

Headline 5.3 Disabilities

1. Definition

Sports, physical activity, and play are essential tools for fostering interaction among individuals of diverse abilities, promoting equal participation, and empowering those with disabilities within society. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a key international treaty that establishes fundamental standards to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities and advocates for their equal treatment. This convention emphasises that individuals with disabilities should enjoy the same rights as those without disabilities. Additionally, the European Union's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 builds on the UN Convention, addressing various dimensions of disability rights and furthering the principles of equality and inclusion.

Inclusion in sports means providing opportunities for individuals, both with and without disabilities, to engage in sports activities on equal terms, emphasising autonomy and fairness. Engaging in physical activity not only improves the quality of life for people with disabilities but also enhances their confidence, fosters close friendships, and reduces feelings of loneliness. By focusing on abilities rather than limitations, sports and physical activities help to break down stereotypes, making visible the potential of individuals with disabilities and promoting a more cohesive and inclusive society.

The societal responsibility of organised sports includes the development of inclusive programs, which are driven by both normative-social-moral considerations and practical motives, crucial for maintaining public and political legitimacy. Many sports clubs and associations have recognised the importance of diversity and adjusted their frameworks, structures, and offerings accordingly, especially in response to issues of diversity and migration. Notable strides in promoting inclusivity for individuals with disabilities include initiatives such as adaptive sports and global recognition of events like the Paralympic Games, which showcase the remarkable talents of disabled athletes.

However, promoting inclusivity in sports requires addressing ableism, a significant challenge that involves discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities. Ableism presents obstacles such as inaccessible facilities, exclusion of disabled athletes, and unequal treatment. To tackle ableism effectively, sports organisations must focus on several key areas: creating inclusive organisational cultures, implementing accessible programs, ensuring barrier-free facilities, collaborating with scientific and advocacy groups, promoting diverse representation, and enhancing communication, services, and counseling. These efforts should prioritise accessibility across all aspects of sports, from architectural considerations to event participation guides, ensuring that sports environments are welcoming and inclusive for everyone, regardless of their abilities.

See also “External Communication” (3.5) and “Strategic Human Resources Management” (1.3).

2. Ideal Scenario

The organisation prioritises disability inclusion across all aspects of its operations, with accessibility guidelines and education forming a core part of its approach. Stakeholders are equipped with an understanding of functional diversity to break down barriers, supported by accessible premises and

events. Diverse representation is ensured through the employment of staff and volunteers, including individuals with disabilities, contributing expertise in disability-related matters. Inclusive policies and programmes cater to athletes with disabilities, offering equal opportunities for participation, training, and competition, with accessible facilities and trained coaching staff. Sporting events are designed to be inclusive, accommodating the needs of spectators with disabilities and providing clear communication on accessibility features. Disability inclusion is integrated into governance structures and decision-making processes, facilitated by advisory committees and regular assessments. The organisation advocates for disability rights and awareness, challenging stereotypes and promoting positive portrayals of athletes with disabilities. Detailed accessibility guidelines inform practices across various areas, while mandatory training sessions ensure all individuals involved are educated on disability awareness and inclusive practices tailored to their roles. Accessibility considerations are embedded into organisational policies, procedures, and decision-making, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.

3. Risks

- **Exclusion:** Failure to address disabilities can result in the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from participation in sports and related activities, leading to social isolation and discrimination.
- **Legal Non-Compliance:** Neglecting to consider disabilities may lead to non-compliance with disability rights laws and regulations, potentially resulting in legal repercussions, fines, or penalties.
- **Lack of accessibility:** Without appropriate governance measures in place, facilities, programs, and services may lack accessibility features, making it difficult or impossible for individuals with disabilities to participate fully.
- **Missed opportunities:** By disregarding the needs and perspectives of individuals with disabilities, organisations may miss out on valuable insights, talents, and contributions that could enhance diversity and innovation within the sports community.
- **Reputation damage:** Organisations that neglect to address disabilities may face reputational damage, as stakeholders, including athletes, sponsors, and the public, may perceive them as insensitive or discriminatory.
- **Ethical concerns:** Failing to prioritise inclusivity and accommodation for individuals with disabilities raises ethical concerns about fairness, equality, and social responsibility within the organisation.
- **Negative Public Perception:** Organisations that are perceived as disregarding the needs of individuals with disabilities may face backlash from the public and stakeholders, damaging their image and credibility.
- **Missed funding opportunities:** Many funding sources prioritise organisations that demonstrate a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. By neglecting disabilities in governance, organisations may miss out on funding opportunities.
- **Loss of trust:** failing to address disabilities erodes trust among stakeholders, including athletes, members, sponsors, and partners, leading to decreased engagement, support and collaboration.

