



BeST  
Inclusion  
Better Sport Through Inclusion

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# GUIDE OF BEST PRACTICES

*BEST PRACTICES FOR THE  
INCLUSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY  
OF THE SPORT WORKFORCE*



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# INTRODUCTION

## What is the BeST Inclusion project?

The BeST Inclusion project aims to contribute to the **work for greater inclusion within the sport sector by making practical recommendations to sport employers regarding the employment of women, young people and people with disabilities.** It is coordinated by EASE (European Association of Sport Employers), with the support of experts, academic partners and sport employers coming from 9 different European countries.



The objective of the BeST Inclusion project is to enhance employability by providing comprehensive support to sports employers, equipping them with the necessary tools to confidently hire from diverse background. The key objectives include:

- **Evaluating obstacles to achieving a more inclusive workforce in the sports sector,** considering factors such as gender, age and disability;
- **Identifying effective existing policies that promote inclusivity in the sports workforce;**
- **Developing policy recommendations that address inclusivity in the sports sector,** aligning with its economic dynamics;
- **Facilitating the exchange of knowledge among economic stakeholders in the sports sector and advocates for inclusivity in sports;**
- **Creating practical tools to promote concrete actions for a more inclusive sport workforce.**

The BeST Inclusion project also addresses the concept of good governance in European sports by focusing on social inclusion. **It aims to contribute to European sport policies by fostering collaboration and social dialogue among European sport entities.**

# INTRODUCTION

## Understanding Inclusion in the Sports Workforce

Inclusion is not merely a buzzword; it's the cornerstone of a truly equitable and thriving society. At its essence, inclusion embodies the fundamental principle that **every individual, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstance, deserves equal opportunities, respect, and representation.** It transcends mere tolerance, urging us to actively embrace and celebrate the rich tapestry of human diversity.

In the context of the sports workforce, inclusion extends far beyond ensuring equal access to employment opportunities. It encompasses **fostering a culture where individuals of all races, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds feel valued, empowered, and able to contribute their unique perspective and talents.** It's about creating environments where differences are not only accepted but embraced as catalysts for innovation, growth, and excellence.

The importance of inclusion in the sports industry cannot be overstated. Beyond the moral imperative of upholding principles of fairness and equality, there are compelling practical reasons why organizations should prioritize inclusivity. **By fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces, organizations can tap into a wealth of perspectives, experiences, and talents, driving innovation, problem-solving, and creativity.**

Moreover, **inclusive organizations are better equipped to attract and retain top talent from a broad pool of candidates.** When individuals feel supported, respected, and valued for who they are, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work. This not only enhances organizational morale and cohesion but also leads to improved performance and productivity.

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, characterized by demographic shifts and changing societal norms, inclusion and diversity are no longer optional – **they are imperative.** Organizations that fail to prioritize these principles risk not only stifling their own potential but also alienating key stakeholders, including employees, customers, and partners.



## What are the barriers and challenges identified in creating an inclusive sports workplace in terms of age ?

### *How do generational differences impact workplace dynamics in the sports industry ?*

Generational differences significantly impact workplace dynamics in the sports industry, shaping various organizational culture and communication aspects. Firstly, **values enlightenment** plays a pivotal role, with younger generations often prioritizing trending sports and technological advancements over traditional values like fair play and solidarity. This shift in priorities can lead to divergent strategic priorities for developing the sports sector as organizations grapple with catering to evolving audience preferences while upholding core values. Additionally, **communication styles** vary across generations, with older generations favouring face-to-face or email conversations, while younger counterparts lean towards instant messaging platforms like social media. These differences in communication preferences can influence collaboration and information exchange among sports managers, coaches, trainers, and athletes, necessitating adaptability and flexibility in communication strategies within the workplace.

Furthermore, **generational disparities** are evident in work ethic, as their upbringing and societal influences shape each generation's values and attitudes. Older generations often prioritize loyalty and hard work, preferring to stay with one sports club, federation, or organization for an extended period. In contrast, younger generations prioritize **work-life balance and flexibility**, displaying a propensity for changing organizations and roles within the sports sector more frequently. This dichotomy in work ethic can lead to contrasting expectations and approaches to work, requiring organizations to tailor management strategies and incentives accordingly.

Moreover, **technology adoption** varies across generations, with younger cohorts embracing new technologies more readily than their older counterparts. This disparity in technological proficiency can result in differences in how technology is integrated into work processes and communication within the workplace, potentially impacting efficiency and collaboration. Additionally, attitudes towards career development and advancement differ between generations, with younger generations seeking opportunities for rapid advancement and skill development. In comparison, older generations prioritize stability and longevity within their sports organization roles. This divergence in career aspirations necessitates **personalized approaches to talent management and succession planning to accommodate varying needs and motivations**.

Furthermore, **workplace flexibility** is a key area where generational differences manifest. Younger generations often prioritize flexible work arrangements such as remote work options and flexible hours. This preference for flexibility underscores the importance of adaptable workplace policies that cater to diverse generational needs and preferences. By embracing this flexibility, organizations can **foster a culture of inclusivity and accommodate the evolving needs of their workforce**.



## *What specific age-related biases exist in the hiring and promotion processes within sports organisations ?*

Age-related biases in hiring and promotion processes within sports organizations are evident in various forms, impacting younger and older individuals. Firstly, **biases related to experience often disadvantage young people who have recently graduated from university or are still pursuing their education.** Despite possessing relevant skills and qualifications, these individuals may be overlooked for positions requiring expertise or leadership experience. Employers may perceive them as needing more experience. They may need more time or resources to invest in training and onboarding, making them excluded from roles with greater responsibilities. Consequently, **young professionals may be relegated to simple, low-qualified tasks, limiting their opportunities for career advancement and professional growth within the organization.**

Conversely, **age-related biases also affect older-generation representatives in the hiring and promotion processes within sports organizations.** Older individuals may be stereotyped as resistant to change or needing more technological proficiency, particularly in digital skills and innovation in the sports sector. Employers may need to pay more attention to them for roles requiring technological understanding or involvement in innovative projects, assuming their age correlates with a reluctance or inability to adapt to new technologies. This bias deprives older individuals of opportunities to contribute their expertise and experience in driving organizational innovation and perpetuates outdated stereotypes that undermine their potential contributions to the organization. Thus, addressing age-related biases in hiring and promotion processes is essential for **fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace culture within sports organizations, where individuals of all ages are valued for their skills, experiences, and contributions.**

## *How do age-related stereotypes affect the opportunities for advancement and inclusion in sports workplaces ?*

Age-related stereotypes profoundly impact the opportunities for advancement and inclusion in sports workplaces, affecting individuals across different age groups. Firstly, **young professionals are often underestimated as being more accurate in their skills and experience due to stereotypes that they need more maturity and expertise for roles with higher levels of responsibility or leadership.** Conversely, **older generations may need to be more noticed for innovation and technology-related tasks, as they are perceived as less adaptable or proficient in these areas.** These stereotypes limit opportunities for younger and older individuals to contribute their skills and experiences fully, hindering their advancement within sports organizations.

Moreover, age-related stereotypes contribute to **limited authority and decision-making opportunities for young professionals in sports workplaces.** They may be perceived as needing more authority or credibility due to their age, leading to their exclusion from decision-making processes and leadership roles. **This exclusion deprives young professionals of opportunities to influence organizational direction and strategy and perpetuates the notion that age determines one's ability to lead effectively.** This bias undermines the potential contributions of young professionals and hampers the overall diversity and inclusivity of leadership teams within sports organizations.

Furthermore, implicit biases in hiring and promotion processes exacerbate the challenges faced by young professionals in advancing their careers in sports workplaces. Hiring managers and decision-makers may harbour unconscious biases against young candidates, assuming they are inexperienced or unreliable solely based on age. This bias can lead to overlooking young talent and innovative perspectives, resulting in **missed opportunities for fresh ideas and out-of-the-box solutions**. As a result, young professionals may find themselves marginalized and their contributions undervalued, further perpetuating age-related stereotypes and limiting their opportunities for advancement.

Stereotypes about work ethic and commitment can also **undermine young professionals' credibility and advancement opportunities in sports workplaces**. They may encounter perceptions of being lazy or entitled, which erode trust in their abilities and dedication to their roles. These stereotypes not only impede young professionals' professional growth and development but also contribute to a toxic work environment where individuals are unfairly judged based on age rather than merit. Thus, combating age-related stereotypes and **fostering a culture of inclusivity and meritocracy are essential for creating opportunities for advancement and inclusion in sports workplaces, where individuals are valued for their skills, contributions, and potential rather than their age**.

## What does an inclusive sports workplace look like in terms of age ?

*How can sports organizations ensure equitable representation across different age demographics in their workforce ?*

Sports organizations can ensure equitable representation across different age demographics **by implementing various strategies focused on recruitment, policies, mentorship, and training**. Firstly, **diverse recruitment practices** are essential to attract candidates from multiple age groups. This can involve promoting job opportunities through different channels, such as word of mouth, social media platforms, recruitment services, and partnerships with other sports organizations. By casting a wide net, organizations can reach a diverse pool of candidates and increase the likelihood of equitable representation across age demographics.

