in sport are not about how to substitute special structures with integrative ones, and those in turn with inclusive ones, but are characterised by giving each approach equal importance and validity (Kuippis, 2018).

The Inclusion Spectrum is one of the most popular inclusion tools for sports practitioners (Figure 2) (Stevenson and Black, 2011). The inclusion spectrum presents five distinct modalities of practice, which overlap in principles and methodologies. Each approach has equal importance.

### Five modalities of the Inclusion Spectrum, modified from Stevenson and Black, 2011:

**Separate or special activities** are specially thought out and proposed for people with disabilities and practised at different times and places, such as wheelchair basketball or Special Olympics soccer.

In **parallel activity**, athletes with disabilities may need to train separately with disabled peers to prepare for a competition, such as a goalball group.

**Disability sport activity**, also called reverse integration, whereby non-disabled participants are included in disability sports together with disabled peers, such as using the Paralympic sports goalball, boccia or sitting volleyball as a basis for an inclusive game.

**Open activity:** Everyone does the same activity with minimal or no adaptations to the environment or equipment; open activities are by their nature inclusive so that the activity suits every participant. For example, warm-up or cool down,

and cooperative or unstructured movement games (like collecting games, play canopy games, or actions songs and activities).

**Modified activities** (or adapted activities) are designed for all, with specific adaptations to the space or environment, tasks or rules, equipment and teaching (e.g., MATP in the Special Olympics). In many cases, people with disabilities can be included with no modifications at all, whilst in other situations modifications may be needed. The golden rule of inclusion is to keep the goals of the activity in mind when making modifications. The activity should be meaningful and challenging for the entire group.

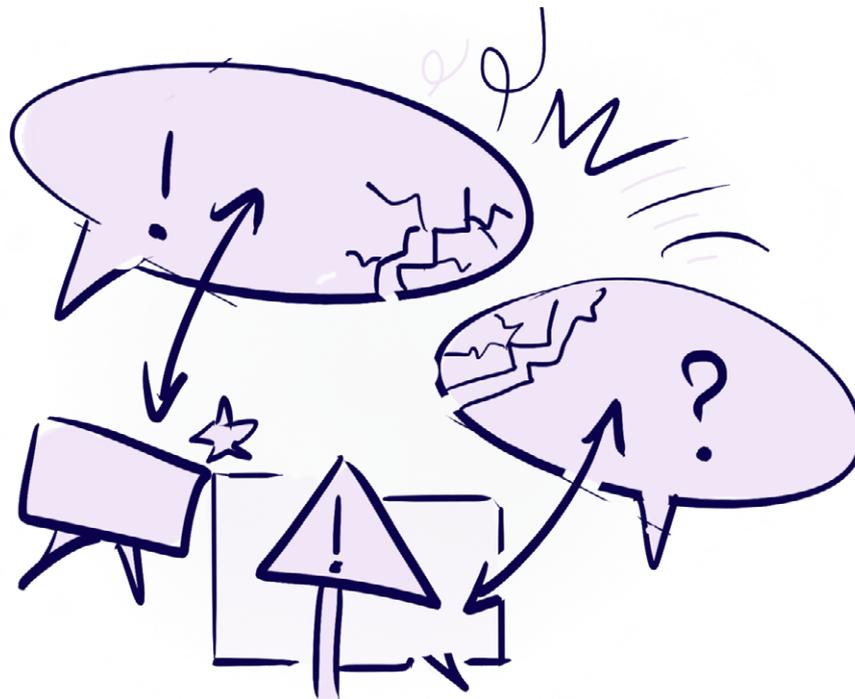
### The STEP and TREE tools for adapting

There are two practical tools designed to help sports clubs to modify activities or programmes. TREE comes from the words Teaching/coaching style, Rules, Equipment and Environment. STEP means adapting Space, Teaching, Equipment or People. Both tools have four essential elements of an activity that can be modified to make it more inclusive. You can find an example of how to use the **TREE** model on the website of [Sport Australia](#). There is also a nice model of **STEP** use on the website of [England Athletics](#). More videos can be found on YouTube.

### More information and links

- TREE: More information about TREE can be found on the website of Sport Australia [https://www.sportaus.gov.au/sports\\_ability/using\\_tree](https://www.sportaus.gov.au/sports_ability/using_tree)
- STEP: England Athletics inclusion spectrum guidance (AIM) incorporating the STEP model is a nice example of how inclusion can be put into practice <https://england-athletics-prod-assets-bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/2018/11/the-inclusion-spectrum-guidance-2018-v2.pdf>
- The Inclusion Club is an international open-access website with plenty of sports-related inclusion resources <http://theinclusionclub.com/>
- The Youth Sport Trust is the UK's charity improving every young person's education and development through sport and play <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/about/equality-diversity-and-inclusion>
- Play by the Rules is an Australian collaboration programme for promoting child safety, anti-discrimination and inclusion <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/>
- Move United's Inclusive Playbook uses the power of sport to push what's possible for people with disabilities, fuelling conversation and inciting action that leads us to a world where everyone is included. The Playbook is targeted mostly at children, but it can also inspire sports clubs <https://www.moveunitedsport.org/education/inclusive-playbook/>

## 3. Terminology and language



### 3.1 Definitions

Sport is, as defined by the Council of Europe: “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels”. By sport we refer to recreational sports (for example cycling, walking, running, dance, yoga), grassroots sports (for example football, basketball, volleyball), adapted sports (for example goalball, wheelchair dance, basketball) and competitive sports (Paralympic sports, deaf sports such as Deaflympics, transplant games, Special Olympics). Here in this handbook, we are not talking about physical activity like walking and cycling as part of everyday life, or gardening or PE as part of school curricula, although we understand that in many cases sport and physical activity overlap and one cannot be separated from another.

There is a great variation between sports clubs due to their individual operational models and procedures (Nagel et al., 2015). Some sports clubs have thousands of members whilst most of them remain relatively small; some may focus only on their activity-related goals while other clubs highlight the importance of health, inclusion and so on, in their way of operating. There are sports clubs run by volunteers only and there are those where work is done by professional, paid staff. Clubs may be dedicated to a single sport or to several sports (multi-sport club). However, sports clubs are continuously influenced by the changes and trends in the socio-cultural environment surrounding them, thus being subject to these changes and trends (Koski, 2009). This may require them to introduce new activities, ways of operating or standing up for a good cause from time to time.

### **Mainstream sports club, disability (sports) federation or club**

This guidebook is targeted at mainstream sports clubs. Sports can be practised in a *mainstream setting* where most members or participants share the characteristics of the mainstream, through fully integrated ways or in a categorical setting (disability-specific or special/adapted sports groups and teams). A sports club can also be both or enable its members to practise sports in both ways.

**Disability sport**, here in this handbook, refers to the practice of sport and physical activity by people with disabilities, both mainstream and adapted, at a grassroots and recreational level (fun, orientation, fun and learn to train), competitive level (training for competitions) and elite sports level (training to win), as well as the infrastructure that supports these practices. Thus, disability sport does not imply that the sport is solely for people with a disability. People with disabilities can also practise mainstream sports with little or no modification to allow their inclusion in sport (van Lindert, Scheerder, and Brittain, 2019). Disability sports may also involve non-disabled participants, especially at the grassroots level.

**Para sports** is a parallel concept to disability sports. **Paralympic sports** include all sports that can be practised in the Paralympic context of training and competing at the national and international levels.

### **Adapted sports**

It is important to remember that outside the Paralympic sphere there are numerous sports (both disability and non-disability sports) that are practised merely recreationally in sports clubs, community centres and backyards. These are sometimes called *adapted (or adaptive) sports*. Adapted sports are competitive or recreational sports for people with disabilities. Adapted sports often run parallel to typical sports activities. Adaptations may for instance concern rules, environments or equipment (see The inclusion spectrum, Chapter 2).

**Adapted physical activity** is defined by the [IFAPA](#) as a cross-disciplinary body of practical and theoretical knowledge directed towards impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions in physical activity. It is a service delivery profession and an academic field of study that supports an attitude of acceptance of individual differences, advocates access to active lifestyles and sport, and promotes innovative and cooperative service delivery, support and empowerment. Adapted physical activity includes, but is not limited to, physical education, sport, recreation, dance, creative arts, nutrition, medicine and rehabilitation.

### **People with disabilities (PWD)**

The terms *People with disabilities* and *Disabled people* are commonly used within the coaching literature and reflect national and contextual influences. Respecting the difference in terminology used around the world, in this handbook we align with the ‘people first’ approach and use *people with disabilities* (also: people with impairments) with the abbreviation PWD. When we talk about children and young people with a disability, impairment or special needs, we use the term *youth with disabilities*.

## 3.2 Models of disability

Taking models of disability into consideration can help coaches to understand their own and their surroundings' perspectives on and assumptions towards disability, thus helping them to reflect on their own practice when coaching or planning to coach PWD (Allen et al., 2020). Understanding the models of disability broadens your perspectives and provides you new ways to explore and develop your practice, design and deliver sport. You can

develop more meaningful inclusive practices if you change constraining structural and interpersonal practices in your club (Darcy et al., 2011). The most commonly referred to approaches are the medical and the social models. Furthermore, Townsend et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of the social-relational and human rights model in the context of sport as follows:

In the **medical model's** view, the focus is on the limitations of the impairment which then characterise the whole disability experience. In simple terms, the impairment or disability is seen as something that needs to be fixed or intervened into. As a coach, this may be misunderstood to mean that the sports participant needs rehabilitation or physiotherapy. This could influence the coaching to become more instructional. The coach wants to observe, test, measure and improve the performance of a participant with an impairment or disability according to medical treatments, i.e., fix the body.

**The social model** breaks this medical view and re-constructs disability as a socially created concept. This means that the limitations of a person are acknowledged but disability itself is the product of socially built barriers that create the disadvantages and exclusions that people experience. As mentioned above, the term Disabled people refers to a social model perspective and means disabled by society rather than being a title. As an example, a person who uses a wheelchair is disabled by society because society has not built ramps or made facilities accessible. These barriers are present in all aspects of life, and the aim is to reduce the barriers and enable participation. For coaching, an issue with the social model could be that the reality for many sports participants is not addressed. For instance, dysfunction, illness, or pain in the body could be overlooked, or even ignored.

**The Social Relational model of disability** sees the bodily reality of people with disability but does not limit them to their impairment. In this perspective, exclusion is created and constructed through certain values, ways of thinking. In the coaching context, coaches and sports participants work together and co-construct knowledge. The coach brings the sport-specific knowledge and the athlete has the knowledge of disability and their own needs and limitations. In this way, coaching is inspiring and continuously developing, and the sports participant is actively involved and engaged in their own training process.

**The Human Rights model**, relying on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), offers a powerful rationale for uncovering and addressing inequality in sport. This meta-model builds on the social model but sees opportunities as rights. It is everyone's right to participate in sport on an equal basis with others and to be empowered to make decisions and choose for themselves. In this way, sports clubs must provide inclusive policies and practices to support the participation of PWD, as well as helping their coaches to create more inclusive and high-quality coaching environments. We could say this is a whole-club approach in which inclusion takes place at various levels, such as sports club management and policies or coaching practice. However, a limitation of this model is that being included in the sport does not mean that people are not excluded by attitudes or do not feel marginalised. (Townsend et al. 2015.)



### 3.3 Disability sports movements

Community sports programmes /clubs provide recreational or competitive opportunities for their participants with disabilities who wish to take part in a sport or other physical activity. These sports clubs play an important role in their participants' lives by providing stepping stones to participating at higher levels in international competitions, while those wishing to stay local or just wishing to be more active are also supported. See Appendix C on eligibility and classification for disability sport competitions.

From a grassroots participant's point of view it does not always matter how disability sports are organised in your club or at local level. For instance, sports can be practised with the organisation's rules, or conversely the group's coach or participants can create the routine themselves. It is possible to include competitive elements into recreational activities. Annual amateur competitions and shows are great for increasing participants' motivation, self-confidence and experience. An amateur

competition like this can be very small as well, with every competitor awarded a diploma or other honorary award. Even if participants with disabilities do not aspire to compete, it is important to give opportunities for all participants to take part in the club's annual shows and other occasions. However, when we talk about participation in formal competitions, we must think about eligibility and classification.

**Classification** is a process in which a single group of entities or units are ordered into a number of smaller groups or classes based on observable properties that they have in common. Classification in sports competitions increases fairness and promotes participation. It aims to minimise the impact of an impairment on athletes' performance, and contributes to the safeguarding of integrity and credibility of competitions (Tweedy and Vanlandewijck, 2009). For the detailed classification and divisioning rules and groups, see Appendix C.