4. Instruments and key elements

| <i>Instruments</i> | <i>Key elements</i> |
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| Accessible environments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the workplace environment, including offices, meeting spaces, and digital platforms, is fully accessible to employees and volunteers with disabilities. • Gather feedback, implement changes based on input, and monitor progress. • Collaborate with external organisations to create more inclusive environments. • Demonstrates varying degrees of accommodation and inclusion. • Accessible infrastructure, text-to-speech programmes, easy language, high contrast, etc. |
| Accessibility Audits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly audit your infrastructure, working methods, programs for accessibility. • Define criteria together with people with disabilities. • Report on the results to the board. • Regularly review the audit criteria. |
| Guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be distributed within the organisation as well as member organisations. • Focusing on awareness, communication strategies, and best practices for accommodating colleagues and participants with disabilities in the workplace and during events. |
| Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement recruitment processes that are inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities. • Accessible job postings, accommodations during interviews and assessments, and considering diverse candidates for all roles, both employment and volunteer. |
| Awareness-raising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement awareness campaigns to educate the public, the sport community and member organisations. • Provide accessibility training, guidelines and checklists for staff and volunteers focusing on awareness, communication strategies, and best practices for accommodating colleagues and participants with disabilities in the workplace and during events. |

5. Good practice examples

Example “Accessibility Guidance”

Organisation: International Paralympic Committee

Description: The development of an Accessibility Guide represents a significant advancement for the IPC, aiming to establish a clear philosophy, share best practices, and set specific technical guidelines for designing facilities and services essential for delivering an inclusive Games. This Guide is intended to offer valuable information and inspiration to the Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games

(OCOG) and Host City authorities responsible for staging the event. It provides expert guidance and detailed technical information grounded in proven best practices, enabling the delivery of truly inclusive Games that cater to the needs of all stakeholders.

Further information: [IPC Accessibility Guide - 4th edition - October 2020_0.pdf \(paralympic.org\)](#)

Example “Strategic Concept”

Organisation: German Olympic Sport Confederation (DOSB)

Description: In the “Strategic Concept for Implementation of Inclusion”, the DOSB has listed which measures are needed to make the equal participation of people with disabilities possible. Every year, measures from this concept are implemented in order to get closer to the goal. At the same time, a survey of member organizations is carried out every two years and the status of implementation of inclusion is presented. The inclusion strategy concept shows how the inclusion of people with disabilities can be systematically implemented in sport and was created together with the member organizations. It is good to transfer it to other sports associations.

Further information: [Inklusion im und durch Sport \(dosb.de\)](#)

Example “Accessibility Guidance”

Organisation: International Equestrian Federation

Description: The FEI has developed a comprehensive Accessibility Guide for Event Organisers to enhance accessibility for athletes, staff, and spectators with disabilities, ensuring that everyone can fully enjoy equestrian events regardless of their disability or mobility levels. Created through consultation and collaboration with accessibility experts, individuals with disabilities, and professionals in the equestrian industry, the guide addresses key areas of event planning and delivery, including venue layout, accommodation, and transportation. The goal is to equip Event Organisers with practical guidelines and recommendations to eliminate barriers, fostering an inclusive environment where people with disabilities can fully participate in or work within the sport.

Further information: [FEI Knowledgebase - 3.3 - Accessibility Guidance](#)

Example “Guidelines”

Organisation: Central Coast Council New Zealand

Description: This resource is designed to assist community sport and active recreation clubs and associations in offering inclusive mainstream activities and programs. It provides valuable information on expanding your programs, activities, and competitions, creating employment and volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities, and making physical environments more accessible. The primary objective is to guide local community clubs and associations from routine practices to best practices and innovation in accessible and inclusive sport and active recreation. The booklet is informed by extensive community feedback from individuals with lived experience of disability, their families, friends, and carers; the Central Coast Council Access and Inclusion Reference Group; local providers and sector workers; advocacy groups; local sport and active recreation experts; and relevant research and case studies on inclusive sport in Australia. It includes practical checklists to help clubs and associations enhance

accessibility, based on a customer journey map that visualizes each stage of a participant's interaction with a sporting group or active recreation program. Implementing activities from these checklists will foster a more inclusive and positive experience for all participants at various touchpoints, including registration, marketing and communication, staff and volunteer training, club premises, program development and delivery, on-field participation, and member retention.