**Structured interview processes** are another crucial tool for ensuring fairness and consistency in assessing candidates from different age groups. Standardized questions and evaluation criteria help mitigate biases and ensure that all candidates are evaluated based on their qualifications and merit rather than age-related assumptions or stereotypes.

**Implementing age-inclusive policies** is also essential for promoting equal opportunities for advancement and professional development regardless of age. These policies can include measures to prevent age discrimination in hiring and promotion decisions and initiatives to support career progression and skill development for employees at all stages of their careers.

**Intergenerational mentorship programs** are vital in facilitating knowledge exchange, skill development, and perspective-sharing among employees from different age groups. By pairing younger professionals with seasoned veterans, organizations can foster a culture of learning and collaboration that benefits individuals of all ages and promotes inclusivity in the workplace.

**Offering leadership development programs accessible to employees at all career stages** is another effective way to promote equitable representation across age demographics. By providing opportunities for skill-building and career advancement, organizations can empower individuals from diverse age groups to take on leadership roles and contribute to the organization's success.

**Volunteering programs** can also play a valuable role in nurturing young talent in the sports sector. By offering opportunities for hands-on experience and skill development, organizations can attract young professionals passionate about sports and eager to contribute to the organization's mission. These programs help grow the talent pipeline and cultivate ambassadors who can promote the organization's values and attract other young professionals to join the team.

Finally, **regular diversity and inclusion training** is essential for raising awareness of unconscious biases and promoting a culture of respect and inclusion within the organization. By providing education and awareness-building opportunities on age diversity and other aspects of diversity, organizations can create a more inclusive workplace where individuals of all ages feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.

### *What strategies can be implemented to promote intergenerational collaboration and knowledge sharing in sports workplaces ?*

**Promoting intergenerational collaboration and knowledge sharing in sports workplaces fosters a culture of learning, innovation, and inclusivity.** One effective strategy is **establishing intergenerational mentorship programs**, where employees from different age groups are paired to facilitate knowledge exchange and professional development. By providing mentorship opportunities, younger employees can benefit from the wisdom and experience of their older counterparts. In comparison, older employees can gain fresh perspectives and insights from younger colleagues, creating a mutually beneficial learning environment.

**Creating cross-generational teams to work on competitions, events, projects, and initiatives within the sports organization** is another effective way to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing across age groups. By bringing together individuals with diverse experiences, skills, and perspectives, organizations can leverage the strengths of each generation to achieve common goals and drive innovation.

Additionally, **providing digital platforms and tools that facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among employees of all ages** can enhance organizational communication and information exchange. By creating online forums, databases, and collaboration tools, organizations can break down silos and facilitate seamless sharing of ideas, best practices, and expertise across different age groups.

Another effective strategy is **organizing team-building activities and social events that bring employees from different age groups together in a fun and interactive environment.** Activities such as sports competitions, healthy lifestyle challenges, and social gatherings provide opportunities for employees to bond, build trust, and develop meaningful relationships outside of the workplace, fostering a sense of camaraderie and collaboration across generations.

**Implementing flexible work arrangements accommodating employees' diverse needs and**



**preferences across different age groups** is also essential for promoting intergenerational collaboration. By offering flexible hours, remote work, and job-sharing options, organizations can empower employees to balance their personal and professional commitments while contributing effectively to the team.

Finally, **recognizing and rewarding employees for their contributions to intergenerational collaboration and knowledge sharing is essential for reinforcing desired behaviours and fostering a culture of appreciation and respect.** By acknowledging and celebrating individuals actively participating in cross-generational initiatives, organizations can incentivize and encourage continued collaboration and knowledge sharing across age groups, ultimately enhancing organizational performance and success.

*How do policies and practices regarding retirement, succession planning, and mentorship contribute to age inclusivity in sports organisations ?*

Policies and practices regarding retirement, succession planning, and mentorship play a vital role in promoting age inclusivity in sports organizations by fostering a culture where employees of all ages are valued, supported, and empowered to contribute their skills and expertise. Firstly, **flexible retirement options allow older employees to transition out of the workforce gradually while still contributing their knowledge and experience.** Organizations can retain valuable talent and ensure a smooth transition while accommodating individual preferences and needs by offering options such as **phased retirement or reduced hours.** This approach benefits older employees by allowing them to maintain a sense of purpose and engagement and enables organizations to retain institutional knowledge and experience.

Continued engagement of retired employees is a valuable resource that sports organizations can tap into. By offering **part-time or consulting roles, volunteer opportunities, or alumni networks,** organizations can leverage their expertise and maintain connections. This not only provides a platform for retired employees to share their valuable insights and experiences but also **fosters ongoing learning and collaboration, benefiting the organization and the retirees.**

**Respecting employees' choices regarding retirement timing is a fundamental aspect of promoting age inclusivity in sports organizations.** It's crucial to ensure that retirement decisions are not solely based on age. By valuing individuals' autonomy and contributions regardless of their age, organizations can create a culture of inclusivity and respect. This approach fosters an environment where employees feel valued and appreciated for their skills and expertise, not their age, thereby promoting age inclusivity.

**Succession planning** is another critical aspect of promoting age inclusivity in sports organizations. By implementing robust succession planning processes that identify and develop high-potential employees across all age groups, organizations can ensure a pipeline of talent for future leadership roles. Promoting a level advancement approach to succession planning that **considers employees' skills, experience, and potential rather than age ensures equal career advancement and growth opportunities, regardless of age.**

**Facilitating mentorship relationships between employees from different age groups** is another

effective strategy for promoting age inclusivity in sports organizations. Intergenerational mentorship programs **foster knowledge sharing, professional development, and mutual learning, enabling employees to benefit from each other's insights and experiences.** Additionally, they encourage **reverse mentorship**, where younger employees mentor older colleagues on topics such as technology and emerging trends, and promote cross-generational collaboration and innovation, benefiting both mentors and mentees.

**Providing mentorship support for employees at various career stages, including entry-level staff, mid-career professionals, and those nearing retirement, ensures that individuals receive guidance and support tailored to their needs and aspirations.** By offering mentorship programs that cater to the diverse needs and experiences of employees across different age groups, organizations can foster a culture of continuous learning and development, promoting age inclusivity and enhancing overall organizational performance.

## How can we implement and develop an inclusive workplace in the sports industry ?

### *What role do leadership and management play in fostering inclusivity within sports organisations ?*

Leadership and management play a critical role in fostering inclusivity within sports organisations by setting the tone, establishing policies and practices, and creating a culture where **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are valued and prioritised.** Here's how leadership and management contribute to fostering inclusivity:

- **Setting the Tone:** Leaders and managers set the tone for inclusivity within the organisation through their words, actions, and behaviours. By consistently demonstrating a commitment to DEI principles and holding themselves and others accountable for creating an inclusive environment, they establish a culture where everyone feels welcome and respected.
- **Establishing Policies and Practices:** Leadership and management are responsible for developing and implementing policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion across all aspects of the organisation, including recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, and decision-making processes. This may include implementing bias-free hiring practices, establishing diversity goals and metrics, and providing training and education on topics such as unconscious bias and cultural competency.
- **Creating Opportunities for Participation and Advancement:** Leaders and managers play a key role in creating opportunities for all employees to participate and advance within the organisation, regardless of their background or identity. This may involve providing mentorship and professional development opportunities, advocating for diverse representation in leadership positions, and addressing barriers to advancement faced by underrepresented groups.
- **Fostering a Culture of Belonging:** Effective leadership and management foster a culture of belonging where every individual feels valued, respected, and included. This may involve promoting open communication, actively soliciting feedback from employees, and creating opportunities for collaboration and teamwork across different departments and levels of the organisation.
- **Addressing Bias and Discrimination:** Leaders and managers have a responsibility to address

bias and discrimination whenever they occur within the organisation. This may involve conducting investigations into allegations of discrimination, providing support and resources for employees who have experienced discrimination, and implementing corrective actions to prevent future incidents.

- **Leading by Example:** Ultimately, leaders and managers must lead by example by embodying the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their own behaviour and decision-making. By demonstrating a commitment to DEI principles in their interactions with employees, stakeholders, and the broader community, they inspire others to do the same and create a more inclusive organisational culture.