### Paralympics

Sport for PWD has over 100 years of history; however, after World War it was widely introduced as additional rehabilitation option for veterans and civilians who had been injured. Paralympic sports evolved from rehabilitation to recreational and then to competitive sports. The values of the Paralympic Movement focus on athlete-centredness, and emphasise athletes' courage, determination, inspiration as role models and role as pioneers for inclusion, diversity and equality. The movement aims to challenge stereotypes, create a shift in attitudes, break down socially built barriers and fight against discrimination towards persons with disabilities.

### Virtus

Virtus World Intellectual Impairment Sport, formerly called INAS or International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability, governs the eligibility of athletes with an intellectual impairment, elite competition and sports development. Their aim is to advocate for inclusion in sport and build elite pathways for more athletes with an intellectual impairment to compete at the highest levels of international sport. Virtus is a founding member of the International Paralympic Committee and has some involvement in the Paralympic movement.

### Special Olympics

SO is the one of largest sports movements for people with intellectual disabilities and offers all year-round activities and training in several different projects. Its vision is to help athletes' inclusion in larger society, where they are accepted and given opportunities to become useful and productive citizens. The Special Olympics is committed to inclusion, respect and dignity and determined to build accepting communities with family members, employees, coaches, other volunteers, fans and athletes. Special Olympics promotes healthy lives for people with intellectual disabilities, energetic lives through sport and physical activities, good nutrition and encouragement for athletes to achieve and show their personal bests.

### Sports Union for Athletes with Down Syndrome

As athletes with Down syndrome generally do not have the same functional abilities as competitors with other intellectual disabilities, SU-DS promotes sport for athletes with Down syndrome and strive to open the world of competitive sporting opportunities for them.

### Deaflympics

Deaflympics, launched in 1924, is the second oldest multi-sport event in the world and is recognised by the International Olympic Committee but exclusively organised by the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf. The mission of the movement is to cherish the value of the spirit of the movement where athletes strive to reach the pinnacle of competition by embracing *Equality through sports* (Per ludos aequalitas).

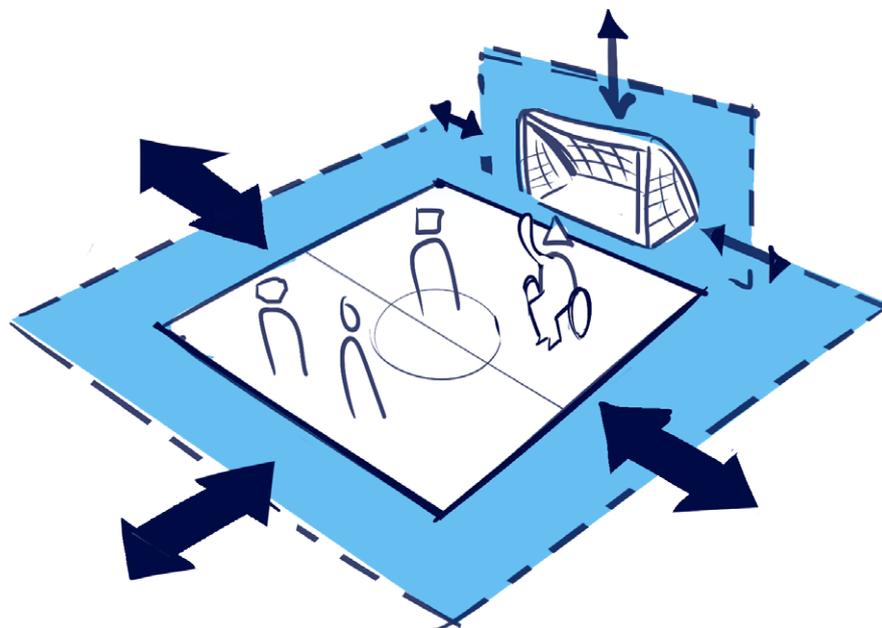
### World Transplant Games Federation

The World Transplant Games Federation organises sports events for athletes to connect with others and encourage them to be fit and active whilst celebrating their return to health. The aims are to encourage transplant recipients to lead active and healthy lifestyles, whilst raising awareness of the importance and benefits of organ donation.

### More information and links

- International Paralympic Committee's updated a terminology guide: IPC guide to Para and IPC terminology, January 2021 [https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/IPC%20Guide%20to%20Para%20and%20IPC%20Terminology\\_0.pdf](https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/IPC%20Guide%20to%20Para%20and%20IPC%20Terminology_0.pdf)
- International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity webpage <https://ifapa.net/>

## 4. Everyone can participate



### 4.1 How to start

Before you start, it might be interesting to know how inclusive your club already is. Do the inclusion check. The Welcome to sport campaign was launched in the Netherlands in January 2022 to challenge sports providers to start a conversation about the value of an inclusive and welcoming sports environment. The campaign is being carried out on behalf of the Sports and Exercise for Everyone alliance and the Ministry

of Health, Welfare and Sport. The aim of the alliance is to make the professional field aware of the possibilities and obstacles that exist to participate in sports and exercise due to a person's age, physical or mental health, ethnic background, sexual orientation or social position. Original statements can be found on the campaign website <https://www.weeswelkomindesport.nl/meedoen/>.

**Do the inclusion check. Are you curious about how your club is doing? Answer the following 10 statements with either “agree” or “disagree”.**

1. The term “inclusion” fits my club.
2. There are members with diverse backgrounds (i.e. gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation) in my club.
3. The various competencies of our staff (directors, trainers/coaches, volunteers) are comparable with the needs of our members.
4. The club acknowledges that there are potential members who are not yet taking part in sports. Their wishes, needs and obstacles are taken into consideration.
5. My club provides a hospitable environment so that everyone feels welcome.
6. My club has included diversity, a positive sports culture and a safe sports climate in the policy.
7. Extra help or support (such as adjusted membership rates) are provided to give everyone the opportunity to participate.
8. Sports facilities used by my club are easily accessible for everyone.
9. My club is easily accessible in terms of transportation (by car, public transport).
10. The club offers fun and pleasant sporting experiences for everyone.

**Figure 3.** Do the Inclusion check. Modified from <https://www.weeswelkomindesport.nl/meedoen/>

There are multiple ways to offer sports for PWD. They can be included in already existing sports activities or new adaptive activities for PWD can be created. Explore the possibilities first.

The SEDY2 project collected best practices in terms of promoting participation in sports on the community and institutional levels of the Social Ecological Model (individual, interpersonal, institutional, community and policy level). The best practices report (Pimenta, 2022) can be found on the Inholland University [SEDY2 project website](#).

In the Netherlands, an [8-step plan](#) is used to organise adapted sports in a new sports club (Appendix D).

## 4.2 Finding coaches and volunteers

Lack of qualified coaches and volunteers are the biggest hindrances to launching or maintaining activities for PWD in both Finland and the Netherlands (see Appendix A and B). This issue was also recognised in the SEDY2 focus groups.

Extra coaches are not necessarily needed if PWDs are welcomed into existing activities in a mainstream setting. People with disabilities should also be given an opportunity to participate in sports in other roles than those of athlete or participant. They bring qualities and unique gifts that sports clubs and their respective communities can benefit from. However, PWD are an underutilised resource for the voluntary movement. In Finland only 10% of mainstream sports clubs report that they have volunteers or coaches with a disability (Appendix B; Saari, 2021).

It is advisable to start looking for a coach from within the club. Is there already a coach in the club who would be interested in becoming involved in existing activities or a special group? A parent of a member already in the club might turn out to be

skilled in a sport and eager to start coaching an adapted sports group, especially if some support is provided. Clubs often have plenty of members, so you should take advantage of this potential. If they do not yet have proper training or skills, they can be encouraged to participate in coach training or attend other informal training. (See Chapter 4.3, Education and training).

The best ways to find a new coach from outside the club is via universities and vocational schools, municipalities, the disability community and other sports clubs. Many health and welfare study programmes work with PWD. A few examples would be physiotherapy, physical education and rehabilitation training programmes, and other sports-related programmes, just to name a few. It is recommended to reach out to students/ interns in these fields when setting up adapted sports activities, as many degrees include job placements in their study programmes. For instance, in Finland and at the Inholland University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, students receive study credits by acting as personal buddies (PAPAI) for youth with disabilities. For more information about the PAPAI programme, visit the Inholland University [SEDY2 project website](#).

Athletes with disabilities can work as coaches or be trained to become assistant coaches or peer supports. There are several benefits of getting PWD involved in running activities themselves. It can be a start for a career in sports and an important job or volunteer opportunity for this person. As role models, they show that more diverse participation in sports is possible. Moreover, they bring their networks with them.

It is also possible to establish a training group together with another club. Cooperation between two or more sports clubs could either focus on one or combine several different sports in the form of a multi-sport club.

**Rovaniemi multi-sport try-outs (FINLAND)**

Rovaniemi is a 60,000-inhabitant city up in the North of Finland, in Lapland. Five different sports (judo, track & field, floorball, gymnastics and football) with their respective sports clubs launched a multi-sport course for youth with disabilities. They published a calendar for the whole spring term. It contains the name of the sport, where and when it takes place, and detailed information for newcomers, such as how to prepare for the try-outs. Each sport is offered four times for a 10 € fee. The participant can choose if they wish to try only one or several sports. The adapted sports try-out course is organised in cooperation with the municipal adapted physical activity instructor and local sports clubs.

**'Ik neem je mee' (THE NETHERLANDS)**

'Ik neem je mee' (I'm taking you with me) is a Dutch participation programme to link someone to a sports ambassador/buddy who helps and motivates them to take up a sport. Currently there are already 190 sports ambassadors who want to help. Based on the registrations, the programme brings ambassadors and non-athletes into contact with each other, first online, later offline. The programme organisation supports the sports ambassadors where necessary and gives tips and advice when desired. The organisation can also help the ambassador in finding a suitable sports club, in collaboration with the sports clubs.

## 4.3 Education and training

Sports coaches are widely recognised at the highest level of sports policy as having a key role in achieving important sporting and societal outcomes. The education, learning and development of disability coaches is often neglected (ParaCoach, 2020). Although sports-specific technical knowledge is usually provided by respective national sports federations or Paralympic committees, if not, coaches for PWD need to acquire knowledge through and rely more often on **informal ways of learning**. Here are some examples you could also do or get engaged in with.

The most important way is to **learn from your athletes**. No two athletes are the same and no two disabilities are the same. Knowing your athlete contributes to the coaching process as they have all the knowledge about their disability and they can tell you about their physical capabilities, mobility capacity and preferred training practices. Athletes, even younger athletes, can provide sufficient help and advice on advanced technical and medical knowledge about their impairment (Wareham et al., 2017). A strong coach-athlete relationship is vital to the athlete's success and for the coach to acquire specific coaching knowledge.

**Mentoring** allows mentees to gain valuable information, learn roles and responsibilities and pass on extensive hands-on learning opportunities for new coaches (Cushion, 2006). Multiple mentors could provide opportunities to learn from the best, improve individual coaching styles and behaviours and include other professionals involved with the athletes to gain numerous perspectives and further knowledge (Fairhurst et al., 2016).

Participation in **Communities of Practice (CoPs)** have the potential to provide many opportunities for learning (Cassidy et al., 2006). In CoPs, coaches are engaged in social learning through

social interaction, discussions and active participation (Wenger, 1998). Coaches gather together to learn about their practice by asking and sharing ideas, exploring issues and solving everyday work/coaching problems. Through this, coaches learn from each other and learn together and take control of their learning process, enhancing their motivation for continued learning (Lauer and Dieffenbach, 2012).

**Non-formal learning** is an intentionally chosen optional form of learning that takes place outside certified coach education programmes or training (Leeder et al., 2021). These non-formal learning situations are considered as a type of continuing professional development which could include disability awareness courses, disability sports training, workshops, conferences on designated topics and interventions. These are just some brief examples of what these non-formal learning opportunities may include. As you may need some country-specific context (for example safeguarding courses), or be looking for something in your native language, you should always check what

local representatives of various disability sports movements have to offer.

**Disability Awareness courses** normally help in understanding how to deliver inclusive sports sessions for PWD, introduce you to the STEP (or TREE) model for adapting your activities and include local legislation. There are also more general courses that do not focus on the sporting context but describe the most common disabilities with easily understandable language and tips for practitioners from any field, for example communication.

**Special Olympics** coaches may already be familiar with SO's own learning platform which offers access to several free online modules. For example, Introduction to Intellectual Disabilities provides definitions for understanding and offers strategies to be able to communicate more effectively with athletes. The SO Unified Sports coaching course provides the tools to coach in an inclusive team and information on how to recruit athletes and achieve success.

