



BeST  
Inclusion  
Better Sport Through Inclusion

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE SPORT WORKPLACE

*What can be done to be more  
inclusive in the sport workplace?*



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by  
the European Union

2025

**EASE**  
European Association of Sport Employers

# HOW DID THIS PROJECT COME TO LIFE?

*Context, objectives, intersectionality, consortium*

## CONTEXT

The **ESSA-Sport project**, led by **EOSE**, highlighted the critical need to improve workforce inclusivity within the European sport sector. In response to this finding, the **BeST Inclusion project** was developed to specifically address this challenge. Its overarching goal is to deliver **actionable recommendations** that can be effectively implemented across all **European Union member states**, fostering greater inclusion within the sport sector.

## OBJECTIVES

Inclusiveness was addressed through three key dimensions: gender, age, and disability. By uniting experts and sport employers around these themes, the project aims to foster the exchange of knowledge and best practices. Each participant contributed their unique perspective, enriching the collective effort to promote greater inclusion in the sport sector. This collaborative approach will support the development of practical recommendations and effective practices that can be implemented wherever they are most needed.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Adding a dedicated section on intersectionality was highly relevant to the BeST Inclusion project as it recognizes that individuals may face multiple and interconnected forms of discrimination or barriers in the workplace. Gender, age, and disability often overlap with other identity factors, such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation, which can amplify challenges. By addressing intersectionality, the project can provide a more nuanced and complete understanding of inclusion and ensure that its recommendations and tools effectively meet the needs of individuals with complex and multifaceted identities.

## CONSORTIUM



## AGE INCLUSION

### Skill-Building Training

Implement comprehensive programs to equip youth with essential skills for an evolving sport work market

### Investment in Digital Learning

Improve digital infrastructure and resources to develop crucial digital skills across the life stages for the modern economy

### SMEs Apprenticeship Incentives

Allow financial bonuses for SMEs hiring apprentices, creating hands-on training opportunities for young people

### Stronger Employment Services

Enhance resources and training for public employment services to better assist young work seekers

### Start-up Support

Provide incubators, grant financial support and loans to help young entrepreneurs overcome barriers and launch their businesses

### Guide Young Employees

Find out more about your young employees and what motivates them to work in sport.  
Incentivise, guide and support them to build long-term careers in sport

### Career Management Education

Integrate career planning and guidance into formal education to help people navigate the work market through all life stages



Co-funded by  
the European Union

**EASE**  
European Alliance of Sport Entrepreneurs

**swos**  
werkgemers in de Sport

**spo life**

**S**  
SPORTWISS HAAST  
WIJZEN VAN SPORT

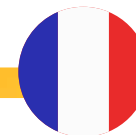
# Examples of Studies and Initiatives



The European Union operates programs such as the Solidarity Corps and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs. These initiatives aim to **provide young individuals with opportunities** for personal and professional growth through volunteering, entrepreneurship, and cross-cultural experiences.



In Estonia, individuals who are enrolled in studies are granted **additional vacation days**. This recognition of the importance of education and the need for time off to pursue studies can contribute to a **more educated and skilled workforce**.



France has successfully implemented a **civic service program** as a national traineeship initiative. This program offers valuable opportunities for young people to gain **practical experience** and **contribute to the community**.



Glasgow Works Youth Gateway: Glasgow's initiative pools expertise from multiple authorities, **engages employers early, and provides in-work support**, effectively reducing youth unemployment despite economic challenges.



EduCluster:  
Central Finland's Learning Region fosters **collaboration between education and business**, driving innovation and workforce development through the EduCluster framework.



The Youth Employment Initiative is a European Union initiative that supports projects across EU regions with high levels of youth unemployment. It aims to provide young people **with quality employment, education, and training opportunities**.





# GENDER INCLUSION

## Equal Pay

Introduce an annual salary review, establish transparent pay scales & deal with gender-based pay discrepancies without delay

## Affirming Communication

Highlight and showcase successful role models such as women athletes or coaches through promotional campaigns and proactive initiatives

## Mentoring & Professional Networking

Create professional women's networks to ensure forums for women to exchange ideas and provide mutual support

## Zero Tolerance for GBV

Implement anti-harassment policies, confidential reporting, mandatory training, and appoint a GBV Officer to lead prevention efforts

## Inclusive Working Conditions

Guarantee equal parental leave options to support career growth including menstrual leave and flexible work options for health conditions

## Success of Women

Roll out specific training modules for women to encourage them to take on positions of responsibility within their sport organization

## Quotas & Equal Representation

Introduce gender parity or quotas for positions of responsibility and decision-making to ensure equal representation in sport organizations



Co-funded by  
the European Union

EASE  
European Association of Sport Employers

swos  
werkgemers in de Sport

spo life

S  
SPORTWISS HAAST  
WIJDE VAN SPORT

# Examples of Studies and Initiatives



Countries such as Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands or Lithuania have an **employability of women above 50%**, other countries such as Malta or Germany have almost **equal gender representation** of their employees in the sport sector (although men slightly higher). Countries with a proportion of **more than 45% of female employees** are Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and the United Kingdom, while Croatia, Romania and Slovakia have less than 40%. In other words, the northern European countries show a higher representation of women in the sports labour market, while the southern and eastern European countries are those with the greatest inequality in employability in sport.



