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DELIVERABLE 2.2

PLAYINC4KIDS Method and Evaluation:

Guidelines for Implementing inclusive sport environments for children with and without disabilities (aged 6-13) and their parents



PI4K
Play Inc 4 Kids

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1. Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Sport

The social inclusion of people with disabilities is a complex and multidimensional process that aims to ensure their **full participation** in community life. This means not only removing the **physical and social barriers** to their participation but also promoting a cultural change that recognizes and **values the diversity** and contribution of each person, regardless of whether or not they have a disability. In this regard, Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) explicitly acknowledges their right to take part in cultural life, engage in recreational activities, and participate in sports, highlighting the importance of these areas as tools for inclusion and well-being.

In line with this recognition, a wide body of research highlights the benefits of sport and physical activity for all individuals, with or without disabilities, showing that their impact goes far beyond physical health to include significant psychological and social advantages. Specifically:

- **Physical benefits:** Improved cardiovascular health and coordination, increased muscle strength and reduced physical pain (Martin, 2013).
- **Psychological benefits:** Participation in physical activities also reduces stress and increases self-esteem and self-efficacy¹, improving daily skills and self-confidence (Martin, 2008). Self-efficacy is also positively linked to mood: athletes with higher self-efficacy tend to experience a more positive mood (Martin, 2008).
- **Social benefits:** By fostering socialization and cooperation, sport increases the possibility of creating bonds of friendship and increasing the sense of community and belonging to a group by encouraging social support (Richardson et al., 2017). It also proves to be an effective tool in reducing negative attitudes and prejudices about people with disabilities, as it counteracts the stereotype that people with disabilities are incapable and lack autonomy (Clément-Guillot et al., 2018).

¹ **Self-efficacy** is a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). To put it in more simple terms, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation.

→ **Improvement of the quality of life:** Sport promotes self-determination in people with disabilities, providing the drive to gain awareness of their resources and skills and address difficulties (Taddei et al., 2023). It plays a crucial role in redesigning life, especially after a traumatic event, because it highlights the potential of the individual, often overlooked by a society that focuses on deficits. Sport is, therefore, a tool to promote empowerment, autonomy and emancipation (Taddei et al., 2023).

Despite the numerous benefits of sport and the provisions of Article 30 of the UN Convention (2006), considerable efforts are still required to ensure genuine inclusion through sport, as significant barriers persist that hinder the full participation of youth with disabilities.

1.1. Barriers To Participation In Sports Activities

Across the European Union, 4.4% of individuals under the age of 16 live with a disability (WHO, 2020). Unfortunately, there are no consolidated European data on the participation of children with disabilities in sport, making comparisons between member countries difficult (European Commission, 2018). This lack of centralised data is in itself an obstacle to fully understanding the phenomenon and formulating effective policies. However, it is possible to get an idea of the situation by analysing sectoral studies. A 2022 Eurostat analysis, although focused on the population aged 16 and over, found that across all EU countries overall participation in cultural or sporting activities for people with disabilities was lower than for people without disabilities. This suggests a general trend which is probably also reflected in the younger age group (Eurostat, 2024).

Finally, a Eurobarometer survey showed that having a disability or illness is the third most cited reason (by 14% of respondents) for not playing sports more regularly, after "lack of time" and "lack of motivation or interest" (European Commission, 2018).

The low participation of children with disabilities in sport is the result of a complex web of **barriers**, which can be classified as individual, social and environmental barriers (Martin et al., 2020). Understanding these challenges is crucial to develop targeted interventions and effective policies:

→ **Individual factors:** These encompass limitations arising from the disability itself, whether functional (e.g. mobility limitations, low coordination), psychological (e.g. frustration, fear of failure and low self-confidence), or physical (e.g. pain, fatigue).

- **Social factors:** These barriers stem from the surrounding socio-cultural environment. Specifically, they involve a **lack of specialized training** for sports staff in communication and activity adaptation for individuals with disabilities, **financial constraints**, parental safety concerns, and a scarcity of accessible sports facilities and opportunities. This deficit often correlates with **inadequate resources** and limited understanding of the advantages of physical activity within rehabilitation and educational settings. Furthermore, societal **prejudices and stereotypes** about people with disabilities can create resistance towards embracing inclusive sports approaches.
- **Environmental factors:** this category includes **architectural barriers** (including lack of accessibility to facilities, lack of transport and adequate equipment) and **limited** pathways for individuals with disabilities to progress from basic physical activity to competitive sports, thereby diminishing the appeal of sports.

Recognizing these persistent barriers to participation, it becomes essential to explore inclusive models within grassroots sports that actively foster engagement and equal opportunities for all youth.

1.2. Inclusion Models in Grassroots Sport

Grassroots sports, according to the European Union's Erasmus+ program, are physical leisure activities practiced regularly at a non-professional level, for health, educational, or social purposes (European Commission, 2023). These activities are typically community-based, often volunteer-led, and focused on participation rather than high-level performance.

Although there's no official classification, there are many models that categorize the ways in which people with disabilities are included in sports. These models can be placed on an "inclusion spectrum" (Black and Williamson, 2011) which outlines the different participation options available:

- **Separate activities:** special activities designed specifically for individuals with disabilities.
- **Parallel activities:** athletes with disabilities might train separately with other disabled peers to prepare for competitions.
- **Disability sport activity (reverse integration):** this approach includes individuals without disabilities in sports designed for people with disabilities.
- **Open (inclusive) activities:** these encompass cooperative games, unstructured movement, or warm-up and cool-down exercises that are accessible to all.

→ **Modified activities:** these activities are designed for everyone, with adaptations made to the space, tasks, equipment, and teaching methods to ensure inclusivity.

This project specifically focused on integrated sport. The reason for this focus is that PlayInc aims to achieve inclusion through the joint participation of people with and without disabilities in pre-existing sports, without the need to create specific adapted ones (see the next paragraph). Indeed, the **integrated sport model** promotes the **joint participation** of individuals with and without disabilities in the same sporting activities, sharing the playing field and rules. While this approach is designed **to highlight the unique abilities** of all athletes and truly promote social inclusion, it often proves difficult to put into practice, leading to many young people with disabilities facing hurdles to participation (Nixon, 2007). For example, assistive devices like wheelchairs or prosthetics, which enable some athletes to succeed, might be perceived as an **unfair advantage** or a safety hazard by others (Hutzler, 2007). Beyond equipment, **inaccessible sports facilities**, existing **prejudiced attitudes**, or coaches unwilling to adjust their teaching or communication methods can also prevent certain athletes from engaging on an equal footing with their non-disabled peers. Therefore, efforts to include individuals with disabilities in mainstream sports sometimes achieve only "**front-end**" inclusion: a superficial placement of young people in standard sports settings without any real transformation of the cultural context they enter (Nixon, 2007). The complexity of making grassroots sport truly inclusive through integrated sport is the reason behind the [PlayInc project](#). These guidelines aim to support the implementation of integrated sport activities, ensuring that all children can participate fully while promoting a sporting culture that values every ability.