### Opportunities for sports coaches (THE NETHERLANDS)

**The Special Heroes Campus** is a platform for professionals who are committed to promote a healthy lifestyle for PWD. The platform provides sports and exercise activities, six different training courses, tip cards and more! More information (in Dutch): <https://www.specialheroescampus.nl/>

**The Academy for volunteers and Coaches in Sports** from NOC\*NSF offers over 40 different training courses, including training courses such as: Athletes with intellectual disabilities, Athletes with a visual impairment and Adapted sports, how do you do that? More information (in Dutch): <https://nocnsf.nl/opleidingen>

Gehandicaptensport Nederland offers multiple training courses. The educational program Sports Leader 3 for PWD is offered at different educational institution for intermediate vocational education and for goalball and boccia specific coach programs are being offered. The organization also offers two-hour webinars about inclusion for municipalities and presentations about projects concerning sports participation for PWD. For more information (in Dutch): <https://www.gehandicaptensport.nl/professionals/opleidingen>

In Finland, a volunteer, trainer, or coach in a sports club can get a start on disability sports in a two-hour webinar organised by the Finnish Paralympic Committee. It is also possible to order a practical workshop to further supplement the topics of the webinar. Both online webinars and practical workshops come with a small fee. There are five themes:

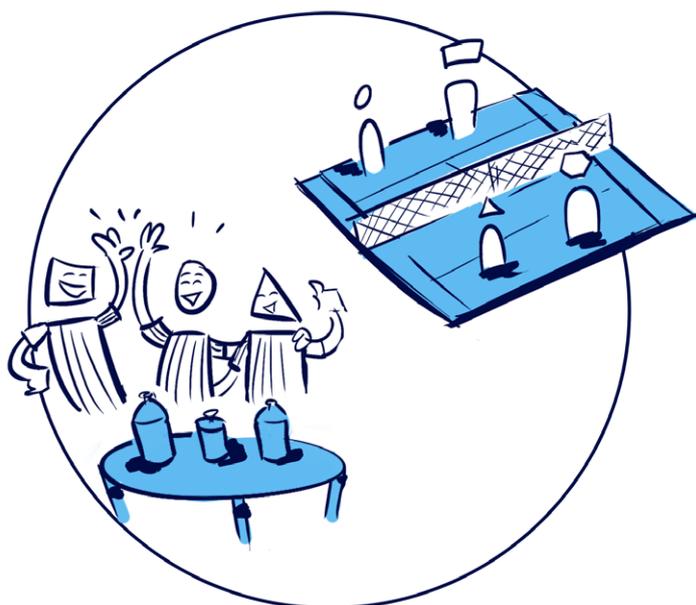
**Open doors** focuses on need-to-know facts, such as designing the service, marketing and cooperation.

**We are all different** introduces typical challenges and solutions in sports participation if the person has a disability or impairment especially in the following areas: mobility, seeing, hearing and understanding.

**How to include and adapt** presents pedagogical tools for adapting and modifying activities and how to run a well-organised and structured session. **Coaching in Parasport** familiarises the participant with different Parasports and disability sports movements, as well as Parasport classification. **Accessibility** is a short-cut to inclusive design in sports construction and facilities, introduces key facts and laws, and shows examples of how accessibility can be put into practice.

## 4.4 Designing activities

Before starting the group, it is important to determine who the activity is targeted for. Is it originally a mainstream group which is being redesigned into an open group for all, or is it an adapted sports group for certain disabilities? Does it have a recreational or competitive focus? Generally, in the beginning when the group is most likely quite small, it may be a good idea to keep the group open to all abilities, genders and ages. As the group and programme grows, it may be possible to create separate adapted sports groups for those who want to compete or improve their skills in specific sports. At this stage, it may be worth considering the need for age and/or gender specific groups. Our advice is to first ask the participant what sports they are interested in doing and where and with whom (mainstream or separate group) they wish to do sports.



### Open activity in a mainstream setting

#### **Kokkola Golf for All (FINLAND)**

Kokkola is a small town on the west coast of Finland. Kokkola Golf Club, with some 800 members, has one of the oldest golf courses in Finland. It has organised adapted golf since 2017. Every Monday it holds open doors for newcomers, and people with disabilities are welcomed.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTps-nhy4\\_I&list=PLORgb7zDxq8M3bT1TFs0lGtxq0v2djS-L&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTps-nhy4_I&list=PLORgb7zDxq8M3bT1TFs0lGtxq0v2djS-L&index=5)

Open activity, as described in the second chapter (Inclusion spectrum) allows anyone to join in the same activity. Participants with and without disabilities can be training at the same time. Sometimes open activity just happens without any special actions from the coaching side. PWD simply come along with their peers and there is nothing special in that, as seems to be the case in the Netherlands (see Appendix A). It can be as simple as a coach talking to the participants and asking what their specific needs are. However, in most cases it is useful to attend to disability awareness and adapted sports training.

Running open activities should not be a problem for an experienced coach. It is simply good coaching. However, when the activity is well-planned and has enough staff and the right conditions (see Chapter 5.2, Accessibility), it is easier for a newcomer with or without a disability to join. After-school activities, where all classmates, with or without disability gather to play adapted ball games is a good example of an open activity.



### Adapted sports group

#### Oriveden Ponnistus adapted skiing sports club (FINLAND)

Oriveden Ponnistus is a medium-sized multi-sport club which offers Nordic skiing, volleyball, weightlifting, orienteering, track & field and gymnastics for its members in a small 9,000-inhabitant municipality in Central Finland. The club has launched an adapted skiing group for children and youth with disabilities. A participant can choose to stay in the adapted group or participate in a mainstream training group.

<https://youtu.be/69HTGd9eQ0I>

An adapted sports group can be reserved for individuals with disabilities only. This is the traditional way of organising disability sports, for example, a football team for Special Olympics or wheelchair basketball players training together as a team. In some cases, a separate group serves as easy access to sports. One must not underestimate the power of peer support. It can be a good option to start a new activity, for instance, for beginners with similar abilities. However, all too often people with disabilities are regarded as needing segregated activity only because of their medical condition, and are thus not given equal opportunities to practise sports with their non-disabled peers.

### Recreational or competitive activity?

#### Aisti Sport (FINLAND)

Aisti ("sense" in English) Sport is a multi-sport club, located in Vantaa, near Helsinki. It is specialised in vision-impaired sports (blind sports), offering try-outs for newcomers and opportunities to train in goalball, ice hockey and football. It was established in 2017 and currently has 60 active members of whom the majority have a visual impairment. Open doors programme video from the rehearsals of football for vision-impaired:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asw99NgUuNE&list=PLORgb7zDxg8M3bT1TFs0lGtxg0v2djS-L&index=4>

When starting the activity, it is important to acknowledge why it was formed in the first place. As explained in the first section, PWD can take part in either open group and mainstream activities or join a separate adapted sports group. Both options enable both recreational and competitive activity. Creating competitive opportunities for a Para-athlete can of course happen in already existing mainstream groups. An adapted sports group can also be formed for participants in certain disability-specific activities, such as Special Olympics or goalball. Competitive paths are organised under international disability sports movements (See Chapter 3.3 and Appendix C) and their respective national organisations. However, sometimes Parasport programmes can be too

competitive and lead to a bad experience for new participants. Make sure that the level of challenge (is it beginner level or for more advanced participants?) is made clear for participants.

#### **Futebol Clube do Porto (PORTUGAL)**

FCP is a mainstream sports club, one of the biggest in Portugal, with several sports departments, including the department of “Adapted Sport”. Its headquarters are in Oporto city and they receive athletes from all districts. FCP have their own facilities for training, assuring all needs for PWD and specific sports like boccia. The club also uses the municipalities’ facilities for some of their training sessions. The Department of Adapted Sport has a coach and a sport technical assistant, specialised in sports for PWD. Families of athletes are welcome to be involved. The club’s main goal is competition at high levels: time and resources are also invested in promoting the sport for PWD in society.

The Adapted Sport department of FCP is composed of basketball (ID); boccia; football (ID and cerebral palsy); futsal; goalball; swimming (all disabilities); table tennis (all disabilities). Multidisciplinary and specialised teams accompany all athletes as they participate in mainstream sport. <https://www.fcporto.pt/pt/modalidades/desporto-adaptado>

## 4.5 Advertising and marketing

### **Social media campaign (THE NETHERLANDS)**

We have had successful experiences with social media campaigns (Facebook and Instagram) to find new members for sports teams. For both boccia and wheelchair rugby we have made a short movie clip of 1-2 minutes in which we showed the ‘awesomeness’ of the sport. Also, we explained for whom (with what kind of disability) the sport is specifically great. In the targeted communication we focused specifically on the people we wanted to reach to get involved in the specific sports programme. In the following you can find the rugby video:

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jantine-van-der-vlist-0b086810\\_teamnl-rolstoelrugby-is-op-zoek-naar-nieuwe-activity-6846745785472688128-NMXA](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jantine-van-der-vlist-0b086810_teamnl-rolstoelrugby-is-op-zoek-naar-nieuwe-activity-6846745785472688128-NMXA)

Finding and recruiting participants is among the five largest hindrances to launching and maintaining activities for PWD in sports clubs both in the Netherlands (see Appendix A) and Finland (see Appendix B). In some countries, such as Finland, the long distances are partly to blame. PWD may not live close enough to those sports clubs that already organise inclusive activities. Then there is history. Traditionally, disability sports used to be separated from mainstream sports clubs and the process of integrating disability sports under their respective national sports-specific organisations is ongoing. If PWD do not know about existing activities in sports clubs, how can they be expected to come along? Sport can also blame itself. Parasports are strongly associated with competitions and medals in the media. There has not been much room for stories about fun, friendships and participation in the context of sports for PWD in mainstream sports clubs.

### **Multi-sport Days (THE NETHERLANDS)**

In the Netherlands, Gehandicaptensport Nederland is responsible for three projects that aim specifically at different disabilities; Zichtbaar Sportief (Visual impairment), Ongehoord Sportief (hearing impairment) and MATP (profound intellectual and multiple disabilities). On multi-sport days, people from all ages can try different kind of sports, team sports, individual sports, adapted sports and regular sports. Local trainers and students are invited to participate and learn what it is like to do sports with a specific disability and see how easy it is to start activities with PWD. Aftermovie Multisportdag Zwolle 2021 (no English subtitles) on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKs6VhnDBTo>

Marketing the group to current club members and the clientele outside the club can be done by handing out different types of advertisements and taking part in events to increase the group's visibility. Special schools, day-care centres, disability organisations and other disability-specific clubs are good places to reach potential future participants. Build up a local network. Be patient: it takes time to build up trust and establish a good reputation.

### **Local APA instructors in municipalities (FINLAND)**

At the local level, all municipalities offer sports services for their residents, including PWD. In 2019, there were nearly 400 municipal sports workers dealing with adapted physical activity, of whom 41 were full-time APA instructors (Ala-Vähälä et al., 2021). Municipal APA instructors serve as an important link between public sports services and the voluntary field, such as local sports clubs. They can help sports clubs to launch activities for youth with disabilities by finding accessible facilities, giving subsidies, organising try-out events, making connections and providing training and marketing activities via their networks. Information about Finnish adapted physical activity networks has been collected in English on the website of the Finnish Society of Sport Sciences. <https://www.sportscience.fi/adapted-physical-activity.html>

In every country there are plenty of disability organisations which offer services and peer support for their members or target groups. In most cases they are specialised in one target group such as autism, CP or visual impairment. They can provide medical knowledge about the disability or impairment in question, special equipment, social services and financing activity. They are good resources for special know-how for a new coach or trainer. Their networks are valuable when trying to reach the target group. Municipal adapted physical activity instructors in Finland (see Appendix B) and community sports coaches in the Netherlands (see Appendix A) are valuable resources because they can serve as intermediators and pass information between the disability community and sports clubs.

Remember to supply information on your activity in a variety of formats. Use social media. Make sure that your messaging and information meets

the communication needs of everyone within the community so that the target audience can access, understand and engage with the information you are sharing. For instance, ensure that your website is compliant with the European Web Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Use photos and pictures which show a variety of participants, and language, images and designs which show that they are welcome and which they can relate to.

Search engines, such as the Portuguese Paralympic Committee's [Map of Sport Inclusion](#) can facilitate PWD accessing sports. Some countries have also created different hobby finder tools, for example "Löydä oma seura" [Find your club] is used in Finland, Uniek Sporten in the Netherlands and ParaMe in Sweden. They allow searching for clubs offering activities for PWD. This also helps clubs to inform participants, sports federations and other related organisations of what they offer. The SEDY2 report on Finnish, Dutch and Swedish hobby finder tools (Ketola and Jaakkola, 2021) is available on the Inholland University [SEDY2 project website](#).