In 2023, Spain introduced a **“menstrual leave” policy**, recognizing menstrual health in the workplace. Though not sport-specific, it sets a precedent for inclusivity that sports organizations could adopt.



Sport Ireland is committed to advancing gender equality in sports by **funding and supporting initiatives that enhance female participation, coaching, and leadership opportunities**. It aims to create a more inclusive sport environment and ensure sustained involvement of women across all roles.



In Flanders, there is a concerted effort to ensure that representation across all levels of sports mirrors the diversity of society. This includes athletes, coaches, board members in Flemish sports clubs, and managers within Flemish sports federations.



Co-funded by  
the European Union

EASE  
European Association of Sport Enthusiasts

swos  
sportkenners in de Sport

spo life

S  
SPORTWISS HAAST  
WIJDE VAN SPORT

# DISABILITY INCLUSION

## Culture of Inclusion

Create welcoming environments by embedding accessibility and inclusion into sport company values and everyday practices

## Pratiques d'embauche inclusive

Promouvoir des pratiques d'embauches inclusives et sensibiliser aux dispositifs pour aider l'embauche de personnes en situation de handicap dans le secteur du sport

## Adaptive Work Environments

Implement flexible work roles, remote work options, and tailored accommodations to meet individual needs

## Accessible Communication

Use of inclusive formats (braille, subtitles, easy-to-read language) to ensure clear and effective communication

## Role Models

Highlight the success of employees with disabilities, particularly athletes and coaches, to inspire inclusion and challenge biases within the sport sector

## Long-Term Inclusion Efforts

fostering mentorship programs, adaptive career development, and ongoing support for employees with disabilities

## HR Policies on Accessibility

Unify accessibility policies and standards to ensure a clear, structured approach to sport workplace accommodations



Co-funded by  
the European Union

EASE  
European Association of Sport Employers

swos  
werkgemers in de Sport

spo life

S  
SPORTWISS HAAST  
WIEDE VAN RUST

# Examples of Studies and Initiatives



The Dutch Football Federation improved inclusivity by assessing applicants through **specific questions instead of CVs**, reducing biases related to gender, age, or disability. The Netherlands also uses AI to ensure work descriptions are written inclusively, fostering fairer hiring practices.



Italy requires companies to meet **specific quotas for employing people with disabilities**, ensuring better workforce inclusion. Similarly, Ireland has set **target percentages** to increase the representation of employees with disabilities across various sectors



In France, the association APAJH supports young people with disabilities by providing **training, mentorship, and workplace adaptation**. It collaborates with companies to promote **inclusive hiring and long-term employment opportunities**.



In Sweden, the association Arbetsförmedlingen provides training and guidance to employers on how to **adapt workplaces for employees with disabilities**. It offers support on accessibility measures, inclusive policies, and best practices to create a more accommodating and equitable work environment.



In Lithuania, businesses employing people with disabilities benefit from **tax reductions and subsidies**, helping to **lower hiring costs** and promote workplace inclusivity.



The UGR-Vivagym-Adecco Chair promotes the employability of students with disabilities through sports by **supporting research, internships, and specialized training**. The initiative raises awareness and develops strategies to address employment challenges for individuals with disabilities.





# INTERSECTIONALITY

## Inclusive Hiring Stars Here

Use bias-free recruitment, inclusive work ads, and diverse hiring panels to ensure equal opportunities

## Accountability for Progress

Require organizations to publish diversity goals, progress reports and to appoint an Inclusion Officer within the sport organization

## Breaking Barriers in Sports and Careers

Make grassroots sports inclusive to create pathways for diverse talent in the workforce

## Equal Pay, Equal Worth

Conduct regular pay audits to ensure wage equity and eliminate gender or impairment-based salary gaps

## Sport for All, Work for All

Engage underrepresented groups and promote accessibility to build a diverse sports workforce

## Flexibility for All

Adapt work structures to support parents, people with disabilities, and diverse work-life needs

## Representation Matters

Promote diverse role models in leadership to challenge stereotypes and inspire inclusion.

## Education for Change

Provide ongoing diversity training to combat biases and foster an inclusive sport workplace





***ACCESS OUR DIGITAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS***



Co-funded by  
the European Union

**EASE**  
European Association of Sport Employers