### *What steps can be taken to address unconscious bias and promote diversity at all levels of the sports industry ?*

Addressing unconscious bias and promoting diversity at all levels of the sports industry requires a multifaceted approach that involves raising awareness, implementing policies and practices, and fostering a culture of inclusivity. Some of the possible steps:

- **Education and Training:** Provide education and training programs to raise awareness of unconscious bias and its impact on decision-making processes. Offer workshops, seminars, and online courses that explore topics such as implicit bias, stereotype threat, and microaggressions, and provide practical strategies for mitigating bias in the workplace.
- **Bias-Free Recruitment and Hiring Practices:** Implement bias-free recruitment and hiring practices to ensure that candidates are evaluated based solely on their qualifications and potential. This may include using blind resume screening techniques, standardised interview protocols, and diverse hiring panels to minimise the influence of unconscious bias in the selection process.
- **Diversity Goals and Metrics:** Establish diversity goals and metrics to track progress and hold leaders and managers accountable for advancing diversity initiatives. Set targets for representation at all levels of the organisation and regularly monitor and report on progress towards achieving these goals.
- **Inclusive Leadership Development:** Provide leadership development programs that emphasise the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion and equip leaders with the skills and tools needed to effectively lead diverse teams. Offer training on inclusive leadership practices, cultural competence, and cross-cultural communication to help leaders create inclusive work environments where all employees feel valued and respected.
- **Diverse Representation in Decision-Making Roles:** Ensure that decision-making bodies within the organisation, such as hiring committees, promotion panels, and leadership teams, reflect the diversity of the workforce and the communities they serve. Actively recruit and promote individuals from underrepresented groups to decision-making roles to bring diverse perspectives and voices to the table.
- **Employee Resource Groups:** Establish employee resource groups (ERGs) or affinity groups that provide support, networking, and professional development opportunities for employees from underrepresented backgrounds. Encourage participation in ERGs and provide resources and support for their initiatives and activities.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Feedback:** Gather feedback from employees through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews to better understand their experiences and perspectives and inform future diversity initiatives.
- **Community Engagement and Partnerships:** Engage with the broader community and

establish partnerships with organisations and initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion in the sports industry. Support initiatives aimed at increasing access and opportunities for underrepresented groups in sports, such as youth development programs, grassroots organisations, and diversity-focused sports leagues.

### *How do training and education programs contribute to creating a culture of inclusivity in sports workplaces ?*

Training and education programs are fundamental in fostering a culture of inclusivity within sports workplaces. They serve as catalysts for change **by raising awareness, promoting understanding, and equipping employees with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively address diversity, equity, and inclusion issues.** Firstly, these programs **raise awareness of the prevalent problems such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, privilege, and systemic inequalities that exist within the sports industry.** By shedding light on these topics, employees become more attuned to discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, enabling them to challenge and rectify such instances in themselves and others.

Moreover, **education programs provide a platform for employees to learn about different perspectives, experiences, and identities, fostering greater understanding and empathy across diverse groups.** By gaining insight into the challenges faced by underrepresented individuals in the workplace, employees develop a deeper appreciation for creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

**Training programs also play a crucial role in equipping employees with the skills needed to contribute to a culture of inclusivity.** These may include training on cultural competence, unconscious bias mitigation, inclusive communication, conflict resolution, and allyship. By acquiring these skills, employees are better equipped to navigate diverse work environments, communicate effectively with colleagues from different backgrounds, and advocate for inclusion within their teams and organizations.

Furthermore, **training programs establish a shared language and understanding around diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, facilitating meaningful dialogue and collaboration across diverse groups.** By providing common terminology and frameworks for discussing these topics, education programs enable employees to engage in constructive conversations, address differences productively, and work together to create a more inclusive workplace culture.

Training and education programs serve as vital tools in creating a culture of inclusivity within sports workplaces by raising awareness, promoting understanding, building essential skills, and fostering collaboration across diverse groups. By investing in these programs, organizations can empower employees to drive positive change and cultivate environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and included.

### **What is being done in European countries to achieve an inclusive sports workplace?**

### *What legislative measures or governmental initiatives support diversity and inclusion efforts within the sports sector ?*

In various countries, legislative measures and governmental initiatives are in place to support diversity and inclusion efforts within the sports sector, echoing broader societal aims towards equality and fairness. **Equal opportunity laws** stand as foundational pillars, prohibiting discrimination across various dimensions such as race, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation in employment, education, and public accommodations. By enforcing these laws, governments ensure that sports organizations adhere to principles of fairness and non-discrimination in their recruitment, retention, and operational practices.

Moreover, governments may enact specific **diversity and inclusion policies** tailored to the sports sector. These policies can range from guidelines encouraging organizations to adopt inclusive practices to mandates requiring equitable representation on governing boards or funding criteria prioritizing diversity initiatives. By instituting such measures, governments incentivize proactive efforts to address disparities and create more inclusive environments within sports organizations.

Financial support also plays a crucial role in advancing diversity and inclusion efforts in sports. Governments may allocate **funding and grants** to support programs aimed at increasing participation among underrepresented groups, fostering diversity in coaching and leadership positions, and enhancing access to sports facilities and programs in marginalized communities. By investing in these initiatives, governments demonstrate their commitment to fostering inclusive sporting environments accessible to all.

**Education and awareness campaigns** represent another avenue through which governments promote diversity and inclusion within sports. These campaigns aim to challenge stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory attitudes, while also providing resources and support for sports organizations to implement inclusive practices. By raising awareness of the importance of diversity and providing guidance on inclusive approaches, governments empower sports organizations to create more welcoming and inclusive environments for all participants.

Lastly, **partnerships and collaborations** between governments, sports organizations, community groups, and advocacy organizations are instrumental in driving meaningful change. By leveraging collective expertise, resources, and influence, these partnerships facilitate innovative approaches and address systemic barriers to inclusivity in the sports sector. By working together towards common goals, stakeholders can amplify their impact and create lasting positive change in the realm of diversity and inclusion within sports.

### *How do sports organizations collaborate with community groups and advocacy organizations to promote inclusivity ?*

Considering the Lithuanian context, sports organizations can foster inclusivity through strategic partnerships with community groups and advocacy organizations. One critical approach is **partnering with initiatives** such as "Sportas visiems" (Sports for All), which promotes accessibility within the sports sector. By collaborating with these initiatives, sports organizations can extend their reach and resources, expanding their impact from participation in sports activities to employment opportunities within the sector.

**NGOs**, such as Active Youth and YOUth Can, play a pivotal role in enhancing inclusivity efforts through sports. These organizations, with their focus on youth leadership and rural youth, respectively, serve as prime examples of the types of NGOs that sports entities can partner with to reach specific groups and promote inclusive practices.



**Collaboration with umbrella organizations**, like the Lithuanian Paralympic Committee, can be a highly effective strategy for promoting inclusivity in sports. This committee, through its work with sports clubs and municipalities, offers adapted sports programs for people with disabilities across different age groups. It also provides consultations to other sports organizations, strengthening their advocacy actions. Such partnerships ensure that inclusive sports programs are not only accessible but also well-supported.

Sports organizations can also partner with advocacy groups to **secure funding through grants from government bodies** like the Sports Agency in Lithuania. These collaborations can result in joint programs focused on inclusivity in the sports sector, providing financial support to sustain and expand these initiatives.

**Recruiting volunteers** from diverse backgrounds is another vital aspect of promoting inclusivity. Community groups can assist sports organizations in recruiting volunteers who can serve as coaches, mentors, or event organizers, fostering a more inclusive environment.

**Media outreach** is crucial for raising awareness about inclusivity initiatives. Joint media campaigns or press conferences can highlight these efforts, as seen with campaigns like Parateam. This collaborative approach ensures that the message of inclusivity reaches a broader audience.

Finally, tracking the impact of inclusivity initiatives requires **effective data collection**. Sports organizations can collaborate with advocacy groups to establish metrics that measure progress. Lithuania's responsibility currently falls under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports, ensuring that data collection is systematic and comprehensive.

Considering the global context, sports organizations collaborate with community groups and advocacy organizations through **various programs and initiatives**. For example, ENGSO Youth's "Young Delegates" program, the EUSA Student Commission, and the European Young Olympic Ambassadors program are all initiatives that promote inclusivity and international engagement among young people. Global efforts by the ISF Athletes and Youth Committee, UNESCO Youth and Sport Taskforce, and FISU's "Volunteers Leaders Academy" and "Student Ambassador Programme" also emphasize the importance of inclusivity in sports.

The IOC's "Young Leaders" program is another example of selecting young leaders from 25 countries to develop inclusive sports projects with substantial funding and support. These collaborative efforts demonstrate the commitment of sports organizations to work with community groups and advocacy organizations to create inclusive opportunities, support diverse participation, and promote the values of sportsmanship and inclusivity across various levels and regions.

*Examples of sports organizations or initiatives that have successfully implemented age-inclusive practices*



In Lithuania, the **Lithuanian Paralympic Committee** (Lietuvos parolimpinis komitetas) stands out for its innovative approach to inclusivity. This committee not only collaborates with sports clubs to develop and offer training programs in adapted sports for people with various disabilities, but it has also pioneered partnerships with the private sector for sponsorship. Moreover, it has created new job positions for people with disabilities across various age groups, demonstrating a comprehensive and unique approach to inclusivity.

Additionally, the **Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports** has a 2021-2023 sports development strategy that emphasizes employability, particularly concerning athletes' dual careers. The dual career topic remains a key educational focus for the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee, which supports athletes in balancing sports with educational and professional development.

The '**Sportas visiems**' (Sports for All) program is a testament to the power of collective action. This national initiative, acting as an umbrella organization, unites various NGOs within the sports sector to submit joint suggestions to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport. The result is a collaborative effort that ensures policies and programs are inclusive and effectively address the needs of diverse groups, setting a strong example for other NGOs to follow.