#### **Paralympic Challenge video project (LITHUANIA)**

The Paralympic Challenge project was designed to introduce the country to Paralympic sports and the faces of Paralympic sports. The goal has been achieved with the help of Olympic sports stars, who are challenged by Para-athletes in their Paralympic sports competitions. For example, well-known basketball playing brothers Darjušas and Kšyštofas Lavrinovičiai accepted the challenge from wheelchair basketball players Kęstutis and Vytautas Skučas, and javelin thrower Ramūnas Verbavičius competed with Olympian Liveta Jasiūnaitė. This project was published in the national media. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6PBXiGdMehZHvmm2gYpEAQ/playlists>

#### **More information and links**

- **Special Olympics** courses for coach and trainers <https://learn.specialolympics.org/>
- **Youth Sport Trust** also offers free online courses in English in various topics such as autism in physical education and sport, resources for inclusion, adapting tools for profound and multiple learning disabilities <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/resources>
- **Sport Integrity Australia** offers inclusive coaching and other online courses <https://elearning.sportintegrity.gov.au>
- **German Sport University with the German aid agency (GIZ)**, sport-for-development
  - materials [www.sport-for-development.com/topic-collection](http://www.sport-for-development.com/topic-collection)
  - workshops <https://www.sport-for-development.com/learning-lab>
- **Online education by the SEDY2 project** is targeted for newcomers and volunteers who may have no prior experience of training or coaching adapted sports. For more information about the online education from the SEDY2 project, visit the Inholland University [SEDY2 project website](#).



## 5. Everyone is unique

There are some special issues that sports people should be aware of if you wish to ensure that PWD in your sports eventually have the same rights and access to decision-making and a sense of belonging. Find out how disability services such as transportation, personal assistance and special equipment in your country and municipality are organised. Get to know about your national accessibility regulations and sports-specific guidelines.



### 5.1 Disability services

PWD name lack of transportation, personal assistance, suitable equipment and sporting options as the largest hindrances to participation in sports or physical activity (Saari, 2021). Support needs are always individual. A participant with physical impairments may need special aids or sports-specific equipment such as a sports wheelchair for dance or ball games, a hand bike, a sledge for hockey or a support frame for skating. They may need accessible transportation or a support person to get into and out of the bus or vehicle. A personal assistant or helping hands are also needed to ensure safe travel, to carry special equipment or assist in the dressing room before and after training. Accessible transportation options should be available and this information made known to participants.

In many countries, disability services such as transportation, special equipment and personal assistance are generally applied for and granted by social services in municipalities. In principle there are laws which aim to help citizens to continue to live independently at home and participate in society and compensate for extra costs for sports equipment. In practice, policies can differ greatly between municipalities, especially regarding sports participation.

With youth, transportation can be an extra challenge. For instance, in Finland, youth with disabilities are often expected to be transported and assisted by their parents. In Portugal, municipal programmes can support transportation to sports facilities. They are usually linked to schools, clubs or national disability organisations. There are some rare sports clubs that have their own adapted transport services in partnerships between disability organisations.

#### **Special Heroes (THE NETHERLANDS)**

The Special Heroes foundation facilitates the organisation of transport to and from sport locations for team players with a disability. This can be used for training and competition locations only, with a maximum of 4,000 km per year and a contribution of 0.23 euro per km. There are certain conditions to be able to make use of this, for example:

- You do not have your own transport
- You are unable (or it's very difficult) to use other means of transport to practise this sport,
- You are not able to transfer/travel on your own or you are travelling with an extra (sports) wheelchair and/or sports equipment
- You have no objection to travelling with several other participants to training sessions and competitions.

More information (in Dutch): <https://specialheroes.nl/extra-services/vervoersvoorziening/>

**Adapted sports equipment**

Individually tailored adapted sports equipment gives the participant an opportunity to maximise their potential. However, adapted sports equipment, for example hand bikes, skiing sledges or dancing wheelchairs, is expensive. As a sports services provider you should list and describe what equipment is available and provide information on renting opportunities.

New rental programmes have been developed to give participants an opportunity to try out sports with adapted sports equipment to see if the sport or the equipment is suitable and fun. In addition, in the Netherlands the [Esther Vergeer foundation](#) has a special programme for youth with disabilities who want to start playing tennis. They can apply for an adapted sports wheelchair to start their training. [Challenged Athlete Foundation](#) is an international organisation which gives grants for athletes who struggle with the high costs of adapted sports equipment.

**SOLIA rental services (FINLAND)**

There are five regional centres renting adapted sports equipment under the SOLIA programme, run by the Paralympic Committee. Rental opportunity gives the participant a chance to try the equipment, document the try-out with their physiotherapist and then start an application process with the municipality. The rental system can also be used for temporary purposes, such as a family renting an alpine sledge for a week's skiing holiday or a schoolteacher renting ice hockey sledges for the whole class during winter sports. In addition to SOLIA, there are other national or local rental services for recreation and physical activity. They all have been gathered under one website (in Finnish): <https://www.valineet.fi/>.

**Uniek Sporten rental services (THE NETHERLANDS)**

Uniek Sporten Rental offers possibilities to rent adapted sports equipment for a short period of time. This makes it easier for individuals to try a new sport because they don't need to buy (expensive) equipment right away. More information (in Dutch): <https://www.unieksporten.nl/hulpmiddelen>.

## 5.2 Accessibility

Inclusive design refers to environments that include as many people as possible. An accessible environment is functional, safe and pleasant for all its users, including people with disabilities. The concept of barrier-free access or environment is sometimes used to emphasise physical hindrances faced by people with disabilities. An inclusive experience or a visit to a sports facility is formed by two overlapping chains. The first chain relates to the facility user and begins at the user's front door. The goal is smooth access to the facility and accessible operation within it. The second chain covers the construction process from land use planning to implementation. It is therefore not sufficient to react on a case-by-case basis: clubs must prepare in advance by planning for most potential needs which may arise. (Kilpelä and VAU 2013.)

When we think about physical accessibility in sports facilities, people most often think about people who use wheelchairs or more generally people with assistive devices (mobility). In addition, barriers should be looked at from the perspectives of vision, hearing and understanding. Moreover, various user groups, such as athletes or participants, coaches and spectators or visitors, must be taken into consideration.

An accessible visual environment provides good lighting as well as contrasts that facilitate perception. An accessible hearing environment has good acoustics, functioning sound reproduction and assistive technology for people with impaired hearing, such as an induction loop. Inclusively designed facilities are clear and easy to perceive and comprehend. Concrete issues to be considered in designing sports facilities include sports rules, signage and routes, structures, fixtures, physical activity and play equipment, the sound environment, lighting and safety.

An accessible and inclusive sports club may require a few physical adjustments to buildings. More than anything it needs some forward planning and continuing commitment. It is often the case that sports clubs use venues which are not under their control. The owner of the facility can be somebody else. In these situations, the organiser may have to use some temporary solutions, such as a transportable ramp.

There are three ways to identify accessibility problems: an official accessibility audit, hearings and reviews. An access audit, undertaken by a professional, is a good way to assess how inclusive your clubs is and what needs to be changed. The auditor should have some understanding about sports premises. If an access audit is not possible, you could involve some members or participants with disabilities to look and identify the biggest problems. Opinions from an average user, even if this person is a Para-athlete, are still not the same as an audit conducted by a trained auditor. Different kinds of accessibility check lists (see below) can also be used.

It is recommendable to make a description of the facilities on the website of the service provider. An accessibility description describes in detail how one can find accessible parking places, entrance, dressing rooms, toilets and other important facilities. It can also have information about lightning, signage and services such as cafes.

By providing as detailed information as possible, the person can themselves make up on their mind if they can participate or not, if they must have an assistant with them or not, if there is a spot for an assistance dog during training or not and what kind of assistive devices they might need to bring along. The most important accessibility information is the name and phone number of a person who can provide more information about facilities and environment. Remember, even small changes may have a significant impact on functionality. Some improvements require no more than a change in working methods (e.g. keeping walkways free) or very small investments (e.g. adding clothes hooks).

#### **Short checklist: Is your activity accessible physically?**

- Accessible parking place, close to the entrance, clearly signed
- Drop-off bay close to the main entrance
- Good lightning and contrast
- Accessible toilets, unisex
- Accessible changing room, unisex
- Clear walkways/corridors
- Spectator seating area
- Informative signage
- Ramps
- Public transport options

**Figure 4.** Short accessibility checklist. Finnish Paralympic Committee, 2021.

In addition to physical accessibility, social accessibility should also be taken into consideration. This is about feeling welcomed and accepted and getting equal services and support when needed (see Figure 3 ‘Do the Inclusion check’).

### 5.3 Financial issues

In general, PWD and their families are more likely to experience economic and social disadvantage than those without a disability (WHO and The World Bank, 2011). Disability may increase the risk of poverty and vice versa. Families with a member with a disability may struggle with finances, in which case, paying for an activity or a membership fee may not be a priority, although it is not unusual for hobbies to have a fee. In some cases, disability-specific groups might even cost more than the 'average' group, due to the need for additional assisting staff during the activities, specific coach training and the need for special adaptive sports equipment.

Participation for PWD does not have to be free of charge, but it should not be too expensive, either. The club can support disadvantaged participants, for instance by giving discounts or the club can provide a family membership so family and carers can join for the price of one. The fee should not form a threshold for participation.

Clubs can seek financial assistance to help start up their business, to help fund practices or for the group. They can seek sponsors or cooperation partners to cover the costs. If you are looking for financial assistance, you may start asking from your local Lions Club, Rotary Club or local companies. The European Union has various mechanisms to finance sports projects, the most important being Erasmus+ Sports projects.

Funding for sports clubs varies in different countries. In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) subsidises sports clubs in various development projects, including the promotion of inclusion. Finnish municipalities help sports clubs by giving both subsidies and discounts on facilities. In the Netherlands, sports clubs and federations can be financially supported in several ways, mainly through subsidies and funds. The national federation works with a sports incentive budget. Clubs or federations can

apply for sports promotion budget to strengthen, improve or renew sports offer for inclusive target groups. This budget can be used to promote sports activities, to purchase specific sports equipment for this target group or to set up collaboration with, for example, a rehabilitation centre, care facility, etc. There is also [a fund for families](#) which provides a yearly amount of money per child to take part in sports or cultural activities. In Portugal, some clubs and associations can apply to government and municipal funding programmes to receive financial support to promote sports for people with disabilities.

#### **The Johan Cruyff Foundation (THE NETHERLANDS)**

[The Johan Cruyff Foundation](#) is one of the larger foundations in the Netherlands concentrating on sports and disabilities. They invest in (new) sports for, predominantly, youth. They create special courts ('Cruyff Courts') in schools and in neighbourhoods to encourage children to move and play more. They invest in sports facilities and sports promotion, and offer talented children the opportunity to develop further through collaborations with sports federations and municipalities. Gehandicaptensport Nederland has a collaboration with the Johan Cruyff Foundation to develop boccia, goalball and wheelchair rugby.

#### **More information and links**

- Activity Alliance websites, Access for all – opening doors <https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/resources>
- Finnish Paralympic Committee's Accessible sporting event checklist [https://www.paralympia.fi/images/tiedostot/eske\\_fpc\\_accessible\\_sporting\\_event\\_checklist.pdf](https://www.paralympia.fi/images/tiedostot/eske_fpc_accessible_sporting_event_checklist.pdf)

## 6. Inclusion is an ongoing process

In the SEDY2 project we asked youth with disabilities, their parents and sports professionals their experiences of inclusion and exclusion in sports. According to them, sport does not meet their expectations and hopes. With this handbook we have tried to motivate mainstream sports clubs to open their doors for people with disabilities and thus help us to increase the number and quality of sporting opportunities for youth with disabilities.

The inclusion of people with disabilities is more than guaranteeing access to sports. It is about providing a range of choices to cater for people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities. It is about opportunities for equal participation in accordance with people's individual preferences, wishes and choices, including non-playing roles. For youth with disabilities inclusion in sport is about choices, opportunities and belonging. "Please ask us what we need, what we can do and what we like. Because only together we can make sports more inclusive!" (See The [SEDY2 Inclusion statement](#) at the Inholland website).

Inclusion is an ongoing process. It doesn't happen in a vacuum. The status of inclusion in sports reflects the general development and attitudes towards disability in society. National-level policies and practices go hand in hand with local development. Consequently, national and European-level anti-discrimination and pro-inclusion guidelines, policies and programmes can be useful tools in the promotion of inclusion in sports clubs.



Don't forget to measure. The Activity Alliance UK (2019) performance measurement and learning factsheet recommends first measuring what is crucial so that you know what you can learn and improve from. Collect numbers and customer satisfaction. Make sure your measurement links back to your strategic organisational aims. Benchmark against others to understand how you could improve. For instance, we know that approximately 15% of the world's population has some disability. Think how close to 15% you are with your members. Ask for opinions and ideas from your external partners, because they may find new aspects that you have not even thought about.