1.3. The Guidelines

1.3.1. Objective

These guidelines are part of a wider project (PlayInc4Kids project – 101185186 - <https://www.playinc.eu/>) to develop new pilot activities that strengthen the role of grassroots sport as a tool for social inclusion. More specifically, the main objective of PlayInc4Kids is to develop and test scientific-based strategies of inclusion of children with cognitive disability together with “non-disabled” children (aged between 6 and 13 years old) in traditional sport disciplines through inclusive sport environments.

The following guidelines offer a practical framework for clubs and organizations, serving as a “compass” to observe, reflect, and act toward inclusive sport environments. Specifically, they aim to:

- **Observe and Understand:** provide a new way to look at the club’s current practices, culture, and dynamics, helping to recognize how inclusion is already lived and where attention is needed.
- **Identify Areas for Action:** support clubs in pinpointing priorities and areas where interventions can enhance participation and inclusion.
- **Mobilize Resources:** highlight existing internal and community resources that can be activated to strengthen inclusive practices.
- **Offer Practical Guidance:** present clear, actionable examples and operational strategies that can be implemented in everyday sport activities.
- **Measure Success:** define observable indicators that show whether inclusive practices are effective and how their impact can be monitored over time.

1.3.2. Target groups

These guidelines are addressed to all key stakeholders involved in shaping inclusive, educational, and community-based sport environments. Specifically:

• Coaches and Physical Education Teachers

They are at the forefront of implementing inclusive practices through daily training and educational interactions. The guidelines aim to strengthen their pedagogical, social, and emotional competences, enabling them to create supportive and empowering learning settings for all children.

• Sports Organizations and Clubs

Sports clubs and associations are responsible for establishing inclusive policies and promoting fair, equitable, and safe environments. The guidelines provide strategic direction for leadership, internal training, and team development initiatives that foster inclusion and wellbeing.

• Schools and Community Centers

These institutions play a vital role in connecting education, sport, and social development. The guidelines help integrate inclusive sport practices into broader educational programmes, encouraging cooperation, respect, and diversity.

• Families and Volunteers

Family members, caregivers, and volunteers are essential contributors to a child's sporting and personal growth. The guidelines promote active collaboration between families, coaches, and clubs, reinforcing trust and shared responsibility.

• Policy Makers and Institutions

Local and national policy makers, as well as public institutions, play a crucial role in creating supportive frameworks and allocating resources for inclusive sport initiatives. The guidelines offer insights to inform policies, funding strategies, and planning.

• The Community at Large

Community members, local networks, and civic organizations contribute to shaping a culture of inclusion and belonging. The guidelines encourage collective engagement and awareness-raising actions to use sport as a shared tool for social cohesion and community empowerment.

1.3.3. What you will find

In these guidelines, you will find a description of four key areas of intervention, based on the insights gathered from the surveys with parents, coaches and project partners carried out within the PlayInc4Kids project, as well as the evidence available in the scientific literature on inclusion through sport. These four areas form a holistic framework for fostering inclusion in sport, offering several implications for practice and intervention. For each area, you will find a clear explanation of what it covers and how it is reflected in everyday club life, helping you to understand its relevance and application. Each area is further divided into sub-areas, which highlight specific components, the aspects to observe, and the resources you can mobilize to create a more inclusive environment. For every sub-area, practical examples based on real-life experiences show how inclusion can be implemented in practice. Potential challenges are also identified, including obstacles related to resources, logistics, mindset, and common biases, so you can anticipate and address them effectively. At the end of the guidelines, **success stories** are presented. The success stories are concrete accounts of initiatives, pathways, or experiences, written and developed by the project partners, that have produced clear and positive outcomes in terms of inclusion through sport. They highlight real cases in which specific practices, methods, or interventions have effectively supported participation, well-being, and social integration. These stories serve as replicable or adaptable examples, offering valuable insights, concrete inspiration and guidance for implementing an inclusive culture and effective strategies to promote social inclusion through sporting activities.

2. The Guidelines

Building on the findings from the previous [survey](#) and the work carried out within the PlayInc4Kids project, a holistic framework for inclusion in sport has been developed. This framework identifies four key areas of intervention that serve as area of practical guidelines for creating inclusive sport environments:

1. Training and empowerment for coaches
2. Creating an inclusive club, team, and environment culture
3. Fostering continuous dialogue with parents and other adults
4. Raising community awareness



2.1. Guideline 1. - Training and empowerment for coaches

Effective inclusion in sport requires well-prepared coaches equipped with both technical and socio-relational competences. Training programmes should be designed on the basis of a needs analysis and structured around complementary areas of development. Particularly, three training areas, **disability and inclusion, communication and social skills**, can be implemented together or separately to empower coaches and promote truly inclusive sport environments where every child can participate and thrive. Specifically:

→ Training on specific disability and inclusive sports

Coaches should acquire specific tools and knowledge to address the challenges of working with athletes with disabilities. The main objectives are to strengthen coaches' self-efficacy, reduce explicit and implicit biases, and promote inclusive attitudes. Training should go beyond theoretical learning, focusing on the practical application of strategies and adaptations within real sport contexts.



Examples of good practices

- Include disability and inclusion modules as mandatory core components in coach education pathways. -> See Success Stories 3, 6, 7
- Ensure balanced and comprehensive coverage of different types of disabilities (e.g., physical, sensory, cognitive, and intellectual).
- Establish continuous training cycles by offering at least one annual workshop session for coaches, during which training content is reviewed and training methods updated based on feedback from training activities, and emerging inclusive sport practices.

Please keep these challenges in mind

- Disability modules are sometimes treated as optional, resulting in inconsistent implementation.
- Training may focus primarily on physical disabilities, neglecting cognitive and intellectual disabilities.
- Training content risks becoming outdated when not aligned with evolving inclusive sport practices.

→ **Developing communication and social skills**

Inclusive coaching requires strong relational abilities to manage team dynamics, value each child’s abilities, and build positive relationships with families. This component aims to enhance empathy, active listening, and collaboration, contributing to a supportive and cohesive team culture.



Examples of good practices

- Integrate social, emotional and communication skill development into coach training curricula through practical and interactive formats such as role-playing, simulated coaching situations and guided reflection, supporting coaches in building respectful and inclusive relationships with children and families. -> See Success Stories 2, 7
- Train coaches to structure and differentiate training tasks (e.g., by breaking complex drills into sequential steps) to support diverse learning needs.
- During coach education, focus on key relational competencies, including managing heterogeneous groups, fostering emotionally safe training environments and supporting the development of basic movement, confidence and participation skills. -> See Success Stories 6, 7

Please keep these challenges in mind

- Technical coaching skills often overshadow communication, empathy, and relational abilities.
- Coaches may struggle to adapt their approach to the needs and emotional realities of diverse participants.

Moreover, **mentoring and “guided exposure” practice** can be **useful strategies to implement training activities that foster skills and competences useful to design an inclusive environment**. Direct and structured exposure to inclusive sport settings has proven effective in reducing prejudice and increasing confidence among coaches.

This can be achieved through mentoring programmes grounded in the principles of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) and Contact Theory (Allport, 1979).

In this model, an experienced inclusive coach guides a new coach through real-world practice, offering feedback and support. Such structured contact helps new coaches build confidence, develop practical competence, and challenge stereotypes more effectively than traditional training methods.