The commitment to inclusivity extends beyond the sports sector. Unique age-specific employment programs, such as the summer job programs co-funded by different municipalities, provide financial support to private sector institutions that employ young people for the summer period. This comprehensive approach, applied horizontally across various sectors, not only promotes inclusivity but also helps young people gain valuable skills, setting a model for other sectors to follow.



Other successful inclusive programs internationally include the **German Sports Youth's two-year publicly funded initiative** and the **Italian Civil Service's "Universal Civil Service."** These programs offer structured opportunities for young people, with the latter providing a year-long engagement supported by government funding and reimbursement.



In the UK, the **Aston Villa Foundation's "Villa EmployAbility" program** targets individuals aged 16-25 with learning disabilities, offering free resources and support. This initiative ensures inclusive participation by providing necessary resources such as equipment, venues, and coaches through grants and fundraising efforts.

These examples highlight how sports organizations and initiatives in Lithuania and internationally have successfully implemented inclusive practices and policies. By fostering partnerships, securing funding, and developing targeted programs, these organizations promote accessibility, participation, and employability in the sports sector, ensuring everyone can engage in sports.

## How are we going to get there ? How can we do it better ?

*What are the long-term goals for creating an inclusive sport workplace, and how do we measure progress toward these goals?*

Creating an inclusive sports workplace involves setting **long-term goals** prioritizing diversity, equity, and respect for all individuals. One key objective is to achieve **diverse representation** within the workforce, ensuring that the composition of the sports workplace reflects the rich diversity of the communities it serves. This includes equitable representation across various demographic groups such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, and socio-economic background. By striving for diversity, organizations can harness broader perspectives and experiences, leading to more innovative and inclusive decision-making processes.

**Equitable opportunities** are another critical aspect of fostering inclusivity within the sports workplace. This entails providing equal opportunities for participation, advancement, and leadership while actively working to eliminate barriers and biases that may disproportionately impact marginalized groups. By promoting fairness and meritocracy, organizations can create environments where individuals are judged based on their abilities and contributions rather than their background or identity.

Fostering a **culture of inclusivity**, respect, and belonging is central to creating an inclusive sports workplace. This involves cultivating an environment where all individuals feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. By promoting open communication, empathy, and mutual respect, organizations can create a sense of belonging where individuals feel comfortable being their authentic selves and are encouraged to thrive.

Additionally, ensuring **accessibility and accommodation** is essential for creating an inclusive sports workplace. This includes making sports facilities, programs, and resources accessible to individuals with disabilities and accommodating diverse needs and abilities. By removing physical and logistical barriers, organizations can ensure everyone has equal access to participate and engage in sports-related activities.

Furthermore, organizations must adopt a **zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and bullying** within the sports workplace. Robust mechanisms should be in place to address and prevent such behaviours, creating a safe and inclusive environment where everyone can work and thrive without fear of discrimination or mistreatment.

Organizations can employ various methods to **measure progress toward these inclusivity goals**. Tracking **diversity metrics** such as demographic representation, turnover rates, and promotion rates provides quantitative data on progress toward equitable representation within the sports workplace. Regular **employee surveys** allow organizations to gather feedback on workplace culture, inclusivity initiatives, and perceptions of diversity and equity, identifying areas for improvement and measuring changes over time.

Developing an **inclusion index** or scorecard that measures critical indicators of inclusivity, such as employee engagement, satisfaction, and sense of belonging, offers a holistic view of organizational progress and allows for benchmarking against industry standards and best practices.

Additionally, soliciting **qualitative feedback** from employees, stakeholders, and community members through focus groups, interviews, and open forums provides deeper insights into the effectiveness of inclusivity efforts and identifies opportunities for innovation and improvement. By employing these measurement strategies, organizations can assess their progress toward creating a more inclusive sports workplace and drive meaningful change towards greater diversity, equity, and inclusion.

*What innovative approaches or strategies can be adopted to accelerate progress towards inclusivity in the sports industry?*

Accelerating progress towards inclusivity in the sports industry requires innovative approaches that leverage technology, collaboration, and inclusive design principles. One such approach is using **technology and data analytics** to identify and address patterns of bias and inequity within the sports workplace. By harnessing predictive analytics, organizations can anticipate potential barriers to inclusivity and develop targeted interventions to mitigate them. This data-driven approach enables organizations to make informed decisions and track the effectiveness of their inclusivity initiatives over time, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Another innovative strategy is integrating **virtual reality (VR) training** simulations to create immersive learning experiences that challenge biases and promote empathy among employees. VR training offers a unique opportunity to simulate real-world scenarios and provide individuals with feedback in a safe and controlled environment. By immersing participants in diverse perspectives and experiences, VR training enhances cultural competence and equips employees with the skills to navigate complex diversity issues effectively.

Prioritizing **inclusive design and accessibility is essential** for creating an inclusive sports industry. By incorporating feedback from individuals with diverse needs and perspectives, organizations can ensure that sports facilities, equipment, and programs are accessible and inclusive for all. This involves adopting inclusive design principles and accessibility standards from the outset of the development process rather than retrofitting solutions after the fact. By proactively considering the diverse needs of all individuals, organizations can create environments that foster participation and engagement for everyone.

Furthermore, fostering **community partnerships and co-creation initiatives** can accelerate progress towards inclusivity in the sports industry. By collaborating with community groups, advocacy organizations, and grassroots initiatives, organizations can co-create inclusive programs and initiatives that address diverse communities' specific needs and priorities. Engaging community members as co-designers and stakeholders ensures that inclusivity efforts are informed by the lived experiences and perspectives of those directly impacted, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Lastly, implementing **innovative leadership development** programs is crucial for driving organizational change towards greater inclusivity. By offering immersive learning experiences, coaching, and mentorship opportunities, organizations can empower leaders to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in their roles. By equipping leaders with the skills and tools needed to foster inclusive environments, organizations can create a ripple effect that cascades throughout the sports industry, driving meaningful change and progress towards a more inclusive future.

Feedback mechanisms and continuous evaluation are essential for refining and improving efforts to create an inclusive sport workplace. **Regular feedback surveys** provide a structured approach to gathering input from employees, stakeholders, and community members on inclusivity initiatives and their impact. By collecting data through surveys, organizations can identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in their inclusivity efforts. This feedback is a valuable source of information for guiding decision-making and prioritizing actions to address critical challenges.

In addition to surveys, organizing **focus groups, listening sessions**, and town hall meetings provide opportunities for open dialogue and feedback on inclusivity issues. These interactive forums create a safe and supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and experiences. By actively listening to diverse voices and experiences, organizations gain valuable insights into the lived realities of their employees and stakeholders, enabling them to understand the barriers to inclusion better and identify opportunities for improvement.

Establishing a **continuous improvement process** is crucial for ensuring that inclusivity initiatives remain effective and responsive to changing needs and circumstances. This process involves regular reviews and evaluations to assess the effectiveness of inclusivity efforts and make adjustments as needed. By soliciting input from diverse stakeholders and incorporating feedback into ongoing planning and implementation efforts, organizations can ensure that their inclusivity initiatives remain relevant, impactful, and aligned with their broader goals and objectives.

**Transparent communication** is vital to maintaining trust and accountability in creating an inclusive sports workplace. Organizations should support open and transparent communication channels to inform employees and stakeholders about inclusivity initiatives, progress, and outcomes. Sharing successes, challenges, and lessons learned openly fosters a culture of transparency and accountability, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and creating opportunities for collective learning and growth.

Finally, **celebrating progress** is essential for recognizing the contributions of individuals and teams towards creating an inclusive sports workplace. By celebrating milestones and achievements in inclusivity efforts, organizations inspire continued engagement and commitment among employees and stakeholders. Highlighting success stories and best practices acknowledges the progress made and serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for future efforts. By celebrating progress, organizations reinforce the importance of inclusivity and create momentum for further positive change in the workplace.



# 10 best practices for creating an inclusive sports workplace



# Age



- 01** Include young people in every step of the organisation's decisions, from delineating its mission, vision, and objectives, to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies, actions and activities.

Co-creation and co-management with, for and by young people are essential as any decision within the organisation can affect the way youth interacts with sport structures and practice sport and physical activity.

- 02** Address youth participation deficit in decision-making by establishing mechanisms for their formal engagement.

This includes increasing youth representatives in board structures and creating youth bodies that allow for an effective and inclusive participation and governance.

- 03** Foster mutual learning and sharing of good practices regarding youth participation.

Sport clubs and organisations differ between countries and not everything that works in one country's organisation can be exactly adopted in the same way in another country's organisation. Whilst there are no "one size fits all" solutions, information sharing and mutual learning can help in adapting youth participation practices to different realities.

- 04** Invest in education and awareness-raising for youth inclusion, enabling young people to participate on equal terms with adults.

It is necessary to build the capacity of adults working with young people in sport, including board members, coaches, teachers and youth workers to empower and educate their pupils in and through sport to realise and take advantage of the benefits of their participation in sport organisations. Another important aspect is adjusting the language of the discussions to reflect the developmental age of all participants.