Finally, have patience. This is a long process. Always involve people with lived experience of disability in service and policy design. The more you get to know them, and they are valued stakeholders in your activities at all levels, the easier it becomes.



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# Appendices

## Appendix A. van Lindert, de Jonge, Gutter & van Kalmthout (2021)

### Integration of persons with a disability into mainstream sports clubs in the Netherlands

In 2018, the Dutch ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, along with its strategic partners the Netherlands Olympic Committee\* Dutch Sports Federation (NOC\*NSF), the Association for Sport and Municipalities (VSG) and the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG), signed the National Sports Agreement 'Sport unites the Netherlands' (*Nationaal Sport Akkoord, Sport Verenigt Nederland, 2019-2022, hereafter NSA*) (Ministerie van VWS, 2018). The partners formulated ambitions regarding six policy domains, one of which is 'Inclusive sport & physical activity' (*Inclusief sporten en bewegen*), which is relevant to disability sport. The overarching aim of this sub-agreement is to allow every Dutch person to have a lifelong enjoyment of sport and physical activity and to remove barriers people may face due to age, physical or mental health, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. The Mulier Institute monitors developments in the creation of policies and programmes that stem from this sub-agreement for the participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities (PWD).

An online survey was conducted among Dutch sports clubs in 2020, as part of this monitor. The surveyed sports clubs were part of a national research panel of sports clubs set up by the Mulier Institute. The panel is a representative sample (n=2,000) of all sports clubs in the Netherlands. 453 sports clubs participated in the survey (Gutter et al., 2021). The survey aimed to answer the following research questions:

- How and to what extent is sport for PWD organised and embedded in mainstream sports clubs?
- What factors hinder or stimulate the development, improvement, and structural embedding of sports activities for PWD in mainstream sports clubs?

The results were compared to a previous survey from 2018 (407 sports clubs) (Van Stam et al., 2018).

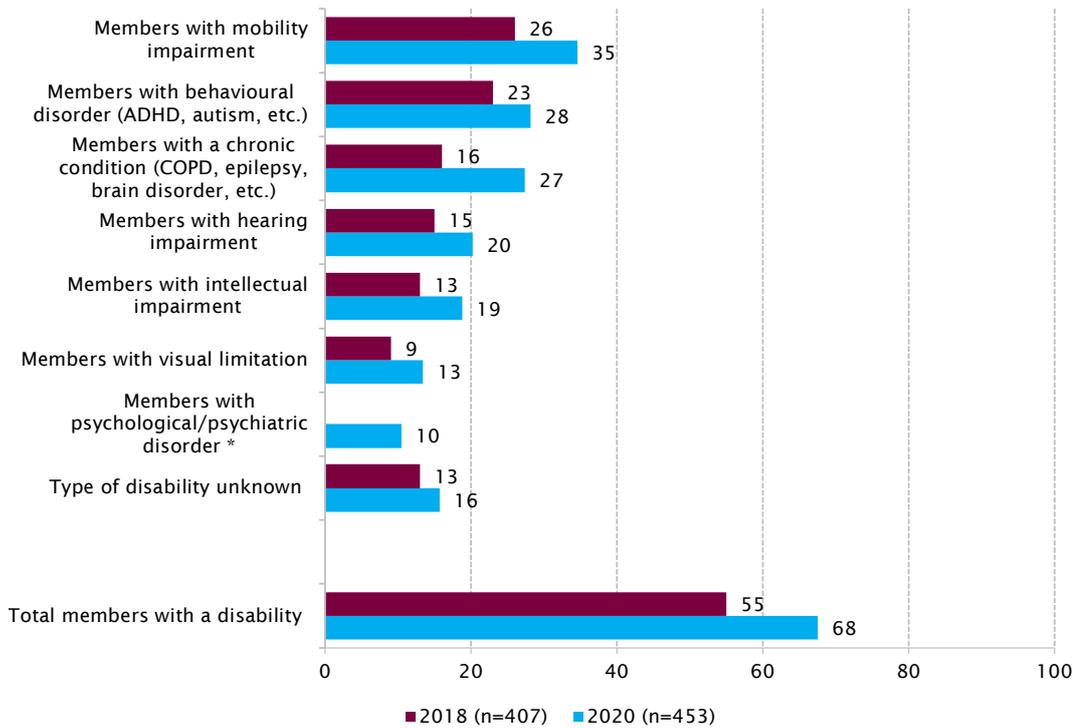
### Context

The Netherlands has 26,501 sports clubs, of which 23,500 are affiliated with NOC\*NSF through one of the 77 national sport federations (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021; NOC\*NSF, 2018). On average, sports clubs have 192 members. The average number of youth or adolescent members (under 18 years) is 62. Most of the sports clubs in the Netherlands are small: 57 percent have fewer than 100 members (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021). In terms of membership, the ten most practiced sports are football, fishing, tennis, golf, gymnastics, hockey, equestrian sports, swimming, athletics and volleyball (NOC\*NSF, 2018).

### Members with a disability

In 2020, 68 percent of Dutch sports clubs indicated that they had one or more members with a disability (figure 1). This is more than in 2018, when 55 percent of the clubs had one or more members with a disability. This increase is partly due to the addition of the answer option 'members with psychological or psychiatric problems' to the list of disabilities sports clubs could select. The increase was observed across all groups of people with disabilities, but we observed a strong increase in the percentage of sport clubs with one or more members with a chronic condition.

**Figure 1.** Percentage of sports club members with a disability in 2018 and 2020, in total and by type of disability (in percentages, multiple answers possible)



Source: Mulier Institute sports club research panel, 2018 and 2020 (Gutter et al., 2021; Van Stam et al., 2018).  
 \* In 2018, ‘members with psychological/psychiatric problems’ was not included in the list of answers.

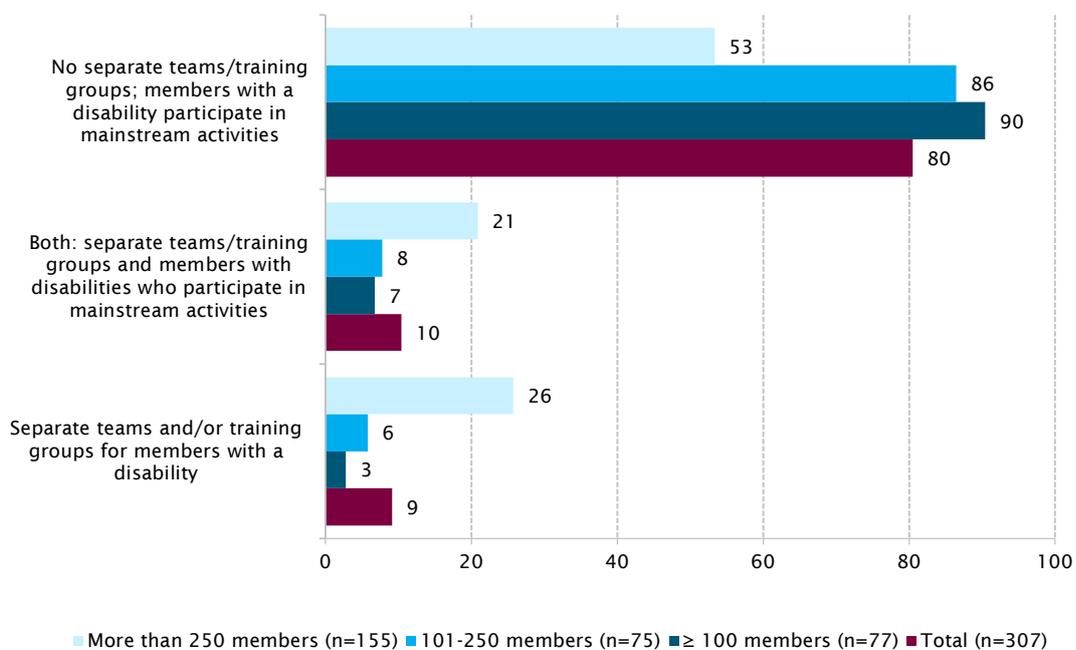
Larger sports clubs (> 250 members) more often had members with a disability than smaller sports clubs ( $\leq$  100 members) (75% and 64%, respectively, not in figure). Sports clubs with individual sports (74%) more often had members with a disability than clubs with team sports (66%) or duo sports (58%). A small number of sports clubs in the survey were clubs specifically for PWD. If these clubs are excluded from the total, the percentage of mainstream clubs that have members with a disability drops to 67 percent (not in figure).

86 percent of the mainstream sports clubs with members with a disability had one to ten members with a disability. 13 percent had 11 to 30 members with disabilities, and 1 percent had between 31 and 50.

**Activities and available expertise**

At most sports clubs that have members with disabilities (excluding disability specific clubs), members with a disability participated in the mainstream sports activities of the club (80%, figure 2). 9 percent of the sports clubs (excluding disability specific clubs) had separate teams or training groups for members with a disability. 10 percent of the sports clubs had both separate teams and training groups. Larger sports clubs (> 250 members) more often had separate teams or training groups for members with disabilities than smaller clubs.

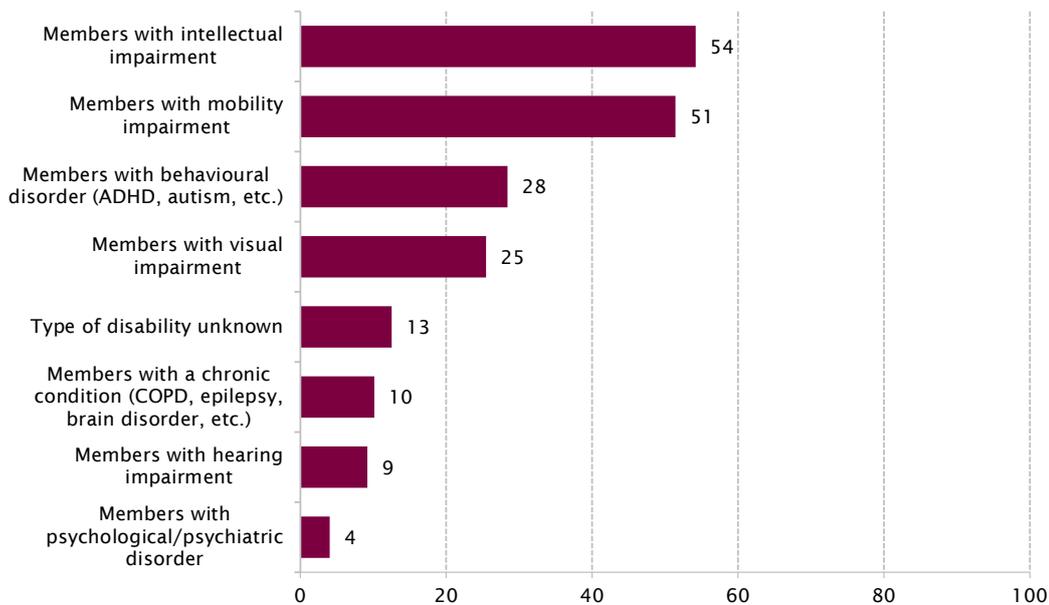
**Figure 2.** Sports activities offered at sports clubs with members with disabilities in 2020 (excluding disability specific sports clubs), in total and by total number of members (in percentages)



Source: Mulier Institute research panel sports clubs, 2020 (Gutter et al., 2021).

Approximately half of the sports clubs that indicated that they had separate teams or training groups for members with disabilities (excluding disability specific clubs) provided these activities specifically for people with intellectual disabilities or those with mobility limitations (see figure 3). This is similar to the 2018 results (Van Stam et al., 2018).

**Figure 3.** Separate teams/training groups offered by sports clubs with separate teams/training groups for members with a disability, by type of disability (in percentages, n=307)



Source: Mulier Institute sports clubs research panel, 2020 (Gutter et al., 2021).

Sports clubs that did not have a separate team or training group for members with a disability were asked to give a reason for this. Half of them (not in figure) reported that they only had a few members with a disability, which makes it easier for those members to participate in the mainstream activities. Half of them also reported that there are little to no adjustments needed for these members. 40 percent reported that members with a disability want to participate with the other members and 34 percent reported that they do as much as possible to ensure that members with a disability can participate in the mainstream activities. 10 percent had no specific reason for allowing members with a disability to participate in mainstream activities, inclusion simply occurs without intended actions.

#### Framework and other measures

The majority of the sports clubs with members with a disability had no specific framework or support for PWD (80%, excluding disability specific

clubs, not in figure). 14 percent had one or more qualified trainers/guides for members with a disability and 7 percent had one or more guides that could help with sports or other aspects, such as transportation or assistance with changing. In comparison to small or middle-sized sports clubs, large sports clubs (> 250 members) more often reported having qualified trainers/guides (34% versus 6% for sports clubs with 101-250 members and 9% for sports clubs with fewer than 100 members) and guides that can help with sports or other aspects (18% versus 6% for sports clubs with 101-250 members and 2% for sports clubs with fewer than 100 members).