Examples of good practices

- Implement structured, mentoring programs that integrate job shadowing, observation of experienced coaches, and dedicated feedback sessions to refresh common club methodology. -> See Success Stories 5, 6
- Require a substantial practical training component, for example a fixed number of hours of supervised internship training, providing hands-on experience that builds confidence and reflection. -> See success story 5
- Utilize "learning by doing" approaches, such as including in-training coaches in team travel and events as support staff, allowing them to gain practical, empirical mentorship from the main coach. -> See Success Stories 5, 6

Please keep these challenges in mind

- The fear of being observed during mentoring may sometimes cause the less experienced coach to move their focus away from the individual person and onto the disability.
- If coaches in training are not included in every session, they may struggle to connect with participants and may not be acknowledged as a coach with authority.
- Coordinating the logistics and finances necessary to mix the agendas of coaches, secure external teachers, and find suitable locations for continuous, year-long training can be challenging.

In summary, training for coaches should integrate knowledge, practical experience, and guided mentorship to empower professionals to foster truly inclusive sport environments where every child can participate and grow.

2.2. Guideline 2 - Creating an inclusive environment, and an inclusive team and club culture

True inclusion goes beyond placing children with and without disabilities in the same space. It requires a fundamental shift in the sports club's culture:

- **Prioritize participation over competition:** The survey revealed that parents of children without disabilities sometimes believe a child with a disability could "slow down learning," causing frustration. This highlights an underlying prejudice that an excessive focus on winning can reinforce. Recognizing the **educational value** of sport and orienting the activity not only to competitive results, but to the characteristics of the people who practice it, transforms sport into a powerful tool for inclusion and development of self-esteem, well-being and autonomy for people with (and without) disabilities (Taddei et al, 2023).

Examples of good practices

- Apply inclusive scoring system to ensure that participation, attitude, and cooperation are rewarded alongside skill. For example establish a dual-score competition system where final results consider both athletic performance and values such as Team work, respect, and fair play. -> See Success Story 7
- Ensure that all activities are designed for fun rather than competition (e.g., everyone receives a participation medal; children run together in a single group; no teams, levels, or rankings are assigned). -> See Success Stories 3, 7
- Use data-driven feedback (e.g., video analysis, performance tracking) to show that inclusion enhances, rather than slows, individual and team development.

Please keep these challenges in mind

- When using mixed-ability groups, pay attention to pacing: ensure advanced participants remain engaged while supporting those who require more time.
- When organizing inclusive competition formats, anticipate resistance from those accustomed to performance-driven models.

→ **Tailor activities and roles:** Activities and training sessions should be designed starting from each child’s abilities and needs. For example, a slower pace, the absence of physical contact when necessary, and the use of personalized challenges or small group activities can ensure that every child participates meaningfully and on an equal footing. It is also essential to tailor the overall sport environment and to adopt flexible solutions that adapt to different situations and abilities.

Examples of good practices

- Design training drills with flexible difficulty levels, enabling meaningful participation for athletes with diverse abilities. For example, modify exercises, pace, or task complexity according to individual needs. -> See Success Story 1
- Assign differentiated roles (e.g., team coordinator, warm-up leader, referee assistant) to ensure every athlete experiences recognition and contribution. -> See Success Story 3
- Provide individual adjustments during training to ensure each participant receives guidance suited to their learning pace and motor abilities (e.g., offering simplified sequences, extended practice time, or one-to-one demonstrations). -> See Success Story 6
- Adapt the environment considering accessibility of spaces, materials, equipment, and scheduling (e.g., ensuring step-free access, using lighter or modified equipment, or adjusting session times to reduce sensory overload). -> See Success Story 3
- Include structured physical contact exercises in mixed-ability pairs, emphasizing trust, cooperation, and mutual understanding (e.g., simple balance-support tasks like standing facing each other with light hand contact, or small partner-assisted movements where one person helps stabilize or guide a slow, controlled action, always beginning with a clear “ready?” cue). -> See Success Stories 2,

Please keep these challenges in mind

- When modifying drills, avoid highlighting differences too explicitly; adaptation should feel natural and integrated, not compensatory.
- When scheduling training sessions, allow extra time for inclusive adaptations; rushing can unintentionally marginalize those who need adjustments.

- When budgeting inclusive activities, anticipate higher costs for adaptive equipment, accessible venues, or support staff.
- When selecting venues, verify actual accessibility (e.g., toilets, entrances, surfaces, parking, travel routes).
- When introducing physical contact exercises, be mindful of comfort levels, personal boundaries, and cultural norms; discomfort may undermine relationship building.
- When organizing adaptive sports activities, participants without disabilities may initially undervalue the purpose of inclusion; structured reflection and guided dialogue are needed to promote understanding.

→ **Promote socialization outside of training:** Parents emphasized the importance of group activities that foster a sense of belonging and friendships. Organizing social activities like excursions and gatherings outside of training can strengthen the sense of community and belonging to a group, which is a key social benefit of sports.

Examples of good practices

- Organize inclusive social events where participants with and without disabilities come together outside formal sport settings, examples include shared meals, family days, picnics, and friendly mixed-ability tournaments. -> See Success Story 3
- Create thematic socialization activities like “The 3rd set” (i.e., post-match shared breakfast/snacks with families, referees, players, and volunteers) to foster meaningful interactions among all stakeholders and promote a sense of belonging.
- Encourage group excursions and trips (such as visits to professional matches, cultural landmarks, or nature outings) where participants, families, and staff collaborate in non-sport contexts, strengthening relationships and community identity.

→ Host environmental or community service events, engaging both athletes with and without disabilities in joint, purposeful tasks outside sports practice, combining learning and fun. These events may include collaborative “green activities” such as waste sorting games, neighborhood clean-up initiatives, tree planting, or recycling workshops, designed to promote environmental awareness while fostering cooperation and mutual support.

Please keep these challenges in mind

- Social events may require extra resources and time (staff coordination, costs for venues/food, transportation), making sustained implementation difficult.
- Ensuring accessibility (physical, sensory, communication) at off-site locations can be challenging and may prevent some families from participating fully.
- There can be cultural or personal discomfort with mixed-group events, physical contact, or roles outside of sport, especially when families are not familiar with inclusion principles.
- Sustained engagement is difficult: occasional activities may not be enough to establish lasting friendships or shift club culture; maintaining a regular calendar of varied social events requires commitment.
- When participants with disabilities are heavily supported by staff at events, they may feel less independent; balancing support and autonomy is crucial for authentic socialization.

→ **Use an inclusive communication:** Inclusive communication means choosing language that respects the dignity and individuality of people with disabilities. It avoids stereotypes or labels, and instead emphasizes the person first, not the condition. Using inclusive language fosters understanding, reduces stigma, and creates environments where everyone feels valued and represented.

Such communication should be promoted not only within the sports club, but also in all external communication, ensuring consistency and a wider impact (see Raising community awareness).