- 05** Recognise and include youth work within the organisation's activities, thus empowering young people to contribute to decision-making processes through skills and knowledge building.



# 10 best practices for creating an inclusive sports workplace



# Age



**06** Provide access to quality and user-friendly information regarding the organisation's activities and how young people can participate.

**07** Innovation in forms of governance is especially relevant for youth participation.

The digital space can provide an important impetus in outreaching and engaging young people in participation processes, however, they can only be used as complementary to offline physical activities, and never replace them.

**08** Ensure that the most vulnerable young people are directly involved in developing strategies and tools to facilitate their participation.

Youth represents a very heterogeneous group with different social, economic, cultural, geographical, and educational backgrounds, challenges, interests and needs. Such heterogeneity should be taken into account in all phases of youth participation policies and activities.

**09** Special attention should be given to marginalised groups, minorities, underrepresented and disadvantaged young people.

Encourage the establishment of mentorship programs where experienced members guide young people, helping them navigate the complexities of organisational roles and enhancing their confidence.

**10** Promote the visibility and voices of young people by creating platforms and opportunities where their opinions and ideas can be publicly shared and recognized within the sports organisation.

## What are the barriers and challenges identified in creating an inclusive sports workplace in terms of gender ?

### *How do traditional gender norms and stereotypes impact opportunities for women in the sports industry ?*

Traditional gender norms and stereotypes significantly impact opportunities for women in the sports industry, as many people still follow and believe these norms to be valid. Historically, and in many people's minds, sport was always a male-dominated industry, making it impossible for women to be accepted in this sector. Nowadays, **women tend to have limited opportunities in this field due to restricted mentalities**. People are still closed to women having significant roles in the sports industry because nothing is being done to change their opinion. Women from this field are not represented enough in the media. **According to UNESCO, only 4% of sports media content was dedicated to women's sports at the international level. Compared to men's exposures, women's presentations rarely focus on their achievements but rather on their appearance and personal life, leading to reduced investment in women's sports as their full potential is not considered<sup>[1]</sup>**. This lack of representation makes it much harder for women to have access to leadership roles as they do not have examples and, therefore, believe that it is impossible to do so, leading to the creation of barriers.

In addition, **these leadership positions are rarely assigned to women because they are not seen as fit for such roles in sports organizations**. This is primarily because women are commonly characterized as too sensitive and emotional to occupy jobs that require so-called male characteristics such as assertive communication. On the contrary and according to stereotypes, women use less aggressive ways to communicate, which is seen as inappropriate for more prominent roles. However, aggressiveness in communication does not help women reach leadership positions, as men can feel threatened because our society is not capable of reconciling both toughness and femininity in one personality<sup>[2]</sup>. Either too aggressive or not assertive enough, stereotypes and gender norms hinder women's ability to correspond to leadership standards. Therefore, **women do not have the possibility of occupying decision-making roles and end up restricting themselves from reaching higher positions**.

**Girls and women also feel pressured to conform to traditional norms and values, not willing to risk getting involved in the sports industry as they don't feel like they belong there**. All these elements significantly impact girls and women who feel incapable of reaching such positions in the sports industry. This **lack of self-confidence** makes them feel like they are not fit for specific jobs and have fewer responsibilities in their roles and tasks. Moreover, it is often thought that hiring a woman is more costly than hiring a man. Thus, from the start, employers will focus on gender rather than skills and capacities. All these beliefs durably and negatively influence women's opportunities in the sports industry.

## *What barriers exist for women in accessing and advancing within sports organizations ?*

The study led to barriers to a more inclusive workforce for the sports sector in terms of gender highlighted the barriers that have been identified as limiting and hindering the employability of women in the sport industry. More precisely, among gender barriers, three different types were observed. Therefore, **structural barriers represented 31% of the gender barriers, socio-economic barriers 41,4%, and cultural barriers 27,6%.**

Among the **structural barriers**, several were found to be particularly impactful. **Pay gaps, selection processes, and leadership capacities** all contribute to gender inequality. However, the '**glass ceiling**' is a unique issue. It refers to the gender-biased organization of work, creating a barrier that prevents women from advancing in their professions.

In addition, the main notable **socio-economic barriers were living conditions, family responsibilities, the number of opportunities, and the network of contacts.**

Finally, the most relevant **cultural barriers were work experience, self-confidence, gender stereotypes and discrimination.**

The study's conclusion is a call to action. The most critical gender barriers identified are the network of contacts, which are predominantly male-dominated, the self-confidence that women often struggle to develop, and the vertical segregation barriers such as pay gaps and the glass ceiling. These barriers significantly deter women from accessing and advancing within sports organizations, exacerbating the gender disparity in this field.

## *In what way does the prevalence of sexism and discrimination hinder gender inclusivity in sports workplaces ?*

As seen previously, many barriers impact gender diversity in the sports industry at all levels. This is because a majority of men are present in these workplaces, pushing an increased influence of sexism and discrimination at work, hindering gender inclusivity. These behaviours create hostile work environments for women already working in the same organization, as they will not feel welcome and represented. It has many consequences on women's place in the institutions. **Women might need to change jobs and have fewer responsibilities in a field different from the sports industry.**

Moreover, women in leadership tend to experience the **impostor syndrome**, meaning they will (falsely) not feel confident and competent enough for their role. In addition, sexism and discrimination in the workplace make women less inclined to assert themselves, reinforcing their lack of self-confidence in their tasks by male co-workers.

All these make women more prone to isolation in the face of male workers who take advantage of this situation to reinforce gender disparities in the field of sports industry. Sexism and discrimination dramatically impact women's mental health, who develop anxiety at work because



of all the behaviours and comments they can receive. **Women also have fewer opportunities for career advancement as they are not offered promotions or leadership positions and find more incredible difficulty in getting a job.**

**The prevalence of discrimination and sexism prevents women from gaining access to the training courses that would later enable them to enter the sports professions.** On the one hand, women don't feel they have the right to take up training courses that seem to be reserved for men (in France, for example, only 10% of BPJEPS (diploma for youth, popular education and Sport (brevet professionnel de la Jeunesse, de l'Éducation populaire et du Sport) training courses for combat sports instructors are attended by women)). What's more, these training courses do very little to address the issue of gender equality and discrimination, which reinforces the omerta in the sector and discriminatory attitudes. As a result, women feel uncomfortable and out of place in these training courses.

These actions hurt women and significantly damage the organizations' efficiency. These consequences of the prevalence of sexism and discrimination hinder gender inclusivity and organizations in general.

## What does an inclusive sports workplace look like in terms of gender ?

*How can sports organizations ensure equal representation and opportunities for individuals of all genders within their workforce ?*

Sports organizations can ensure equal representation and opportunities for individuals of all genders within their workforce by implementing many alternatives.

To start with, **non-sexist languages and gender-neutral terms** should be used to represent all individuals better and enable gender minorities to feel included. Research has proven that the use of the masculine form in several languages (such as French) as a neutral form prevents women from feeling represented, acts on the construction of our role models and can influence them negatively when it comes to applying to jobs and positions in a sports context. Hence, there is a need to pay attention to the vocabulary and suppress gender stereotypes in any sporting context. This can be possible through **training actions** that improve education and awareness of equality and diversity in sports. This should unfold with the hope that less sexism and discrimination lead to better representation of women in the field.

**Mentoring programmes** should also be set up to increase representation and opportunities for individuals of all genders. They will contribute to these by inspiring women needing role models, showing how they overcame their inequality in this field, and giving them tools. **Promotional campaigns** should also be implemented to increase women's employability in the sports sector. Moreover, diagnosing the **current organizational situation** should lead to understanding the conditions that make effective equality impossible. The need for more data on sports employment, specifically regarding sporting officials, is an issue. Only by conducting analyses and gathering more data will it be possible to change the situation. Data is necessary to monitor the effect of policies and have a better understanding of their impacts. A visibility gap should be established for public broadcasters to report on M/F sports portrayal and exposure. For example, in Ireland, Regulations require organizations with over 250 employees to report on their gender pay gap in



2022 and then publish the report on the same date in December 2022 [3].

To complete this, **codes of conduct** inspired by the previous analysis should be implemented to prevent unequal opportunities and discrimination in the sports field from occurring. Establishing employability, accessibility, and internal promotion programmes for women in management bodies and governing bodies is relevant to ensure equal representation and opportunities for individuals of all genders within their workforce and improve women's representation and opportunities in the field. Further ideas could be relevant to ensure equal representation and opportunities for individuals of all genders, such as using new hiring practices consisting of anonymous resume reviews where gender is hidden and focusing on the experience rather than the gender. Therefore, equal representation and opportunities for all are essential for the proper development of sports organizations.

Organizations must include parity in their membership; if it is not required by law, it will mostly not happen. The introduction of **quotas** is therefore essential if more women are to gain access to the world of sport, particularly leadership positions. In 2022, France introduced a law regarding gender representation in the sports movement: by January 1st, 2024, all national federations will have to be led by leadership boards composed of 50% men and 50% women. For the clubs, it will become mandatory in 2028.