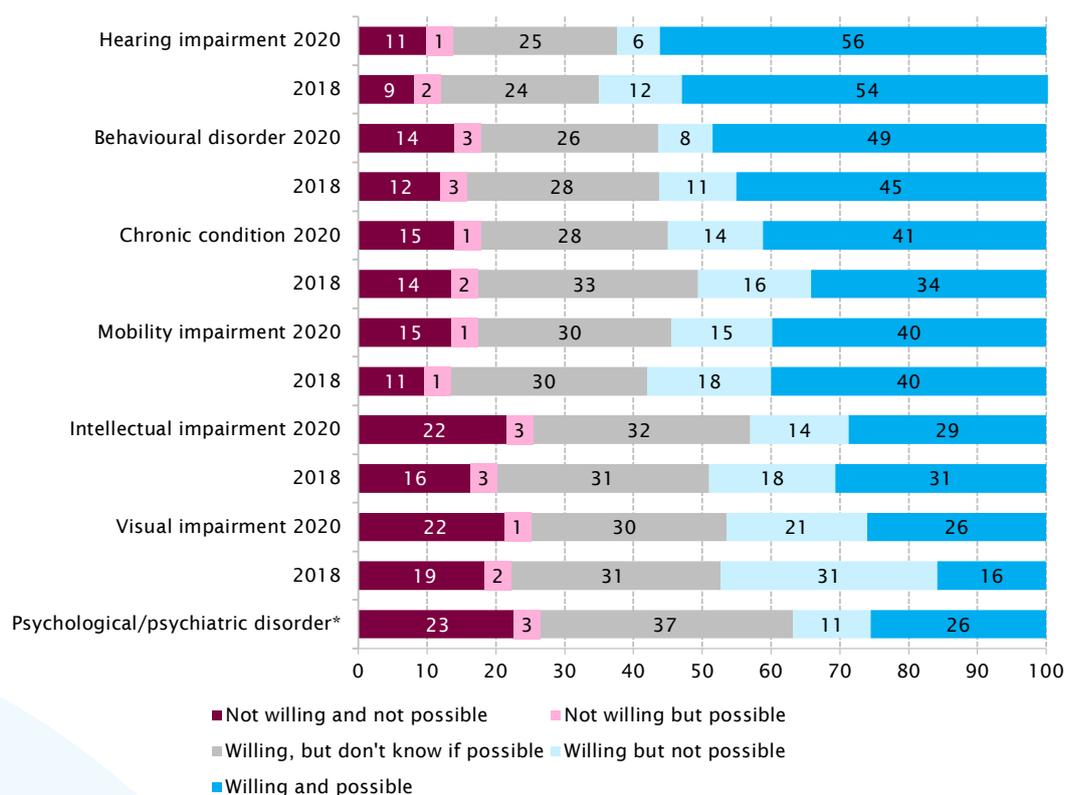
Two thirds of the sports clubs with members with a disability did not take any extra measures to adjust their activities for members with a disability (65%, not in figure). 12 percent adjusted the number of guides and 10 percent had adapted materials for sports and games. Larger sports clubs (> 250 members) had adapted materials for

sports and games and adjusted the number of guides more often than smaller clubs. 8 percent of the sports clubs reported trying to increase support among members or within the framework of the club. Another 8 percent reported trying to gain insight into the wishes and needs of members with a disability. 2 percent of the sports clubs with members with a disability reported having a host or hostess responsible for welcoming and helping members with a disability.

### Willingness and possibilities

92 percent of all sports clubs (with and without members with a disability) was willing to allow (more) people with at least one type of disability to participate in their sports club, regardless of the possibilities (not in figure). The willingness for all types of disabilities, with the exception of chronic illness, has slightly declined since 2018 (figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Willingness and possibilities among sports clubs, including disability sport clubs, to welcome members with a disability in 2020 (n=453) and 2018 (n=407) (in percentages)



Source: Mulier Institute sports club research panel, 2018 and 2020 (Gutter et al., 2021; Van Stam et al., 2018).  
 \* In 2018, 'members with psychological/psychiatric problems' was not included in the list of answers.

Approximately three quarters of all the sports clubs indicated that they were willing and saw possibilities to welcome at least one of the groups of PWD into their sports club (74%, not in figure). Almost one out of ten sports clubs were willing and saw possibilities to allow (more) people with all types of disabilities to participate in their sports club (8%). The percentage of sports clubs that is willing to allow (more) participation PWD in the sports club, but isn't sure if that is possible, differs by type of disability, ranging from 25 to 37 percent (figure 4).

Sports clubs that already have members with a disability were willing and saw opportunities for people with almost all types of disabilities to participate (with the exception of psychological/psychiatric problems) more often than sports clubs without members with a disability. Societal responsibilities of being accessible for PWD are a reason for almost half of all sports clubs (excluding disability specific clubs) to allow (more) PWD to participate (49%, not in figure). 36 percent of the sports clubs reported that it would be a possibility for membership growth for the sports club and 22 percent said that athletes with a disability already belonged to their target group. 12 percent follows the ambitions outlined in the local sports agreement. Two fifths of the sports clubs did not know what a reason would be to allow (more) PWD to participate (22%).

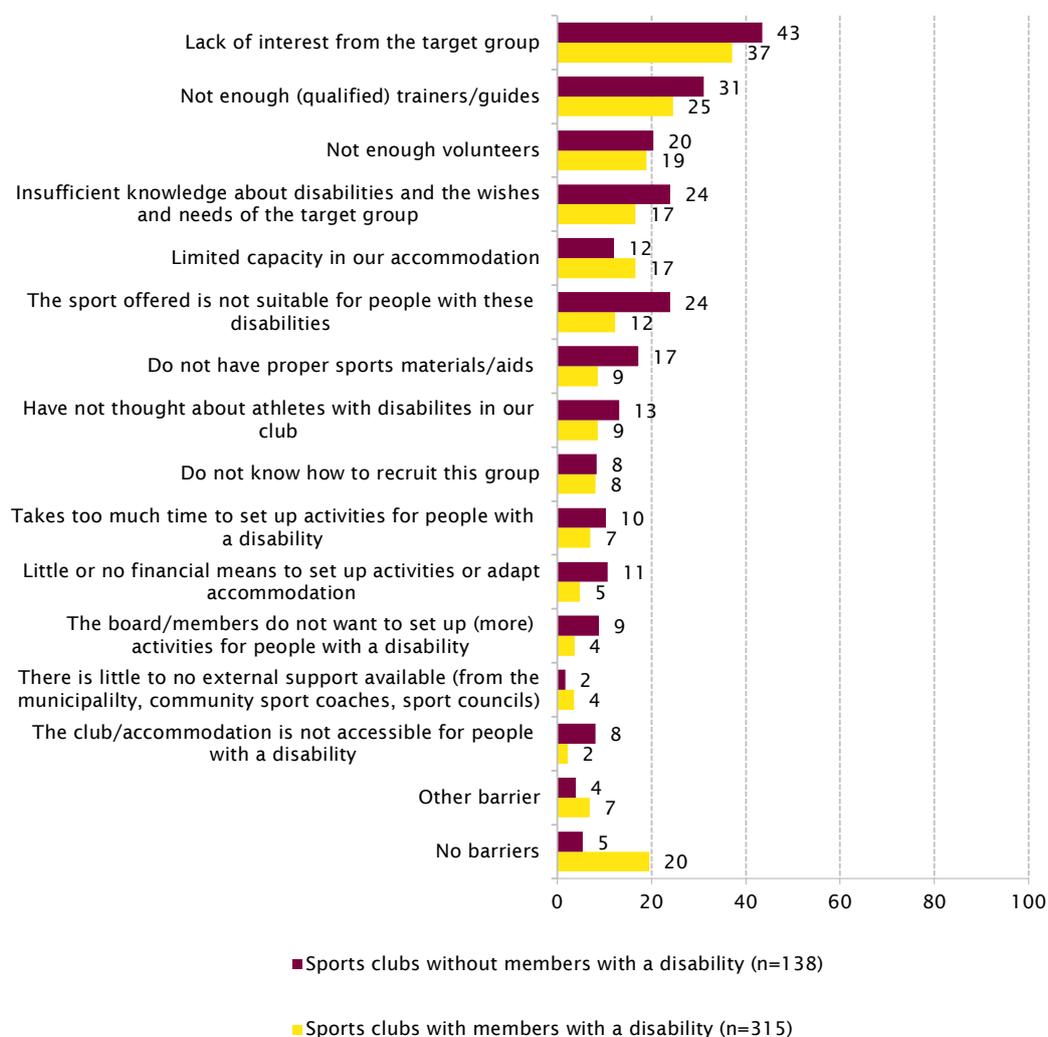
### Barriers

Approximately two fifths of the sports clubs without members with a disability report that lack of interest from the target group is a barrier to include members with a disability and organise sports activities for them (43%, figure 5). This is also a barrier for 37 percent of sports clubs with members with a disability. Lack of (qualified) trainers and guides was a barrier for including (more) members with a disability for a quarter of the sports clubs with members with a disability and for almost a third of the sports clubs without members with a disability (25% and 31%, respectively).

Lack of sport materials and aids, unsuitability of the sport, poor accessibility, lack of financial means to set up activities or adapt the facilities, and lack of support from the board or other members are more often barriers for sport clubs without members with a disability than for sports clubs with members with a disability. Sports clubs with members with a disability more often experience no barriers towards including (more) members with a disability than sports clubs without members with a disability (20% and 55%, respectively).

3 In accordance with the National Sports Agreement, at municipal level organisations sign local sports agreements. Often, one of the ambitions in these local agreements focus on inclusion in sport for PWD.

**Figure 5.** Barriers among sports clubs towards including (more) people with a disability in the sports club, by type of sports club (in percentages, multiple answers possible)



Source: Mulier Institute sports clubs research panel, 2020 (Gutter et al., 2021).

**Conclusion**

The integration of sport for PWD into the mainstreams settings of sport has been policy in the Netherlands for more than 20 years now. A survey among National Sport Federations (NSF’s) in the Netherlands shows that from the 77 NSF’s, more than half claim to pay attention to athletes/members with a disability in their policies and actions. This is reflected in their support for affiliated sports clubs in setting up and strengthening their sports offer for PWD (Gutter et al., 2021).

The sports clubs survey confirms that mainstream sports clubs in the Netherlands offer adequate possibilities for PWD to participate in sport. The survey shows that approximately two thirds of the sports clubs in the Netherlands have members with a disability. This is an increase compared to 2018. The increase was observed in particular among clubs that offer individual or outdoor sports and sports clubs with members with a chronic illness.

In general, small number of PWD participate in the mainstream activities of the clubs. This seems to be an intentional policy by the sport clubs: little to no adaptations are needed for these members, these members want to participate in the mainstream activities and one third of the sports clubs try to include members with a disability in the mainstream activities as much as possible. The majority of sports clubs with members with a disability has no specific framework of support from guides for these members.

Many sports clubs have the potential to welcome people with a disability. However, hospitality in the form of a host or hostess is seldom used. Almost all sports clubs (with and without members with a disability) are willing to allow people with at least one type of disability to participate in their club. Some of them also see possibilities to do so, but a quarter of the sports clubs is unsure if this is possible for each type of disability. Barriers to include more members with a disability are lack of interest from the target group and lack of (qualified) trainers or guides.

These barriers can be removed by joining forces with a regional partnership and/or community sport coach for PWD. Regional partnerships for adapted sports, in which municipalities and various agents in the sports, welfare and care sector are working together to match PWD to sport at the local and regional level, and community sport coaches, who play a central role in these regional partnerships, are seen as important policy tools to stimulate sport participation of PWD in the Netherlands. Regional partnerships for adapted sports map out the sport opportunities for PWD in the Netherlands, which makes clubs easier to find for PWD. Furthermore, a community sport coach can refer PWD to the sports clubs, discuss individual barriers with the person and search for solutions. This also helps sports clubs to decide if including (more) members with a disability is possible or not.

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## Appendix B. Saari (2021)

### Disability sports and the inclusion of PWD in Finland, Sports Club Inclusion Survey 2020

The Finnish Paralympic Committee (earlier: The Finnish Sport Association of Persons with Disabilities, VAU) has collected data on disability inclusion in sports since 2011. The aim has been to facilitate the disability inclusion of mainstream sports providers and the participation of people with disabilities (PWD) in sport and physical activity. Data has been collected at all levels from national and rural sports federations (Saari 2011; 2015a, Saari & Sipilä 2018) to local sports clubs (Saari 2011; 2015b; 2021).