Further information: [accessible_and_inclusive_sport_and_active_recreation_web.pdf \(sportnz.org.nz\)](#)

Example “Awareness raising”

Organisation: Para Sport

Description: PARA SPORT is a brand established to fortify the Paralympic Movement at all levels by providing tools and resources that promote grassroots participation and support Para athletes in their journey from local competitions to the Paralympic Games. Our mission is to educate and empower Para athletes, while developing pathways for them to excel across all levels of competition. By boosting participation from athletes and countries, and deepening the talent pool in Para sports, PARA SPORT aims to create a stronger, more diverse, and impactful Movement. This, in turn, will enhance social inclusion and empower the lives of the world’s 1.2 billion persons with disabilities. The brand’s story centres on three core areas: Awareness, Community, and Freedom. Awareness involves elevating the visibility and benefits of sport for people with disabilities and their families, affirming their rightful place in the sporting world. Community emphasizes the importance of the connections and shared experiences that sport fosters, creating a supportive environment whether one is a newcomer or a seasoned competitor. Freedom highlights the opportunity for individuals to challenge themselves, build self-confidence, and experience a profound sense of empowerment and personal identity through sport.

Further information: [About Para Sport - Awareness, Community & Freedom | IPC \(paralympic.org\)](#)

Example “Evaluation”

Organisation: Sport England

Description: Accessible evaluation involves designing an evaluation process for sports and physical activity projects that is both effective and inclusive for all participants, particularly those with specific communication needs, such as individuals with disabilities or those who do not speak English as a first language. Ensuring accessibility is crucial for gathering accurate data and supporting diverse audiences in staying active. Crafting an accessible evaluation can be challenging, as it requires balancing the diverse needs of different audiences, sometimes even at an individual level, while maintaining data quality. When executed well, accessible evaluation can lead to higher response rates, better data quality, and stronger evidence. Conversely, a poorly executed evaluation can deter participation, potentially impacting the project's overall success and engagement. Sport England provides guidance and surveys.

Further information: [Disabled people | Sport England](#)

6. Steps to the next level

| <p>To level 2 ★★ “Emerging”</p> | <p>To level 3 ★★★ “Developing”</p> | <p>To level 4 ★★★★ “Established”</p> | <p>To level 5 ★★★★★ “Embedded”</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all sport facilities are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing barrier-free public transport, assistive technology, accessible entryways, toilets, and braille signage for those with vision impairments. • Foster a culture of inclusion and diversity within the organisation by promoting respect, empathy, and awareness of different abilities. Encourage open communication, collaboration, and support networks among staff and volunteers, including affinity groups focused on disability inclusion. • Provide necessary workplace adjustments, including equipment modifications, flexible scheduling, and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure accommodations are available for attendees and participants with diverse sensory, ambulatory, and developmental capabilities. This includes making events, facilities, and services accessible to all, and proactively identifying and addressing potential barriers. • Conduct thorough training sessions for staff and volunteers on accessibility, accommodations protocols, and disability etiquette. Focus on raising awareness and ensuring best practices are followed to accommodate individuals with disabilities in all settings. • Make sure the workplace environment, including offices, meeting spaces, and digital platforms, is fully | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and observe inclusion as a cross-cutting task and consistent principle across all areas of the organisation, ensuring that it is embedded in every aspect of operations, decision-making, and activities. • Actively communicate the organisation’s commitment to inclusion externally by ensuring all press releases and visual content reflect the participation of people with disabilities. Ensure that all content is barrier-free and maintain strong networking and communication channels with members to provide information, services, and guidance on implementing inclusion strategies. • Ensure that athletes with disabilities are | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that accessibility is a core consideration in all existing and new areas of the organisation, embedding it as a fundamental principle in every aspect of operations, from facilities to programs and services. • Develop and implement tailored onboarding sessions and continuous training courses focused on accessibility for all employees, including full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff, as well as coaches, referees, and other volunteers, ensuring that everyone is equipped with the knowledge and skills to foster an inclusive environment. • Deploy accessible technologies, such as screen readers and voice control, across all of the organisation’s digital platforms. |