*What policies and practices can be implemented to address gender-based harassment and create a safe and supporting environment for all employees ?*

To address gender-based harassment and create a safe and supportive environment for any employee, policies and practices have to be implemented to increase and reinforce this evolution. According to the study on the barriers to a more inclusive workforce for the sports sector in terms of gender, 62,5% of the organizations asked had equality, diversity and inclusion policies. At the same time, the others either needed to find out if they had such policies or had none. These results let us understand that most organizations are focusing on these matters. However, it does not mean it is correctly put in place in organizations, and many still need to pay attention to such issues.

That is why programmes have to be deployed to enhance the devotion to the subject and improve the workplace environment. Consequently, a **network of women in leadership positions** should be created to support any woman in this situation while encouraging others to develop their capacities as much as possible, creating a supporting environment. Moreover, **designing programmes that teach** employees how to balance work, sports, and family life is essential to the development of a friendly and caring environment for all employees, regardless of gender.

Addressing gender-based harassment could be adequate in creating a haven for employees through the **adoption of protocols with non-discriminatory rules and conditions specific to situations of pregnancy, maternity-paternity and return to work**, which is still prone to improper behaviours. Research should also be conducted on the current situation of effective equality for anyone in the sports sector to analyze the existing good practices, implement them with certainty on their effectiveness, and spread them as much as possible through tools.

The implementation of **educational programmes** to prevent and fight against sexist and sexual

violence is crucial for the creation of a safe and supportive environment for all. These training sessions should raise awareness on how to prevent and respond to sexist and sexual violence, targeting all athletes, coaches, stakeholders and any other individual related to the sports industry to educate them. These have to be ongoing programmes to ensure that people receive and properly assimilate what has been learned. In addition, **transparent and accessible reporting mechanisms**, such as counselling centres, have to be created to offer a support platform for anyone in need.

It is important to remind people that gender discrimination and sexism are forbidden and punishable by law. **Public institutions should condition the financing of sports clubs and organizations on gender equality** (allocating the same amount of money to a girls' team within the club than to a boys' team, for example, having gender balance in the leadership, etc.).

**Precise reporting mechanisms** should also be shared within any organization, whether a sports club, a federation, an NGO or a private company. Mechanisms for reporting sexual violence, exploitation and abuse affecting health workers need to be improved. It is essential to determine who will have critical roles/responsibilities, which may be different depending on your organizational structure, size, sector, and what your policy is targeting. For example, you may also be addressing sexual violence against your own staff. Without adequate reporting, the underlying problems remain misunderstood and are challenging to address. Reporting is a first step towards obtaining justice for survivors, yet they should not have to carry the burden of reporting on their own [4].

### *How does gender diversity in leadership roles contribute to the overall inclusivity of sports organizations ?*

Gender diversity is highly beneficial at every level of an organization. Gender diversity in leadership roles seems very important to encourage inclusivity in sports organizations.

**Women lack role models.** Women do not occupy enough positions of responsibility where they have a leadership position. They are more present in "administrative" positions. In France, 55% of women are in administrative positions, and few women are in coaching positions (35% of women). Progressing slowly, the proportion of women coaches at the top level in the Olympic Games has been just 10% over the last ten years. The challenge already begins at the local level, with fewer girls and women deciding to embark on a coaching career. Unfortunately, **this state of affairs widens the gap between men and women because if a sports club has only male coaches, young girls won't be able to see the possibility of taking up the profession themselves.** A coaching career generally requires 10 to 12 years of experience at the national level in regional competitions before reaching the Olympic level. This requirement explains why the process of becoming a coach is much slower than that of becoming a top-level athlete. In addition, there are still several obstacles preventing women from becoming coaches. Katie Allen, an Australian Olympic field hockey player who now coaches a top-level men's team in Spain, explains that **doubt** is often a significant obstacle. In her view, women need to focus on the end goal of doing something that interests them and overcome any feelings of self-consciousness. *"Be bold, and don't succumb to the worries and doubts about the things you don't have,"* she explains, adding that clubs and organizations need to do more to recruit female coaches. *"Teams, clubs or even organizations should be more open and look for the best candidates, regardless of gender or country of origin."* [5]

At the same time, more and more athletes are discovering the benefits of having a female coach. In an op-ed published to mark International Women's Day 2020, Andy Murray, British tennis star and two-time Olympic champion, shared his views on the role women, including his former coach Amélie Mauresmo, have played throughout his career: *"When it comes to mindset, skill and intelligence, there's no reason why a woman shouldn't be as good as a man, and hopefully things will change when women are given more opportunities."* [6]

As a former Olympic gymnast, Cécile Landi has a unique vision of sports coaching for women and girls. Currently coaching American Olympic champion gymnast Simone Biles, she believes that women are finally getting the attention they deserve. *"Things are moving in the right direction as women push the boundaries and break records,"* she points out. *"But as you know, we can always do better."*

The French hockey federation can be cited as a good example, as 44 women are on its board, and 50% of the players are women. Nevertheless, hockey receives very little media attention. It is, therefore, **necessary to give more visibility to sports, federations, and organizations that are leading the way and implementing good practices.**

**Women present in organizations tend to feel more understood when other women occupy leadership positions, as they often focus on gender-related issues that are otherwise not addressed.** For example, when Brigitte Henriques became the first female vice-president of the French Football Federation in 2017, her leadership shifted towards addressing gender-related issues within the organization. Her influence led the FFF to put efforts into improving the visibility and support for women's football and promoting further female representation in different positions within the organization. She promoted women in leadership positions by creating the Le Club des 100 femmes dirigeantes programme. During her mandate, she also launched a feminization plan, which the Ministry of Sports recognized as the best development strategy in 2012. Her leadership increased female participants from 53,000 in 2011 to 200,000 in 2019[Z].

In business, **gender diversity at all levels is recognized as a factor in economic performance, as men and women working together make better use of their experience and complementary qualities, which in turn fosters innovation.** Meanwhile, according to the Skema Observatory on the feminization of companies, the feminization of the Comex and management teams results in much higher short- and medium-term profitability, better CSR performance and reduced financial and extra-financial risks. McKinsey has published three reports investigating the business case for diversity: Diversity Wins (2020), Why Diversity Matters (2015) and Delivering through Diversity (2018). These reports show that the relationship between diversity on executive teams and the likelihood of financial outperformance has strengthened over time. These findings emerge from their most extensive data set, encompassing 15 countries and over 1,000 large companies. By incorporating a "social listening" analysis of employee sentiment in online reviews, the report also provides new insights into how inclusion matters. It shows that companies should pay much greater attention to inclusion, even when they are relatively diverse.

**How can we implement and develop an inclusive workplace in the sports industry ?**

*What role do organizational culture and values play in fostering gender inclusivity within sports organizations ?*

Organizational culture and values are foundational and transformative in fostering gender inclusivity within sports organizations. When an organization truly values inclusivity, diversity and equality, it creates an environment where individuals feel respected and celebrated for their unique capacities, regardless of gender. This not only positively impacts recruitment practices and behaviours but also enhances the overall performance and engagement of the organization. **Policies and practices that support gender diversity, such as non-discriminatory rules and mentoring programmes, provide a solid basis for equality and inclusivity in organizations.** Training programmes on bias awareness and gender equality enforce these values in the organizational culture, empowering employees to recognize and address inequalities of all kinds. In addition, diversity in leadership roles provides role models for any individual and brings new perspectives and dynamics to the organization's decision-making capacities. Open discussions on gender issues enable employees to express their concerns in a safe and supportive environment, fostering respect. **Encouraging women to overcome invisibilization and recognizing achievements regardless of gender can break down stereotypes and advocate inclusivity.** The result is not just a more diverse and inclusive organization, but one that attracts the best talents and reinforces employees' engagement and performances, making sports organizations a place where culture and values foster inclusivity.

It is necessary to change the culture at an organizational level, including the training, the recruitment process, and the way of communicating. The world of sport itself is guided by 'male' norms and values. Sports have been built by and for men. Therefore, organizations must evolve and be more creative to make more room for women and make them feel good and want to join. **One barrier is job recruitment.** In sports, masculine language dominates job descriptions, for example<sup>[8]</sup>. Women also hold more part-time jobs. One of the problems of working in the sports sector, especially coaching, is that it is very time-consuming. You must be available on weekends and evenings and invest much time. It is, therefore, difficult to combine family life and work, and this problem mainly constrains women.

The need for change extends beyond individual organizations in the world of sport. **Society must evolve, and the more 'local' institutions must evolve with it.** Women still face too many comments about their position, which can undermine their self-confidence and question their legitimacy to occupy such posts and positions in the world of sports. This is not just a problem for individual women but a systemic issue that requires a collective effort to address. Recognizing and challenging these societal norms and expectations can create a more inclusive and equitable sports sector for all.