Examples of good practices

- Develop a positive and empowering communication strategy, using supportive language in both verbal interactions and club materials (e.g., framing feedback in growth-oriented terms such as “Let’s try it together” rather than “You’re doing it wrong,”). -> See Success Story 2
- Use person-first language that places the individual before the condition, avoiding reductive labels or pitying tones. This helps maintain respect, autonomy, and a balanced focus on the athlete rather than the diagnosis (e.g., using inclusive language such as “athlete with a disability” rather than labels like “disabled kid”; focusing on what the athlete needs instead of what they “lack,” e.g., “Let’s adjust the pace so it fits you” rather than “You can’t keep up. -> See success story 1
- Maintain coordinated communication across coaches and staff to ensure clarity and consistency (e.g., using a shared log after each session where coaches write two lines on what was adapted for each athlete.) -> See Success Story 5
- Implement accessible digital tools (e.g., website plug-ins for visual/hearing impairments, captioned videos) to enhance access for all participants.

Please keep these challenges in mind

- When implementing communication campaigns, staff may require training to confidently use inclusive language and avoid stereotypes.
- When applying inclusive communication, avoid adopting a one-size-fits-all approach; tone, pacing, and feedback style must be adapted to everyone.

2.3. Guideline 3 - Fostering a continuous dialogue with parents and adults

Parents, caregivers (please note that caregivers refer to any adult that provides primary care to a child in their care; they are often parents, family members, or people unrelated to the child; often, but not necessarily the legal guardian) and other adults involved in children education (such as special education teachers, social workers, etc.) are crucial allies in promoting inclusion. Specifically, in order to design activities that foster an inclusive environment for children it is important to:

- **Establish a bidirectional dialogue:** Coaches should regularly update parents on the team progress and parents should have a formal way to provide feedback and raise concerns.

Examples of good practices

- Before beginning an activity, conduct a short pre-activity interview with parents or caregivers to understand each participant’s specific needs, preferences, and possible adaptations required (e.g., asking concrete questions such as “Are there movements your child finds uncomfortable?” “What helps them feel safe when trying something new?” or “Do they prefer visual cues, verbal cues, or hands-on guidance?” and noting any required adaptations before planning the session.). -> See Success Stories 1, 5
- Maintain structured yet open communication with parents through phone groups or digital platforms, ensuring clear boundaries between supportive dialogue and coaching autonomy (e.g., using a dedicated messaging group for updates and reminders, not for discussing coaching choices; sending brief, factual notes like “Today we worked on balance tasks; next week we’ll repeat the same structure” while redirecting training-related requests to scheduled check-ins to preserve the coach’s role.). -> See Success Stories 1, 6
- Set up informal parent gatherings (e.g., coffee mornings, parents’ breakfasts during tournaments, etc.) to encourage exchange among families, offering a space for peer support.

Please keep these challenges in mind

- When holding introductory interviews, be mindful that some parents may not fully articulate their child’s needs or may view the activity mainly as childcare rather than a developmental experience. The facilitator must help reframe this as a collaborative educational process.

- When involving families in feedback, balance involvement with structure. Too much informal input can blur roles and overwhelm coaches, too little can make parents feel unheard.
- Remember to offer specific training sessions for coaches on how to conduct introductory interviews with parents, emphasizing children’s needs and family expectations rather than limitations.

→ **Empower parents as advocates:** Parents, both those with and without children with disabilities, can be important allies in promoting inclusion. Parents of children with disabilities can communicate their child's specific needs to the sports organizations, helping to shape a more welcoming environment, while parents of children without disabilities can act as key advocates for inclusion by sharing their positive experiences with others.

Examples of good practices

- Collaborate with parent associations to strengthen the sense of community. For example, families can help promote inclusion initiatives, advocate for the program, or assist in organizing events. -> See Success Story 3
- Invite parents to participate periodically in shared sport events or family tournaments where they can experience the activity alongside their children (e.g., mixed parent–child teams in non-competitive games, parents rotating through adapted activity stations alongside their children, or joint warm-up sessions led by coaches, involving parents as referees). This nurtures empathy, pride, and a stronger sense of belonging.
- When appropriate, collect personal testimonies from parents about their experience of inclusion (e.g., “What surprised you during today’s activity?” or “How has participating changed your view of inclusive sport?”). These testimonies can be gathered through brief written reflections, audio recordings, or guided feedback forms immediately after the activity.

Please keep these challenges in mind

- When encouraging participation through parent associations, ensure to consider everyone’s time, commitments and habits. Not all parents have the same availability, confidence, or willingness to engage, which can create uneven support.

- When inviting parents to joint events, maintain sensitivity toward families who may prefer privacy or who feel uncomfortable in public participation.
- When organizing collaborative activities, anticipate the extra time required for coordination and communication. Remember always that building trust between families and coaches is essential but resource-intensive.
- When fostering collaboration with parent associations, remember that advocacy must remain participant-centered. Family enthusiasm is valuable, but the ultimate focus should stay on the needs, autonomy, and enjoyment of the participants themselves.
- When gathering parents' testimonies or experiences, ensure explicit consent and robust privacy protection (e.g. use an informed consent module, guarantee anonymity), especially when stories involve children or disability-related information. Personal stories can be emotionally charged and should always be shared voluntarily.

2.4. Guideline 4 - Raising community awareness

To ensure that inclusion in sports is not the exception but the norm, it is essential that interventions extend beyond the individual sports club and operate at a societal and cultural level. Actions at community level are crucial for transforming the cultural context in which young athletes are placed. This can be achieved through:

- **Organization of public awareness events:** Partners reported organizing conferences and events to raise awareness about the benefits of inclusive sports. These public events are essential for breaking down conceptual barriers and demonstrating the concrete benefits of inclusive sports. Such initiatives not only attract public attention but also provide a platform to share positive experiences and "best practices" of the associations. The goal is to show that sport is a powerful tool for empowerment, autonomy, and emancipation for people with disabilities.

Examples of good practices

- Organise public-awareness events that blend sportive and non-sportive activities (e.g. inclusive community sport events held in public spaces, combining mixed-ability sport activities with informal social moments; initiatives embedded in national or European sport campaigns to increase visibility; awareness events that integrate sport with cultural or social activities, actively involving people with and without disabilities in both participation and organisation). In these events people with and without disabilities co-create the planning, logistics and artistic performance.
- Collaborate with local schools and municipalities to run recurring inclusive events, linking them to larger national programmes (e.g. European Week of Sport or the Special Olympics match week) -> See Success Story 3, 4
- Combine inclusive tournaments with community-engagement moments (e.g., attending a professional game together, sharing meals, celebrating key dates) so participants experience sport as a social, communal activity.

Please keep these challenges in mind

- If public messaging or planning is not inclusive, events can unintentionally reinforce stereotypes (e.g., portraying inclusion as a form of charity) emphasizing pity over shared value, or giving highly visible but superficial roles to people with disabilities.
- Some families or participants may feel uncomfortable with the degree of public exposure at large community events, especially if their differences are highlighted or their participation is used symbolically in communications or media.

- Event venues may lack essential accessible features (e.g., physical access, adapted bathrooms, sensory supports, etc.), which can limit participation and undermine the message of inclusion.
- Sourcing the necessary funding, equipment, and logistical support often requires a mix of municipal backing, sponsorships, and community fundraising, barriers that can stall initiatives or limit their quality and reach.