This study focuses on the Sports Club Inclusion Survey 2020 (SCIS) which was conducted online in Autumn 2020. It was conducted at the same time as another survey for PWD. These two surveys were reported in Finnish in the Liikuttaako Report (Saari 2021) to provide information for the Finnish Paralympic Committee's Avoimet Ovet [Open Doors] project, which has set the goal of improving access for PWD in mainstream sports clubs.

The SCIS 2020 was targeted to all local sports clubs that organise sporting activities. The survey was shared via email and social media in Paralympic Committee networks and the national governing bodies of sports. Local disability associations, if they have sporting activities, were invited to participate in the SCIS 2020. The key results are compared with a previous sports club survey which was conducted in 2015 (Saari 2015 a).

The main questions in the SCIS 2020 survey were:

- How is sport for PWD organised in sports clubs, what is the level of inclusion and who are the participants?
- Which factors facilitate or hinder disability inclusion in sports clubs?
- What kind of support do sports clubs need to promote disability inclusion?



### Context

Approximately 130 national organisations are allocated governments grants from the Ministry of Education and Culture each year to promote sports and physical activity. Approximately 70 of them are sport-specific national sports federation. Municipalities are responsible for granting financial support for local sports clubs. In terms of the numbers of member clubs, the biggest sports are football, floor hockey, athletics, volleyball, skiing and equestrianism. In terms of the numbers of members, the biggest sports are football, gymnastics and golf, each having more than 100,000 personal members. (Mäkinen et al. 2015.)

The exact number of Finnish sports clubs is unknown, but it is estimated that there are approximately 9,000-10,000 sports clubs. The Research Institute for Olympic Sports (KIHU) has recently published a new sports club database with information on 7,795 sports clubs in November 2021 (<https://www.seuratietokanta.fi/>), but it is not yet complete. Earlier it was estimated that 10-15% of Finnish mainstream sports clubs have activities for PWD (Koski & Mäenpää 2018, Saari 2015b).

The Finnish Paralympic Committee serves as an umbrella sports federation for people with physical, visual and intellectual impairments and those who have undergone organ transplantation or are in dialysis treatment. It also serves as the national sports federation for disability-specific sports (goalball, boccia, wheelchair rugby and showdown) and for disability sports which have not yet been integrated, such as chess and shooting for the visually impaired, para ice hockey, electric wheelchair hockey and para powerlifting. Special Olympics Finland is also under the Paralympic Committee's umbrella. The Finnish Paralympic Committee has adopted a double strategy approach (see CRPD) which means maintaining traditional disability sports while working for and with increased inclusion in the mainstream setting. Disability sports are already integrated into national sports federations'

structures and policies in 35 Paralympic and non-Paralympic sports.

### General description of respondents

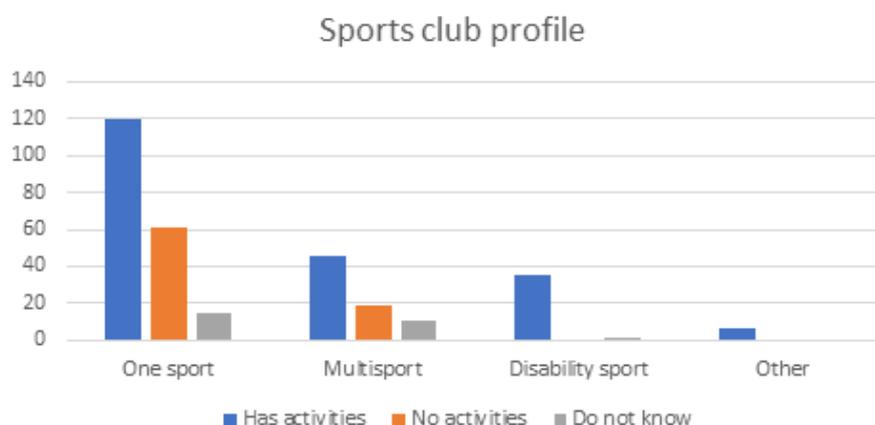
The SCIS 2020 survey had 334 respondents. After removal of duplicates, the majority (87%) of the 314 respondents represent a mainstream sports club, 12% a disability association and 6% another active sport provider, such as social circus. In this report, these last groups are handled together as disability clubs. One-third represent only one sport; the majority are multi-sport clubs. They are members of 50 national sports federations. The highest numbers of member clubs are with gymnastics (34), football (24), equestrianism (22), swimming (22) and judo (17). These sports were also well-represented in the earlier survey (Saari 2015b).

However, compared to the earlier survey, there were significantly less respondents from orienteering, Finnish baseball, skating, agility, bowling, yachting and billiards, and zero answers from snowboarding and cycling, all of which have been active in adapted physical activity or parasports during the last few years.

One out of three clubs are in Southern Finland or on the West Coast. Half (47%) of them can be referred to as big clubs with more than 300 members. In addition, 67 clubs have more than 800 members. The biggest ones usually represent gymnastics, football, swimming and athletics. There are slightly more youth-focused (42%) than adult-oriented (38%) clubs. In general, disability clubs have more elderly members.

### Participants with a disability

Altogether 66% of all respondents (n=207) and 61% (n=166) of mainstream sports clubs (excluding disability clubs) have activities for PWD or report that there are one or more participants with a disability in their club. One out of four clubs reports that there are no members with a disability and 10% do not know (Figure 1). Compared to 2015 (Saari 2015b), there is a 17% increase in clubs that organise activities for PWD.

**Figure 1.** Number of clubs with PWD by type of club (n=314)

Of the sports clubs that report they have PWD, 63% (n=131) gave estimations of the number of participants and the type of their impairment (figure not included). They could choose from a list of disabilities, identical with the Mulier Institute's survey (see appendix A, figure 1). Persons with mobility impairment (91 sports clubs), learning disability or intellectual impairment (n=82), behavioural disorder (n=69) and a chronic condition or illness (n=60) are included most often. However, when sports clubs were asked for the participant numbers in each disability category, persons with chronic illness become dominant (28%), mobility impairment came next and behavioural disorders third (9%).

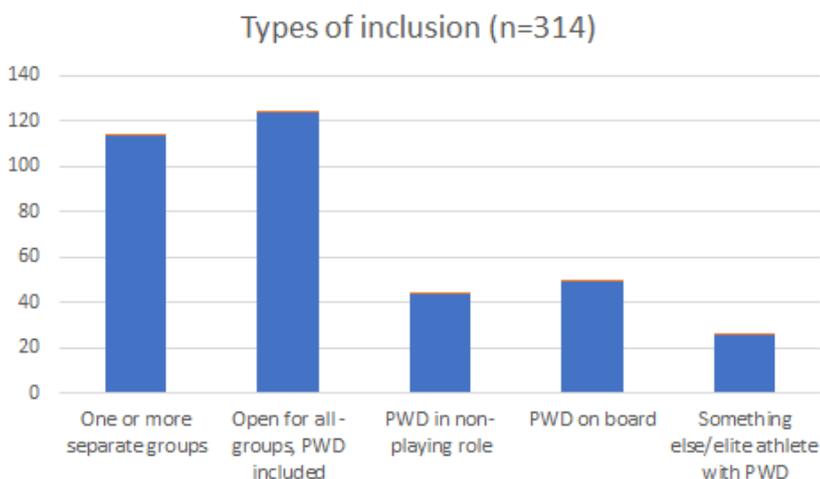
Asking this question and answering it are complicated issues. Impairment terminology can be challenging. Mobility impairment is usually more visible than some other impairments. Athletes with physical disabilities have had a leading role in the Paralympic movement for a long period of time, so it is quite natural that they are the first people to be included in mainstream clubs. However, not all disabilities are visible. It is not always easy to identify participants' disability, especially if there is no need to classify athletes for parasports. There were comments that collecting disability statistics is against the inclusion principle. Respectively, detailed information on

various disabilities was not collected in the 2015 survey, thus comparison with earlier data is not possible. However, according to the UN CRPD, collecting disability statistics is necessary to keep track of change and evaluate the status of inclusion.

Separate teams or training groups for members with a disability were still dominant in the 2015 survey, but in the SCIS 2020 there are approximately as many clubs organising separate activities for PWD (55%) as clubs that offer mainstream activities (open-for-all activities) for PWD (60%).

One out of four has a PWD on the board and one out of five PWD in a non-playing role, e.g., as a trainer, coach or volunteer (figure 2). Only 10% of mainstream sports clubs (disability-specific clubs excluded) have PWD in a non-playing role, which indicates that in mainstream settings PWD are usually seen as targets of actions rather than valuable members of the sports community as a whole.

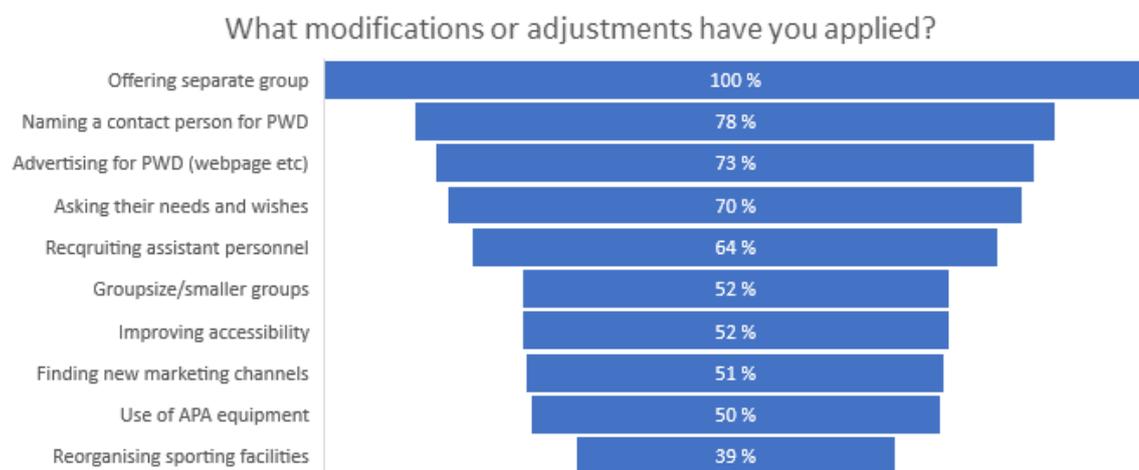
**Figure 2:** Types of inclusion



Offering separate groups and activities is still the number one practical modification used by sports clubs. Other important tools are, for example

naming a designated responsible person, targeted advertising, asking about participants' needs and wishes and recruiting assistive personnel (figure 3).

**Figure 3:** Practical solutions applied by sports clubs (n=125), %.



Bigger clubs, as they have more paid personnel and resources, are better represented among those which organise activities for PWD. Many of them also organise separate training groups for PWD, such as Special Olympics Unified activity, parallel to mainstream groups.

**What motivates, and what support is needed?**

Those clubs that organise activities for PWD are motivated by the importance of the issue itself and see it as a social responsibility of the club, and to find more members. It is also important that there is financial support available for this kind

of activity. However, 5% of respondents could not name a motivating factor that would prompt them towards disability sport or inclusion.

Sports clubs identify lack of instructors and volunteers as their biggest issues. Matters related

to facilities, such as not enough training time or lanes in the swimming hall; accessibility; financial problems; and difficulties to reach the target group (20% each) come next. The most important needs for support are education for coaches and trainers and ways to find them (figure 4).

**Figure 4:** What support need is most important? (n=125)

Need of support	n	%
Training and education for coaches	176	56 %
Economical support or guidance	151	48 %
Help to find new coaches and trainers	143	45 %
Help to find new volunteers	132	42 %
Consultation from local APA professional	111	35 %
Information sharing btw other clubs	104	33 %
Disability and adaptations know-how	103	33 %
Support to find participants	100	32 %
Guidebook for starting activity	89	28 %
Training for management	69	22 %
APA equipment know-how	56	18 %
Knowledge about other service providers	50	16 %
Accessibility know-how	48	15 %
How to organise competitions	38	12 %

Municipalities are the most important co-operational partners in Finland. This is easy to understand, bearing in mind that municipalities own most sports facilities. However, municipal sport units were ranked as less important. This was a surprise, since there are specialised municipal adapted physical activity (APA) instructors in all big cities and even medium-sized municipalities. These municipal APA instructors can be good partners if a sports club wishes to move towards inclusion. They are close by, they have valuable competence and expertise on disability-specific issues, and their networks could be handy when marketing activities for PWD or trying to find new coaches and volunteers. One explanation is that currently municipal

APA instructors are more focused on organising activities for various special groups, such as the elderly. They may not have the resources or know-how to serve as inclusion consultants for sports clubs. However, they are the most obvious source of local APA consultancy, which is high in the list of support needs of sports clubs (figure 4). Other important sources for help and advice in disability sport are own members, PWD themselves and national sports organisations.