*What training and education initiatives are effective in promoting gender awareness and sensitivity among staff and stakeholders in the sports industry ?*

Promoting gender awareness and sensitivity among staff and stakeholders in the sports industry can unfold with the help of training and education initiatives, reinforcing the overall knowledge of gender issues. Identifying and challenging unconscious biases is the goal of these programmes to change mentalities considerably. **Workshops focusing on inclusive communication strategies** can foster respect and discourage harmful stereotypes, increasing awareness and sensitivity. Workshops can also concentrate on **intersectionality** to fully understand the complexities of gender through the observation of how the different types of oppression, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender, reinforce one another. This allows staff and stakeholders from the sports

industry to comprehend better the diverse experiences linked to stereotypes. **Group discussions among staff and stakeholders, along with experts on gender equality in sports and mentors,** can further increase education on gender biases.

Moreover, as mentioned above, organizational culture and values are essential. Therefore, leaders should be provided and, in turn, provide the tools to create inclusive cultures, addressing bias in decision-making processes. **Interactive workshops** can also effectively promote gender awareness and sensitivity among staff and stakeholders, thanks to role-playing scenarios which allow individuals to learn how to respond to gender biases and what it feels like to face such inequalities. The workshops must be consistent and mandatory to ensure these initiatives have a profound impact. Rather than organizing an event once in a while, continuous training sessions should be prioritized as a follow-up, making sure that the awareness and skills developed are ingrained and frequently reinforced in people's minds. All these initiatives will enhance understanding and sensitivity on gender matters in sports organizations among staff and stakeholders, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse workplace in the sports industry.

### *How can sports organizations actively recruit, retain, and promote individuals from underrepresented gender groups ?*

Sports organizations can actively recruit, retain, and promote individuals from underrepresented gender groups by implementing targeted strategies. These strategies include, for example, following different hiring practices such as **targeted outreach**. This consists of actively seeking out candidates from underrepresented gender groups through aimed job postings or attending career fairs focused on diversity to attract candidates from different horizons.

Moreover, **job descriptions should become more inclusive with gender-neutral language** and clearly state the organization's commitment to inclusivity and diversity to attract different types of candidates. Recruitment processes have to change, too. Recruitment systems also lack transparency, and elections as a sport are often a tiny world with closed networks. It can, therefore, leave little room for women. Having mixed-gender teams of persons in charge of the recruitment process can also avoid gender bias from employers.

Furthermore, these recruitment processes should become more inclusive in their selection to welcome more individuals from underrepresented gender groups. To do so, job applications must require CVs that do not include pictures of the candidates. This is so that no discrimination based on someone's appearance or gender stereotypes can impact the recruiting process. Recruitment can then become unbiased and competency-based.

**Training and programmes** could be developed to strengthen employees' skills and ensure that underrepresented groups share the same opportunities as others and do not continue suffering from stereotypes in the workplace. Additionally, one of the main issues found for an underrepresentation of gender groups was the inability to balance professional and personal life. That is why, to retain individuals who are not well-represented, it is necessary to **introduce family-friendly policies** with more flexible hours, for instance, to answer the diverse needs of employees. Promoting individuals from underrepresented gender groups is the last goal of these sports organizations regarding diversity. It must be addressed by establishing mentorships and encouraging others to improve their skills.



Promoting individuals from underrepresented gender groups can be achieved by implementing transparent promotion processes with clear criteria, making sure that all employees, regardless of gender, have **equal opportunities to progress in their career paths**.

Recruiting, retaining, and promoting individuals from underrepresented gender groups requires the development of many strategies to advance inclusivity and diversity in workplaces.

## What is being done in European countries to achieve an inclusive sports workplace ?

*What governmental policies or initiatives are in place to promote gender equality and inclusivity within the sports sector?*



In France, the **Gender Equality in Sports Law from August 4th, 2014** has significantly advanced the **feminization in governing bodies of approved sports federations**, marking a positive step towards parity. It ensures a minimum representation of 25% for both genders, and mandates parity in all federations that have met this quota. In 2022, of the 36 Olympic federations, only 3 were led by women. In response, the **March 2nd, 2022 law** aimed at democratizing sport in France introduced **parity in sports governing bodies at national and regional levels and in the offices of Olympic and Paralympic Committees**, offering a promising future for gender equality in sports.

**Increasing media coverage of women's sports** is also a goal for France, as it represented only between 16% and 20% of the hourly volume of sports broadcasts in 2018. The Conference on Women's Sport allowed the establishment of the **operation "Sport Féminin Toujours"**, an annual event since 2018, giving new impetus to media coverage of women's sport. It is an awareness-raising event involving all types of media at the national or local level to improve the visibility and image of girls and women in sports.

In a collaborative effort, the **"Terrain d'Egalité"** label was established by the Ministry for Equality between Women and Men, the Ministry of Sport, and the Interministerial Delegation for Major Sporting Events, in partnership with numerous stakeholders from the sporting world. This label, part of the State Legacy Plan for the Olympic and Paralympic Games: "Faire mieux grâce aux jeux", is designed for organizers of major international sporting events. **It aims to foster gender equality, inclusivity, and combat all forms of discrimination, including sexist and sexual violence**, before and during sporting events. The Paris 2024 Games have pledged their support to this initiative, demonstrating a collective commitment to gender equality in sports.

Moreover, the **Permanent Conference on Women's Sport** was created in 2017 by the ministers in charge of sports and gender equality to contribute to a better understanding of the place of the female public in sporting practices. It also aims to help women rise to positions of responsibility and improve the structuring and professionalization of women's sports.

The French government provides funding and support for projects and initiatives promoting gender equality and inclusivity in the sports sector. In addition to the budget allocated to sports federations, clubs, and associations to develop women's access to the sports sector, they can mobilize a **subsidy** from the National Center for Sports Development.



In **Ireland**, the national sports agency, **Sport Ireland**, is deeply committed to enhancing women's sustained involvement in sport across various roles. It has **developed sports programmes that support initiatives promoting gender equality and inclusivity in sports through the funding and support of projects**. These projects are dedicated to increasing female participation, coaching, and leadership opportunities in sports, underscoring the seriousness of the commitment to gender equality.

Moreover, Sport Ireland has also established a **women in sport policy aligned with the Government's National Sports policy (2018-2027)** and the **National Strategy for women and girls (2017-2020)**. Sport Ireland's vision for women is one where women have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential while being able to participate and be involved in sports for a lifetime. The first policy of this type was launched in 2019 to build on the works that had been led since 2005 in the sports sector. In 2019, four areas were identified as having current gaps or being prone to future opportunities for women: leadership and governance, active participation, coaching and officiating, and visibility. In 2023, this policy was reviewed to ensure these four key points were still relevant and practical. The **Women in Sport Steering Committee** was also developed to provide strategic and practical advice to enhance delivery, recognition, promotion, participation development, leadership opportunities for women, and inclusion in general.



In **Sweden**, the Ministry of Sport closely works with the Swedish Sports Confederation. This umbrella organization includes more than 70 national sports federations and over 1000 district federations representing over 20,000 clubs. The Swedish Sports Confederation is responsible for leading, supporting, and coordinating the Swedish Sports Movement on national and international matters. The Sports Confederation has put in place **"Strategy 2025", which aims to give women and men the same power and ability to shape sports and their participation in the sports movement**. In 2011, the Sports Confederation had already agreed on a plan that would bring the same opportunities, rights, and responsibilities at all levels and in all areas for women and men. This plan was to be completed by 2017, but in 2017, it had to be pushed back to 2025 with a new strategy that intensified the work already led. However, it kept the same base, advocating for **equal opportunities, equal resources, same conditions and equal influence in decision-making and advisory bodies for women and men**. Moreover, women and men should be represented by at least 40% in any area of the sports sector.



In 2023, the **Spanish government** passed a law creating a **"menstrual leave" policy** in the workplace. Although it does not explicitly address the sports field, this initiative is worth mentioning when considering all individuals' specificities and making them more comfortable in their workplace. It is a regulation that sports organizations could adopt.

## *How do partnerships with women's advocacy groups and gender equality organizations contribute to creating more inclusive sports workplaces ?*

Partnerships with women's advocacy groups and gender equality organizations contribute to creating more inclusive sports workplaces. This collaboration brings together expertise, resources, and advocacy efforts to address gender-related challenges within the sports sector. **These organizations remarkably help to create more inclusive sports workplaces thanks to their specialized knowledge and resources, providing training programs and educational tools to raise awareness about gender sensitivity and unconscious bias among staff and stakeholders.** Through their advocacy and the development of policies, they work together to influence decision-makers to implement further inclusivity, diversity and policies promoting gender equality in the sports workplaces. Additionally, these groups and organizations try to implement many support networks and mentoring programmes to give women the tools necessary to advance their careers in a male-dominated environment. Furthermore, dialogue among these groups and organizations reinforces the partnerships and allows a broader list of effective best practices, leading to more inclusive sports workplaces.

## *Examples of sports organizations or initiatives that have successfully implemented gender-inclusive practices*

Moreover, **sports federations and institutions implement many forums and conferences to promote gender equality and diversity.** At a European level, a conference on gender equality in sports was held in 2023 to discuss gender-based violence, women in leadership positions, and women's visibility in the media. In addition, the EU has launched the **EU sports forums**, which take place every year and focus on many sports sector subjects but always on integrity, good governance and gender equality. These discussions help to implement gender-inclusive practices thanks to advocacy and sensibilization.