→ **Collaboration with local networks:** A holistic approach to inclusion requires collaboration with the wider community. The partners highlighted how working with local associations, educational centers, and schools is crucial for organizing inclusive programs and activities, such as integrated sports sessions during school hours. Building partnerships is essential for reaching a wider audience and creating a supportive ecosystem for inclusive sports. This collaboration helps to ensure that inclusive sports are not seen as isolated activities but as an integral part of community life.

Examples of good practices

- Partner with local schools, municipalities and other community organisations to co-design and host inclusive events, ensuring the activities are embedded in existing community calendars and initiatives (e.g., organize a “sports day” where children of all abilities participate together; coordinate with school timetables to avoid conflicts; involve municipal facilities for accessible venues). -> See Success Story 3, 4
- Engage local businesses and civic groups through crowdfunding or sponsorship schemes that finance adaptive equipment, accessible venues or logistical needs, creating a sense of shared responsibility for inclusion (e.g., a local shop funds a wheelchair-accessible ramp; a sports club donates adaptive balls; community crowdfunding covers transport for participants with mobility needs). -> See Success Story 4
- Involve local volunteer networks (e.g., student volunteers, community service groups) to support event set-up, coaching assistance and logistical tasks, expanding the pool of inclusive-sport advocates. -> See Success Story 3, 4

Please keep these challenges in mind

- Organisations outside established networks may face bureaucratic hurdles when applying for official patronage or municipal support; sustained relationship-building is required to navigate these barriers.
- Coordinating multiple local partners can increase the complexity of planning and demand additional time, resources and clear communication channels to ensure accessibility standards are met.

Maintaining continuity with local partners (schools, volunteer groups) is essential; short-term or ad-hoc collaborations risk limiting long-term cultural impact and the durability of inclusive-sport programs.

3. Success Stories

3.1. Story 1: Shaping Inclusive Play, Together

Link: <https://aicstorino.it/progetto/sport-tra-pratica-e-partecipazione/> & <https://aicstorino.it/linee-guida-in-5-punti-per-unassociazione-piu-inclusiva/>

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AiCS (Associazione Italiana Cultura Sport), one of Italy's largest grassroots sports federations recognized by the Italian Olympic and Paralympic Committees, has long promoted active citizenship through sport, culture, and tourism. In Turin, its local branch became a national example by asking a fundamental question: were they trying to help people "fit into" the club, or were they willing to transform the club itself to be genuinely inclusive? This led them to reject a medical/welfare model where disability is a problem to be fixed, and embrace the social rights model, which recognizes that disability arises from barriers in the environment, not from the person. With this mindset, AiCS developed comprehensive guidelines for inclusion, drawing from their experience with rhythmic gymnastics and other sports.

Preparing the Ground

In AiCS Torino, inclusion begins well before anyone steps onto the field. Staff conducts pre-interviews with interested athletes to understand their passions, fears, and preferred communication methods. The club then provides a clear, detailed information about the program, signaling immediately the possibility of adapting activities to the person's needs.

The Welcome Moment

The arrival phase is treated as a critical ritual. Operators are trained to use an open, welcoming posture: standing tall, smiling, maintaining eye contact, and speaking in a calm, cheerful tone. The physical space is prepared in advance, with accessible pathways from the parking lot through the facility, ramps where needed, clear signage, and accessible bathrooms. AiCS understood that a single overlooked barrier could negate all other efforts.

Adapting the Sport, Not the Athlete

Inclusion during activities is achieved through “reasonable accommodation, adjusting the main program so everyone can participate without fragmenting the group. For instance, a football drill may shift to walking pace, or roles might be adapted so all players can contribute meaningfully. Crucially, staff are trained to “always ask before helping”, reinforcing autonomy and dignity rather than dependence.

Inclusion as a Living Process

What makes AiCS Torino’s approach is that it is never considered “finished.” The organization builds inclusion into a continuous cycle: 1. Observing how the person experiences the activity and interacts with space and peers, 2. Listen to feedback from the person and their family, 3. Adapt based on those insights. This isn’t a one-time adjustment, but an ongoing conversation.

A Community That Learns to Include

The results speak clearly. More athletes with disabilities have participated actively in mainstream programs. Social interaction and group cohesion is improved visibly. Families reported feeling more welcomed and confident. Affiliated associations progressively adopted universal design principles, providing evidence on how the entire sports community became more aware and capable of adapting dynamically to individual needs.

3.2. Story 2: The Design of Inclusive Play

Link: <https://around-sport.it/around-sport-per-inclusione/>

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Around Sport is an Italian CONI-recognised sports club that manages facilities and promotes active lifestyles and inclusion for people with disabilities. During their twelve year long experience they understood that the difference between segregated training and true integration wasn't simply about mixing children together: it required carefully orchestrated phases that respected the emotional and relational journey of each participant.

The heart of their method lies in the way each training session is intentionally structured, following a sequence designed to help every child participate while feeling safe and supported.

Making Kids feel Welcome

Their approach begins with something as simple as the moment a child arrives, called "Reception". The adult greeting the child knows that their posture, tone, and body language communicates safety more powerfully than any words. They stand with open arms, smile warmly, and kneel to meet the child at eye level. The environment is carefully prepared too: sometimes free and exploratory, other times structured with game stations or fully organized layouts. The message is always the same: you are expected, you are welcome, you belong here.

Circle Time

Before any physical activity begins, the group gathers in a circle time activity. This moment serves to teach listening and respect while allowing diverse forms of communication. Some children speak; others use gestures, visual signs, or participate through sound (perhaps passing a tambourine). One child might hold the "magic ball" to indicate that is their turn to share. The Circle isn't just a warm-up activity, it is a ritual that prepares everyone, emotionally and relationally, for what comes next.

Play That Builds Confidence

The actual play then unfolds in stages. It begins with multipurpose games that built basic motor skills and comfort with movement. Then come the "Game Exercises", competitive activities where children work together or in relay structures, without facing an opponent.

Finally, for those who feel ready and comfortable to take the next step, the session ends with a “Game Situation,” a real match with a real opponent that brings in problem-solving and the first taste of actual competition. Each stage is built on the previous one, respecting each child's readiness.

A Goodbye That Matters

The session ends as it began: with intention. The “Exit” ritual mirrors the warm reception, giving children a clear emotional transition from the safe space of play back to their routines at home. For many families, this small moment makes a big difference.

Real-Life Impact towards Active Participation

The impact of this method was visible in everyday moments. Over time, children with disabilities began to show greater independence and confidence. Their peers, including those who had been hesitant at first, formed real friendships and discovered how to collaborate. Parents witnessed moments they had never seen before, such as their children initiating social invitations beyond the sports setting.

3.3. Story 3: Wabol, Building Inclusion Through Play

Link: <https://infoanoia.cat/auria-grup-presenta-igualada-wabol-futbol-correr/> & <https://www.auria.org/>

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Fundació Àuria is a Catalan organization pioneering supported employment for people with intellectual disabilities and actively promoting inclusive sport methodologies. One of its most successful inclusion practices was the design of a Wabol event.

What Makes Wabol Truly Inclusive

Wabol is a playful, hybrid team sport created to be accessible for everyone. It blends elements of football and handball but slows down the pace and simplifies the rules so players of different abilities can join in without pressure. The event took place on a Saturday morning in Igualada, on a local sports field, but its success was built on weeks of meticulous planning. The goal was clear: create a fully accessible, genuinely inclusive sports experience for children with and without disabilities.