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| <p>any required assistance to support employees with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all text-based content is accessible by making it machine-readable, adaptive, and compatible with translation software. Provide documents in simple language and offer alternative formats where possible. • Add alt-text to images and research ways to ensure social media posts are accessible to all, including people with disabilities. • Identify and dismantle barriers preventing people with disabilities from participating in sports. Collaborate with sports associations to ensure inclusivity based on their roles and responsibilities. • Ensure that all event sites are fully accessible to | <p>accessible to employees and volunteers with disabilities. Implement necessary physical modifications, provide assistive technology, and ensure digital content is accessible for those with visual, hearing, or intellectual impairments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement recruitment processes that are inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes accessible job postings, accommodations during interviews and assessments, and considering diverse candidates for all roles, both employment and volunteer. • Actively represent the interests of disability inclusion in sports by engaging with stakeholders and governments. Develop and maintain partnerships with local and national disability | <p>represented and included in the organisation's decision-making processes. This may involve appointing representatives or establishing advisory committees focused on disability inclusion to ensure their voices are heard and considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the availability of sports, games, and physical activities for people with disabilities, offering both disability-specific and inclusive options in sports clubs as well as in facilities and organizations for people with disabilities. • Encourage member organisations to develop and implement measures for inclusion within their associations. Provide support in raising awareness among subdivisions and offer advice on best practices for | <p>Ensure these platforms adhere to the latest international 'Web Content Accessibility Guidelines' (WCAG 2.2), to guarantee that all digital content is accessible to individuals with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to embedding the financial resources required for barrier-free access into the organisation's financial guidelines. This includes ensuring funds are available for both structural/architectural accessibility and the removal of communicative or other barriers, enabling equal participation in exercise, play, and sport for all individuals. • Actively collaborate with external organisations, government agencies, and disability advocacy groups to leverage resources, share best practices, and |
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| <p>people with physical and ambulatory disabilities, making this a compulsory standard for all events.</p> | <p>organisations to share best practices and resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement awareness campaigns to educate the public, the sport community and member organisations about the importance of integrating people with disabilities. Highlight the benefits of inclusive sports programs and the need for accessible facilities. Provide accessibility training, guidelines and checklists for staff and volunteers focusing on awareness, communication strategies, and best practices for accommodating colleagues and participants with disabilities in the workplace and during events. Ensure that all training and further education courses are largely barrier-free and | <p>fostering inclusive environments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly review and update organizational policies, procedures, and practices to ensure they are inclusive of employees and volunteers with disabilities. This includes revising anti-discrimination policies, establishing accessibility standards for events and activities, and creating protocols for addressing disability-related concerns and complaints. Regularly monitor and evaluate the organisation's efforts in promoting disability inclusion and accessibility. Collect feedback from athletes, coaches, and staff to identify areas for improvement and measure progress over time. Engage with disability advocacy organisations and consult individuals with disabilities to gather feedback, | <p>advocate for policy changes that advance disability inclusion in sport. Ensure these partnerships contribute to creating a more inclusive environment for all participants.</p> |
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| | <p>accessible. Develop individual solutions to enable the participation of people with disabilities and include the topic of inclusion in general and specialised training courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement sports programs that cater to athletes of all abilities, including adaptive sports, Para sport events, and integrated sports programs where athletes with and without disabilities can participate together. • Ensure that sports facilities, venues, and equipment are accessible to athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators with disabilities. Make necessary physical modifications, provide assistive devices, and offer alternative formats for communication and instruction. • Regularly assess the organisation's efforts to support | <p>insights, and recommendations for improving accessibility and inclusion within the organization. Implement their suggestions to continually enhance the organisation's inclusivity.</p> | |
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| | <p>employees and volunteers with disabilities. Gather feedback, implement changes based on input, and monitor progress towards a more inclusive and accessible workplace environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement policies that support employees and volunteers with disabilities, including reasonable accommodation policies, flexible work arrangements, and accessible communication methods. • Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to increase physical accessibility at all events hosted by the organisation. Consider the needs of all populations, including those with sensory, ambulatory, and developmental disabilities, whether they are participants, staff, | | |
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