### Conclusion

This survey is not a representative sample. It is unknown how many sports clubs received the survey, or if they represent the field equally. At the time of the survey, many clubs had closed their

doors or downsized their activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finnish sports law, equality and non-discrimination law and the CRPD support inclusion in sports. However, the advancement of inclusion requires measures both locally and nationally, in public bodies and voluntary organisations.

Inclusion is a long process which requires strategic planning and long-term commitment. Clubs should continue removing barriers for PWD to make it more open to join, not only as athletes and participants but also in other roles. They should undertake more co-operation with other clubs and build closer ties with the disability community. Most of all, they should seek help from municipal APA instructors. Municipalities

can accelerate inclusive change by directing their subsidies to non-discriminatory and, in terms of inclusion, well-performing sports clubs. In addition, municipal APA instructors can take a leading role as consultants and intermediators between the disability community and sports clubs.

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**Reference**

Saari, A. 2021. Liikuttaako? A report for the survey on physical activity for persons with a disability and the related survey conducted with sports clubs.

Other references are listed in the handbook.



## Appendix C. Disability sports movements: classifications and divisioning

Edited by Natalia Szergejev

When you plan for inclusion in your club, classification or divisioning or even competition may not be your priorities. At grassroots level, you have the freedom to organise disability sports in your club as you see it fitting best. There are practical tools you can use to modify your activities or programmes (STEP, TREE) to make them more inclusive. However, when the club is providing, for example Parasports opportunities (sports that are present at the Paralympics) or wish to help members to register for competition events, coaches/trainers and athletes must be aware of the eligibility criteria, which can be different depending on the organising movement/federation and impairment. Thus, this resource aims particularly at those who need further guidance to find competing opportunities or the requirements for such events.

Please note that this is not a full list and does not include details on which sports offer competitions for which types of impairment groups, which can vary.

### Paralympics

Due to its history, it is not surprising that 8 out of 10 classification groups at the Paralympics include physical impairments, the other two groups being visual and intellectual impairments. For promoting grassroots, local sports club participation in Parasports, it is recommended to follow the competitive structure provided by the classification system.

Impaired Muscle Power	Visual Impairment	Intellectual Impairment
Impaired Passive Range of Movement		
Limb Deficiency		
Leg Length Difference		
Short Stature		
Hypertonia		
Ataxia		
Athetosis		

Visual Impairment details:  
 - impairment in both eyes  
 - visual acuity less than or equal to LogMAR = 1.00 (6/60) or a visual field that is less than a radius of 40 degrees

Intellectual Impairment details:  
 - with a score of 75 or lower - internationally recognised and professionally administered IQ test  
 - Evidence of intellectual impairment prior to 18 years age

**Table 1.** Classification groups at the Paralympics

Some sports provide competitions opportunities for all 10 eligible groups; other sports are specific to one or a selection of eligible impairments. Each Paralympic sport defines which impairments are eligible for their sporting opportunities. You can find more details about eligible impairments in the sports' own classification rules. The classification system is explained at <https://www.paralympic.org/classification>.

### Virtus

There are currently three eligibility groups within Virtus competition, and the Master Lists for the highest-level athletes.

The eligibility process can be found at <https://www.virtus.sport/applying-for-athlete-eligibility>.

II 1. Intellectual disability	(Paralympic classification, IQ of 75 or lower, diagnosed before the age of 18, has significant limitations in adaptive behaviour).
II 2. Intellectual disability and significant additional impairment	Additional physical and/or sensory impairments, other impairments with differences in anatomical and muscular structures, heart and breathing problems. Down syndrome is the most common form for additional impairments and intellectual impairment.
II 3. Autism with an IQ above 76	Sometimes referred as high-functioning autism. - IQ of above 75, and/or no diagnosis of intellectual impairment (average or above-average cognitive functioning) - formal diagnosis of autism, ASD or Asperger's syndrome.

**Table 2.** Eligibility groups within Virtus competition

### Special Olympics

Special Olympics (SO) competitions are structured in such a way that athletes can compete with others with similar abilities in equitable divisions. An athlete's ability is the main factor in SO divisioning. This is determined by an entry score from a prior competition or the result of a seeding round or prior event at the competition day. Other significant factors that are taken into account to determine divisions are age and gender.

Coaches play an important role in helping to make the divisioning work by submitting earlier scores. You can find more about the divisioning and

coaches' responsibilities at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/divisioning>.

SO further offers the Motor Activity Training Programme (MATP) for athletes who are unable to participate in official SO competitions due to their skills and/or functional abilities. The MATP is designed to prepare athletes including those with severe or profound intellectual disability and significant physical disabilities for sports-specific activities appropriate for their ability levels. <https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/sports/motor-activity-training-program/>.

Intellectual disabilities	
Cognitive delays	(Measured by formal assessment)
Significant learning problems	(Caused by cognitive delay that require or have required specially designed instruction)
Vocational problems	

**Table 3.** Intellectual disabilities

### Sports Union for athletes with Down Syndrome

Often athletes with Down syndrome are outclassed in competitions for people with intellectual disabilities as they do not have the same functional abilities. The goal of SU-DS is to open up the world of competitive sporting opportunities to every

individual with Down syndrome. Currently there are events in nine sports (eight summer and one winter). Detailed information on the eligibility and registration procedure can be found at <https://www.su-ds.org/registration/eligibility/>.

Down syndrome	- Trisomy 21 - Mosaic
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**Table 4.** Down Syndrome

### Deaflympics

Deaflympics, launched in 1924, is the second oldest multi-sport event in the world and is recognised by the International Olympic Committee but exclusively organised by the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf. Deaflympics in

its current organisational structure can provide opportunities in 27 sports (21 summer and 6 winter sports). You can find more about eligibility and sporting opportunities at <https://www.deaflympics.com/>.

Deaf/hearing impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hearing loss at least 55dB in the better ear (3 tone frequency average of 500, 1,000 and 2,000 Hertz, ANSI 1969 standard)</li> <li>- not using hearing aids or external cochlear implant aids during any Deaflympics event</li> </ul>
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**Table 5.** Hearing impairments

### World Transplant Games Federation

Entering competitions is open for all recipients of life-supporting allografts and haematopoietic cell transplants which require/have required the use of immunosuppressive drug therapies. To participate in competitions, athletes must have

been transplanted for at least 1 year, with stable graft function, and are medically fit and have trained for the events in which they wish to take part. More about participation and sports can be found at: <https://wtgf.org/participation/>.



## Appendix D. 8-step plan from the Netherlands

### Step 1: Check needs and wishes and make people excited

Start by putting the desire to create adapted sports offer on the agenda of the board meeting, so that you immediately create support within the entire club. Ideally, the commitment to people with disabilities should be included in the sports club's policy plan. Good questions are:

- Are there enough potential members (persons with disabilities) in the area who are interested in sports at the sports club?
- Is there already another sports club in the area with sports on offer for people with disabilities? What are their experiences?
- Can there be cooperation with other sports clubs?
- Are there other organisations in the area that offer activities for people with disabilities? Is it possible to collaborate with these organisations?

Check the needs of your potential athletes. When starting up an adapted sports offer, it is especially important to offer what the target group itself needs. How often do they want to train? Do they want to participate in competitions or even dream of a future in Paralympic top sport? Get members excited so more people want to contribute.

### Step 2: Set up a working group or committee

The committee makes a plan, is responsible for the implementation and assurance and is the point of contact for the adapted sports offer. The committee should ideally consist of:

- The initiator (person who chairs meetings and coordinates tasks)
- A board member
- A trainer or a coach
- An expert by experience (athlete with a disability or a parent)

### Step 3: Make an analysis of your own sports club

It's important to start with an inventory. By making an analysis of matters that are important, it becomes clearer for the committee how the plan can be set up. Good questions are:

- What do PWD themselves want? Does it fit into the club's sports offer?
- Does the club already have members who fall within the target group and what are their experiences?
- Does the club want to offer adapted sport separately or with other athletes without disabilities? (See Chapter 2, Inclusion spectrum)
- Is the club physically and socially accessible to your target group? Does the club have to make changes to the accommodation? (See Chapter 5.2, Accessibility)
- Should the club attract, support or retrain trainers/coaches?

### Step 4: Find partners for your initiative

Build a network, find partners who can help you with your idea, for example regular sports federations, regional partnerships, etc. In particular, enter into cooperation with parties involved with people with disabilities. They can help you to get in touch with the right people.

**Step 5: Make a plan and a budget**

Making a plan and a budget provides clarity. Make sure your plan includes the following:

- Set your goals
- Make your facilities accessible
- Start cooperation with local organisations
- Set up a single activity in which athletes with and without disabilities can participate
- Determine the minimum needed to achieve your goals
- Make a communication plan: how are you going to reach the target group? How are you going to communicate to your members about what you do? Are your websites accessible?
- Make a budget (purchase material, training of trainers/coaches, improve accessibility, communication costs) and check funding opportunities

**Step 6: Go and execute the plan!**

- Recruit participants and volunteers
- Adjust the accommodation if necessary
- Train the trainers to offer adapted sports
- Organise introductory or try-out lessons
- Create a welcoming atmosphere

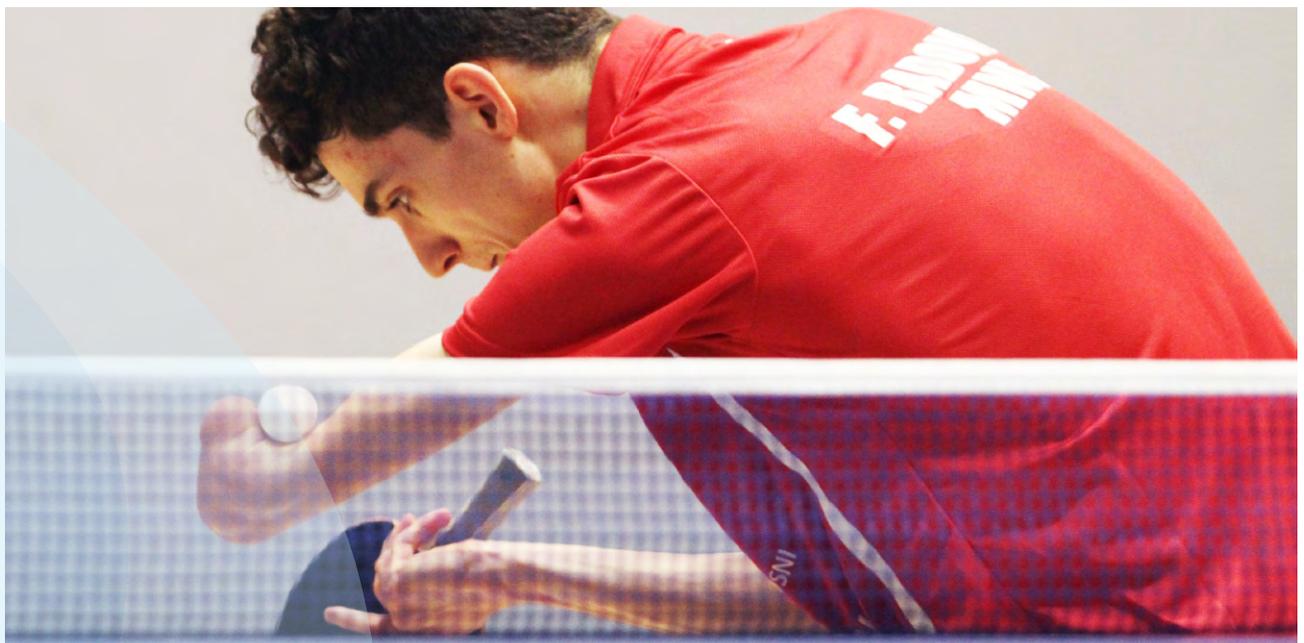
**Step 7: Announce the plan and share your experiences**

Clear communication about the sports offer for people with disabilities is a must. The information is aimed at the club's own members and volunteers, but also at potential new members and their environment (family, friends, carers, etc.) Use positive and good examples from those involved and athletes. Use social media, websites, local newspapers, etc.

**Step 8: Capture and evaluate**

The continuity of the adapted sports offer can be guaranteed by evaluating every six months with participants, trainers/coaches and other stakeholders. What went well and what did not? What are the points to pay attention to? Keep celebrating and communicating successes to keep new members coming.

The 8-step plan for sports club inclusion development in the Netherlands: <https://clubbase.sport.nl/kennisbank/ledenwerving-behoud/diversiteit-en-inclusie/aangepast-sporten/stappenplan-samen-sporten>





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