Planning Every Detail

The planning phase was intensive. Fundació Àuria's team conducted coordination meetings involving educators, project coordinators, volunteers, and local school representatives. They visited the sports field multiple times, assessing every aspect: pathways (would a child using a wheelchair be able to navigate?), rest areas (were there shaded benches for children who tired easily?), bathrooms and changing facilities (were they accessible?).

They prepared visual aids, easy-to-read instruction sheets, and color-coded bibs to help participants identify their teams. They assigned one volunteer to each small group, ensuring personalized support throughout the day.

Training the Team for Real Inclusion

A week before the event, Fundació Àuria held a two-hour training session for all staff and volunteers. This wasn't a generic orientation: it was specifically designed to prepare people to facilitate inclusion. The training covered understanding disability and how it might affect participation, inclusive communication using clear language, visual cues, and positive reinforcement, and the specific Wabol methodology.

Volunteers practiced using observation sheets, learned how to give constructive feedback, and role-played scenarios involving children with cognitive disabilities. By the end, every person on the team understood the logistics and the spirit of what they were trying to achieve.

A Game Where Everyone Can Shine

On the day itself, around twelve children with disabilities and twelve without participated in mixed teams, deliberately balanced by ability, age, and gender.

The Wabol rules ensured maximum participation: games lasted only 10–12 minutes, running was not allowed, roles rotated frequently, and scoring emphasized collective achievement. Volunteers provided crucial one-to-one support, helping participants follow instructions and stay motivated, while educators fostered both verbal and non-verbal communication among teammates. The atmosphere was relaxed and celebratory, with genuine laughter and encouragement.

Reflection and Recognition Valuing Every Voice

After the matches, the group gathered in a reflection circle where participants were invited to share their feelings and learnings. Some spoke, others used gestures or symbols, with volunteers supporting communication when needed. Everyone's voice was valued equally. The session concluded with a small celebration where every participant received a certificate and a medal.

Outcomes That Extend Beyond the Field

The outcomes confirmed that when accessibility and inclusive methodology are paired with staff training and genuine community engagement, children with disabilities gain confidence and independence, their peers develop empathy and cooperation, and families feel welcomed and motivated to continue participating in community activities.

3.4. Story 4: Inclusive Run

Link: <https://www.askoe.at/de/newsshow-das-war-der-2.-solidaritaetsrun-der-ooe-schulen?return=3>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goxxCVhmwCI>

Contact info: Veronica Avantaggiato - internationalprojectoffice@csit.tv

The Solidarity Run grew out of a simple concept: making sport event where participation carries more weight than performance. ASKÖ is one of the several member associations of CSIT (the International Workers and Amateurs in Sports Confederation) and is the largest association for physical culture in Austria, brought this idea to life in Vienna during the second edition of this event. More than 1,500 students from 13 high schools filled the Vöcklabruck Stadium with a shared purpose of running together to support children with disabilities.

Building a Network

Work began long before the event through the meticulous establishment of a strong network between the association and key stakeholders.

Teachers and school coordinators partnered closely with ASKÖ, opening conversations about inclusion and social responsibility inside classrooms. Students became ambassadors, spreading the message through school activities and helping shape a collective sense of purpose. This growing network was strengthened through a crowdfunding initiative. Families, schools, and local partners contributed to purchasing sports equipment for schools supporting children with disabilities. The campaign turned the run into a wider movement, linking physical effort with tangible social impact.

A Track Without Labels

On the day of the event, the track became a place where labels lost meaning. Students with different abilities ran side by side, supported by friends, teachers, and volunteers. The emphasis was not on who was fastest, but on the shared experience of moving together. The stadium carried a sense of unity that made competition feel like an afterthought.

Visibility Matters

ASKÖ and Sport4Everybody brought media, companies, and political representatives into the conversation, ensuring that the story resonated beyond the stadium. Newspapers, television, and a short film helped broaden the reach of the message, strengthening public awareness of inclusive sport as a social responsibility.

The Impact Beyond the Track

The results were clear even beyond the joy and engagement of the participants. Students experienced participation in an inclusive environment that felt natural and joyful. The crowdfunding campaign equipped schools with new materials to support children with disabilities. Partnerships between schools, institutions, and local companies grew stronger. The Solidarity Run managed to turn a single event into a shared lesson in empathy and engagement, showing how inclusion becomes real when people move together.

3.5. Story 5: Seeing the Player Beyond the Game

Link: <https://healthlifeacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/CHAPTE1-2.pdf>

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HLA (Health Life Academy) is a Croatian association that enhances children's physical and mental health through inclusive sports projects and collaborates with more than 40 partners.

Their work stems from a simple but radical shift: moving away from measuring children with intellectual disabilities against a culturally imposed idea of "normality,". Instead HLA embraces a functional diagnosis, that looks at what each child can do, how they move through the world, and which conditions allow them to thrive.

Focusing on Strengths

This led to the creation of an IEP-based evaluation tool designed not to measure performance, but to guide holistic, individualized coaching. At the start of the season, HLA facilitators held a briefing with coaches introducing this new approach. They explained that assessment shouldn't focus narrowly on technical football skills. Instead, observation should encompass sociability, adaptability, communication abilities, motor development, behavior, and self-help skills.

The key principle was simple: understand the player as a whole person, focus on strengths, and identify adaptations that support them, never comparing children with one another.

Learning from Everyday Participation

During regular SPL activities (weekly mixed training sessions, games, transitions between activities) coaches applied this holistic observation. They didn't interrupt the activity to complete formal scoresheets. Instead, they kept mental notes and simplified checklists, quietly observing how each child engaged, communicated (verbally or non-verbally), interacted socially, and responded emotionally to challenges. This naturalistic approach meant that assessment felt organic to the activity, not imposed upon.

From Insight to Impact

The true transformation happened afterward. HLA facilitated reflection sessions where coaches discussed their observations together. A coach might say, "I noticed Marcus showing better balance today during the passing drill," or "Anyia initiated communication with two teammates without prompting."

As coaches shared these insights, a clearer picture of each athlete emerged, for example one that revealed abilities and progress that had previously gone unnoticed. This new understanding led directly to better individual goal-setting: coaches could now tailor their sessions to each child's specific strengths and growth areas. Adaptation strategies improved because coaches understood not just what a child struggled with, but why, and what helped. Communication with families and other educators became easier because coaches now had a structured language to describe what they observed. The tool proved that evaluation, when applied holistically, becomes a powerful catalyst for inclusion rather than a mechanism of measurement.

3.6. Story 6: Growing Through Learning

Link: <https://nkistra.com/video-intervju-special-power-liga/>

Contact info: Anja Šegota - asegota@nkistra.com

NK Istra 1961, a professional football club in Croatia, faced a challenge common to many sports organizations: how to truly embed inclusion throughout the entire club structure, not just in isolated programs. The main idea was that without equipping their coaching staff, genuine inclusion would remain superficial, so they committed to a continuous investment in coach education.

A Hidden Asset

The club recognized that within their own ranks, they had a valuable resource: an SPL (Special Power League) coach who worked both at the club and in a school for children with intellectual disabilities. Rather than keeping this expertise isolated, they created regular informal workshops where this specialized coach shared practical knowledge with the academy staff. These weren't formal seminars with strict curricula, but genuine peer-learning moments where coaches could ask questions and discuss real situations they encountered. Over time, this integration of inclusion-related content into mainstream coaching meetings became normalized, simply part of how the club operated.

Looking Outward

But internal knowledge alone wasn't enough. NK Istra 1961 invested resources in sending coaches to external seminars, conferences, and certification programs organized by the Croatian Football Federation and academic institutions. This commitment to ongoing professional development ensured their staff remained current with modern coaching standards and inclusive methodologies. They also participated actively in the broader SPL learning community, where coaches from various clubs gathered to share experiences and discuss challenges.

Training That Makes a Difference

The educational journey continued within the Special Power League project, where NK Istra coaches participated in structured educational sessions focused on inclusion with an approach on practical skills: how to adapt exercises for mixed-ability groups, how to communicate effectively with children with intellectual disabilities, how to manage inclusive events, and how to create supportive environments both on and off the field.

Growth You Can See on the Field

The results spoke clearly. Coaches reported feeling more confident and competent in their ability to support diverse athletes. The club's overall culture shifted: inclusion became woven into the fabric of how they operated, not treated as an add-on.

Community engagement strengthened as families saw the genuine commitment to professional growth. By prioritizing learning, NK Istra 1961 demonstrated that dedication to coach education directly translates into higher-quality inclusive programs and a more professional organization overall.

3.7. Story 7: Scoring What Really Counts: An Inclusive Game System

Link: <https://www.ucec.cat/projectes/lesport-de-valors/>

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UCEC (Unió de Consells Esportius de Catalunya) is a Catalan union that coordinates sport activities for about 250 000 children and young people in Catalonia ($\approx 20\%$ of pupils).

This organization faced a fundamental tension in youth sports: how could they promote inclusion when the entire structure of competition emphasized winning over everything else? Their answer was to change the scoring system itself.

Designing a New Way to Measure What Matters

During the preseason, technical committees from UCEC met across multiple working sessions to design an "Inclusive Values Scoring System." The traditional approach to scoring had valued only athletic performance. UCEC's innovation was to create a dual-scoring method that evaluated both sporting actions and inclusive behavior. The observation sheet was carefully designed to reward specific behaviors: offering help to a teammate with a disability, adapting communication to ensure understanding, ensuring that every child participated actively in the game. The system was tested and refined until it was simple enough for any team sport in Catalonia to use.

Reinventing the Referee: From Enforcer to Educator

But a scoring system alone wouldn't work without changing how the games were managed. So UCEC made a bold move: they reconceptualized the referee role entirely. The traditional referee enforced rules from a distance, focused only on athletic performance. The new role, called the "Tutor de Joc" (Game Tutor), required the same person to monitor both sporting rules and social interaction. The Tutor de Joc watched not just who scored a goal, but who offered help, who included a struggling teammate, who communicated respectfully across differences. This required coordinated changes across rulebooks, training manuals, and communication materials throughout the sports councils.

Training Tutors to Lead Inclusive Matches

To prepare Tutors de Joc for this expanded role, UCEC designed a revised training curriculum. During preseason courses held in regional training centers, Tutors learned inclusive pedagogy and communication strategies for mixed-ability groups. They practiced using the observation sheet in realistic scenarios, learned how to give constructive feedback that reinforced inclusive behavior, and rehearsed situations involving children with cognitive disabilities.

By the start of the competition season, every Tutor de Joc understood that their role was to guide matches where inclusion, fairness, and respectful behavior carried equal value to sporting performance. A sample of the scoring sheet used by Tutors de Joc to assign points during matches is attached below. It illustrates how inclusive behaviors, fair play, and respectful interaction are formally integrated into the evaluation process.

Inclusion in Action

The impact on the field was profound. Coaches and Tutors reported more positive interactions among players and fewer conflicts. Children with and without cognitive disabilities showed clear improvements in respect and cooperation. Families embraced the model enthusiastically, recognizing that it taught their children something deeper than technical skills: it taught them that inclusion and fair behavior matter as much as victory. Year after year, participation in UCEC's values-based competitions grew, showing strong acceptance from parents and schools. The initiative strengthened collaboration among sports councils, coaches, and educational centers, creating a shared commitment that sport could be a vehicle not just for physical development, but for genuine community inclusion.

4. Checklist on Inclusive Practices

4.1. Why a checklist?

In the context of inclusive sport programs, **monitoring is the first step toward continuous improvement**. By systematically recording what has been implemented, clubs/teams can see which inclusive actions are already in place and where gaps remain, while also **identify emerging issues** early and make timely changes before the end of a season or project cycle.

The checklist below is intended **for practitioners working inside sports clubs** (coaches, technical staff, club managers, etc.). It is a **self-monitoring aid**, not a formal evaluation instrument; its purpose is to support the club's own reflection and learning rather than to assign a score or rating.

Effective monitoring relies on **information that prompts self-reflection**. This checklist offers a structured set of prompts that help clubs capture concrete evidence on inclusive actions through observation. The aim is to be **as objective as possible** while still capturing the lived reality of inclusion.

Effective monitoring, however, cannot rely solely on the perspective of the individual who completes the form; it must also incorporate the voices of those who experience the activity every day (players, parents, coaches and community volunteers). Systematically gathering feedback from these stakeholders, ensures that the lived reality of the sport community is reflected and that the process genuinely gives voice to the people it aims to include. This can be done with the help of tools such as, **observation logs** from training sessions or events, **interviews or focus-group notes** with athletes, parents, volunteers, and community partners or **documentation review** (e.g., activity plans, budgets, publicity material).

By triangulating different sources, clubs can produce a richer picture of what works, what does not, and why. This evidence base underpins the **habit of self-monitoring**, a cornerstone of sustainable inclusive practice.

4.2. How to complete the checklist

What you will find:

This checklist displays a series of Yes/No questions organized around the four main priority areas of activity (i.e., Training & Empowerment for Coaches, Inclusive Club Culture, Dialogue with Parents, Raising Community Awareness). Each question asks whether a specific priority has been carried out.

How to fill in the checklist:

For every inclusion priority area of activity:

1. **Mark “Yes”** if the activity has been implemented.
2. **Mark “No”** if the activity has not been implemented.
3. **When you answer “Yes” a series of follow up questions on specific sub priorities will help you to monitor actions already in place and eventual gaps**
4. **When you answer “No,”** a short reflective prompt will be suggested, asking you to note:

- ↳ Why the activity has not been carried out?
- ↳ What concrete steps could be taken to implement it?
- ↳ When (by what deadline) could those steps be started?

The checklist therefore functions as both a status-report and a planning tool: it highlights achievements, surfaces obstacles, and immediately translates them into actionable next steps. Use it regularly (e.g., at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the activity year) to keep your inclusive sport programme on track and to document the evolution of your club’s culture of inclusion.

4.3. The Checklist

1. Training & Empowerment for Coaches

Has a structured training programme for coaches that includes disability-inclusion content been delivered?

- Yes (Go to section 1a)
- No (Go to section 1b)

1a.

Training on Specific Disability and Inclusive Sports

Is the training continuous around the year?	Yes	No
Does the course include a mandatory disability module?	Yes	No
Does the training include specific practical internship hours on mixed ability sessions?	Yes	No

Developing Communication and Social Skills

Does the training include communication skill modules (e.g., active listening, empathy)?	Yes	No
Are coaches instructed to use an encouraging and inclusive language?	Yes	No
Are coaches instructed to use clear, concise instructions during sessions?	Yes	No

Mentoring and controlled exposure to inclusive environments

Are less experienced coaches paired with experienced mentors for observation and guided practice?	Yes	No
Does the mentoring process include dedicated feedback and reflection opportunities?	Yes	No
Other (please, specify)		

Read your responses again and count: how many items you marked “No” ?

Each “No” indicates a gap that can be turned into a concrete step forward. For each of this gaps describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

1b.

Since you did not implement a structured training programme for coaches that includes disability-inclusion content, now please try to.....

→ **Identify the barrier:** write a brief statement of what is currently preventing the practice.

→ **Define a first step:** describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

→ **Set a deadline:** note the month or time of year by which you will begin the first step

2. Creating an Inclusive Team & Club Culture

Have actions been implemented to promote a club culture focused on participation and inclusive values (e.g., equal playtime, value-based scoring, prejudice-reduction activities), rather than solely on competition?

- Yes (Go to section 2a)
- No (Go to section 2b)

2a.

Prioritize Participation Over Competition

Has a system been created to recognize and reward acts of inclusion, sportsmanship, or positive behaviors, as well as sporting results? Yes No

Do all children receive equal playtime in matches, regardless of skill level? Yes No

Are participation awards (not performance only trophies) are given to every player? Yes No

Tailor Activities and Roles

Do the drills contain games which require collaboration to solve challenges, showing complementary abilities? Yes No

Is drill pace is slowed when needed to allow full participation? Yes No

Are valued support roles (timekeeper, assistant coach, score keeper) assigned so every child contributes to the activities? Yes No

Is the environment (e.g., materials, location, duration) is customized for the children's abilities? Yes No

Use inclusive communication

Is communication (visual, verbal) adapted to each child's comprehension level? Yes No

Is person-first, respectful, and neutral language consistently used when referring to participants, avoiding reductive labels, pitying tones, or overly heroic framing? Yes No

Is communication coordinated among coaches and staff to ensure clarity and consistency in how adaptations and instructions are implemented? Yes No

Promote Socialization Outside of Training

Are team lunches/dinners or other social event held regularly? Yes No

Are small gatherings after matches organized? Yes No

Are non-sport social activities (e.g. weekend trips) offered? Yes No

Other (Specify) _____

Read your responses again and count: how many items you marked “No.” ?

Each “No” indicates a gap that can be turned into a concrete step forward. For each of this gaps describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2b.

Since you did not implement a structured training programme for coaches that includes disability-inclusion content, now please try to.....

→ **Identify the barrier:** write a brief statement of what is currently preventing the practice.

→ **Define a first step:** describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

→ **Set a deadline:** note the month or quarter by which you will begin the first step.

3. Fostering Continuous Dialogue with Parents

Have actions or systems been designed and implemented to facilitate communication with parents, keeping them informed and involved without interfering with training?

- Yes (Go to section 3a)
- No (Go to section 3b)

3a.

Establish a Bidirectional Dialogue

Before initiating a new activity, are parents consulted about their child’s daily routine, social and personal development (e.g. using a structured interview)?	Yes	No
Are there scheduled face to face meetings with all parents?	Yes	No
Are digital channels (e.g., email, WhatsApp, Viber) used for ongoing updates?	Yes	No

Empower parents as advocates

Are parents invited in planning committees or advisory groups?	Yes	No
Are parents involved in organizing social events (e.g., family days, fundraising activities)?	Yes	No
Are special education teachers or social workers included in planning of activities?	Yes	No
Other (specify) _____		

Read your responses again and count: how many items you marked “No.”?

Each “No” indicates a gap that can be turned into a concrete step forward. For each of this gaps describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3b.

Since you did not implement a structured training programme for coaches that includes disability-inclusion content, now please try to.....

→ **Identify the barrier:** write a brief statement of what is currently preventing the practice.

→ **Define a first step:** describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

→ **Set a deadline:** note the month or quarter by which you will begin the first step.

4. Raising Community Awareness

Are public-facing actions (inclusive sport days, community events, school partnerships, media outreach, crowdfunding) carried out to promote inclusive sport beyond the club’s own members?

- Yes (Go to section 4a)
- No (Go to section 4b)

4a.

Organization of public-awareness events

Are social events (e.g. presentations, sport days, conferences) held at least annually to showcase best practices and empowerment stories?	Yes	No
Were crowdfunding campaigns held in order to fund inclusive sport participation?	Yes	No
Does the team or club media coverage (e.g. local news, social media) highlight inclusive activities?	Yes	No

Collaboration with local networks

Are there any active partnerships with local schools, NGOs or community centers?	Yes	No
Are there organized activities involving local volunteer networks?	Yes	No
Are there any events or activities involving local businesses?	Yes	No
Other (specify) _____		

Read your responses again and count: how many items you marked “No.”

Each “No” indicates a gap that can be turned into a concrete step forward. For each of this gaps describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4b.

Since you did not implement a structured training programme for coaches that includes disability-inclusion content, now please try to.....

→ **Identify the barrier:** write a brief statement of what is currently preventing the practice.

→ **Define a first step:** describe a specific, achievable action that could start to address the barrier (max 1 sentence).

→ **Set a deadline:** note the month or quarter by which you will begin the first step.

4.4. Recap and revision:

Now review all your answers and count how many subpriorities received at least one “yes.” For each of those, mark “yes” in the table and highlight the corresponding box in green.

If you did not mark any “yes,” or if you selected “no” for the first question in the section, then mark “no” in the table and highlight the corresponding box in red.

Priority	Subpriority	Yes	No
Training and Empowerment for Coaches	Training on disability and inclusive sports		
	Improving communication and social skills		
	Mentoring and controlled exposure to inclusive environments		
Creating an Inclusive Team and Club Culture	Prioritize participation over competition		
	Tailor activities and roles		
	Promote socialization outside of training		
	Use an inclusive communication		
Fostering a Continuous Dialogue with Parents	Establish a bidirectional dialogue		
	Empower parents as advocates		
Raising Community Awareness	Organization of public awareness events		
	Collaboration with local networks		

Once completed, the table gives you a clear picture of your association’s strengths and the areas that require further attention.

The “No” boxes highlight the gaps to be addressed. The ideas and next steps for filling these gaps can be developed using the reflective prompts in each checklist section. Those short action notes become the practical roadmap for strengthening each subpriority.

Over the next months, this overview will help you focus your efforts on activating your sport community, amplifying the voices of everyone involved, and ensuring a consistently inclusive experience.

By working through this checklist, you are already shaping a club where every person can take part in the community as an active contributor, not as someone to be integrated or saved, but as someone who genuinely belongs. Keep nurturing a climate where autonomy and self-determination guide your choices, and you will help build a sport environment that grows stronger, fairer, and more participated with every season.

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