**European Athletics**, the European Federation, has established a **leadership programme** to guide, use mentoring and provide the skills for the leaders at all levels of athletics organizations across Europe to raise awareness of gender inclusivity.

The **Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)** has implemented a programme for women in leadership positions in the football field. **The Women in Football Leadership programme** is a project that **aims to develop and support the professional careers of women influencing the football industry to foster gender diversity and inclusion in this sector.** This project consists of a week of training every year, during which around 30 female leaders who occupy senior management positions in football, such as executive board members or directors, meet up and follow this course. They are given the tools to understand the challenges and opportunities in football and the skills needed to drive change and progress in the sport. Therefore, the UEFA has implemented a successful **programme for gender-inclusive practices** as some alumni of these weeks of training have had the chance to take up leadership positions in their associations and federations following the programme.

All these initiatives have successfully implemented gender-inclusive practices and guidelines that reinforce advocacy for gender equality and diversity in the sports sector.

How are we going to get there ?  
How can we do it better ?

*What are the specific targets and benchmarks for achieving gender inclusivity in the sports industry, and how do we track progress towards these goals ?*

- **Quotas and parity:** As mentioned above, parity (50/50) is essential in positions of responsibility in the sport business and among decision-makers. Quota laws must be introduced within companies, federations, and organizations because no effort will be made without precise regulations.
- **Introduction of gender budgets:** Gender budgeting is an analytical budgeting method that studies the direct and indirect consequences of public expenditure and revenue on the respective situations of women and men. This framework assesses public policy budgets and their distribution to determine whether they increase or reduce gender inequalities.
- **Collective labour agreements up to date.**
- In France, the "**Zimmermann index**" passed six years ago on the balanced representation of women and men on boards of directors and supervisory boards, and on professional equality - not only assesses the gender mix on boards of directors. It also measures the gender mix of executive management bodies - a reality that is only just beginning to emerge - and the overall representation of women in the company.

**Diagnosing the current organizational situation** should lead to understanding the conditions that make effective equality impossible. The need for more data on sports employment, specifically regarding sporting officials, is an issue. Only by conducting analyses and gathering more data will it be possible to change the situation. Data is necessary to monitor the effect of policies and have a better understanding of their impacts. A visibility gap should be established for public broadcasters to report on M/F sports portrayal and exposure. For example, in Ireland, Regulations require organizations with over 250 employees to report on their gender pay gap in 2022 and then publish the report on the same date in December 2022 [9].

*What strategies can be employed to address systemic barriers and biases that perpetuate gender inequality within sports organizations ?*

Systemic barriers and biases are the foundations of our society, forging our values and personalities. Changing the behaviours and perceptions perpetuating gender inequality within the sports industry is necessary to fully appreciate an organization's capacities and add value to diversity and inclusivity. To achieve these modifications, norms and biases must be addressed as early as possible. At an early age, kids inculcate values taught by adults who are already impacted by societal barriers. That is why **awareness programmes and training sessions** must come from adults who follow training programmes questioning traditional norms, allowing them to transmit new values to the youth.

Moreover, these programmes will also benefit the adults, modifying their beliefs and leading to more open-mindedness regarding gender diversity in sports organizations. Shoving systemic barriers and biases through education is a way to hinder gender inequalities within the sports industry and create a safer environment. Furthermore, the implication of **role models** can disrupt barriers and biases transmitted because of their ability to show that it is possible to overcome the obstacles. Role models influence and show the way for other individuals from underrepresented gender groups to durably and positively impact stereotypes that often result in barriers to employment. This goes hand in hand with adopting gender-balanced communication internally and externally for an organization. In the same way, non-sexist language can help gender minorities to feel more involved and represented in leadership positions, having a gender-diverse representation when it comes to communication materials (pictures used in materials, presentation, videos...etc).

Finally, **following the evolution of the situation** is relevant to ensure that barriers and biases fade away into further openness in the sports industry.

*How can ongoing dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders lead to continuous improvement in promoting gender inclusivity in the sports workplace ?*

Ongoing dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders are potent drivers of continuous improvement in promoting gender inclusivity in the sports workplace. **Through open and daily discussions, stakeholders can share experiences, perspectives, and best practices.** Thanks to very different backgrounds, they bring insights to the exchanges, allowing the development of more effective policies and practices. These lead to a deeper understanding of the gender issues in the sports industry, fostering awareness and keeping gender inclusivity the priority for all employees, creating an environment where these discussions become the norm. Pursuing such dialogues is vital in promoting gender inclusivity in sports organizations, as the more you hear about something, the more it will become common knowledge.

Moreover, **collaboration among stakeholders enables organizations to identify barriers and biases and provide answers with targeted solutions based on what they have observed in their different backgrounds.** Ongoing dialogue empowers the creation of a safe space for stakeholders to discuss challenges encountered and follow the effectiveness of their initiatives, thanks to continuous engagement. It also adjusts them to ensure a resilient approach to promoting inclusivity.



# 10 best practices for creating an inclusive sports workplace



## Gender



### 01 Provide progressive and ongoing training on the issues of inclusion, equality and the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence.

- Modules on respect and consent from nursery/primary school (lessons on empathy for example); on bodily integrity, gender issues and preventing discrimination (middle school); on the fight against sexist and sexual violence (high school).
- Specific modules on sport, inclusion and non-violence in training courses for the jobs of the sporting field.

### 02 Incorporate training into organizations to encourage gender diversity and professional equality.

- Generalize the presence of an equality and anti-discrimination officer in each organization. This person must have specific training in inclusion issues and the prevention of discrimination and SGBV.
- Mandatory awareness-raising on equality, inclusion and SGBV prevention issues for staff in charge of recruitment and managers.
- Obligation to raise awareness on equality, inclusion and SGBV prevention issues for everyone in the company with a set timeframe (e.g. within the first two years in the company).
- Develop a “prevention of discrimination and sexist and sexual violence” public certification scheme.

### 03 Professional support.

- Deploy specific training modules for women to encourage their involvement in positions of responsibility (leadership, personalized coaching, etc.).
- Facilitate the training and retraining of women, particularly top-level sportswomen, by making the most of their experience.

### 04 Inclusive working conditions.

Ensure conditions of employability and performance of professional duties conducive to the equal success of all its employees.

- Introduction of menstrual leave accessible to all menstruating people.
- Recognition of parental rights and leave (development of paternity leave) and support for returning to work after parental leave.
- Introduction of suitable work schedules and timetables : development of teleworking, scheduling of meetings at suitable times, development of nurseries and/or childcare facilities in the workplace.

# 10 best practices for creating an inclusive sports workplace



## Gender



### 05 Representing gender diversity through communication tools.

- Promote greater representation of women in all their diversity within organizations through engaged campaigns and proactive initiatives that showcase successful models.
- Use inclusive language and visual content (pictures, videos) of the structure in daily communications.

### 06 Mentoring and professional networking.

Create professional networks of women within organizations to ensure that there are forums for exchange and mutual support for women. Develop intergenerational mentoring programmes to facilitate the involvement of new generations in the jobs of the sporting field and in positions of responsibility.

### 07 Better application of the legal framework.

Ensure that current legislation is effectively applied (penalise companies that break the law) and advocate strengthening the legislative framework to promote inclusion and combat all forms of discrimination and all forms of sexist and sexual violence.

- Strengthen cooperation between sports companies' management bodies, public authorities and associations to guarantee the application of these laws and ensure an environment conducive to fair employment practices.
- Promote the intervention of associations in companies to facilitate training and knowledge of the legal framework for leaders.
- Promote the consideration of recommendations from associations and NGOs.
- Designate a person in charge of the fight against SGBV and ensure identification, the readability of the path of people who are victims of violence within the organization and the effectiveness in the treatment of cases of violence.

### 08 Quota and parity.

Ensure equal access of women and men to jobs by implementing gender quotas in positions of responsibility and decision-making but also in the boards of directors of organizations and ensure compliance with the quotas in force.

Encourage diversity in technical supervision (one male coach and one female coach) and establish the co-presidency of expert committees/positions of responsibility to strive for equal gender representation in leadership positions.

# 10 best practices for creating an inclusive sports workplace



## Gender



### 09 Equal pay.

Assess pay between women and men annually (annual pay review) and address gender pay gaps without delay. Transparently set up pay schedules according to jobs and levels of experience and responsibility to ensure equal access to responsibilities, bonuses and fair promotion proposals to all agents.

### 10 Annual evaluation and equal conditionality.

Make mandatory the production and publication of an annual report on the situation of its organization in terms of equality and the fight against gender-based discrimination.

This public report (data available) containing a review part (index of feminization of the governing bodies, respect of the laws in force, equal representation and equal pay, state of the training of agents on SGBV, management and support of victims of discrimination and SGBV etc.) and a part for goals (setting of annual goals and criteria to improve the current situation on equality and inclusion) and its conclusions (compliance with laws and objectives) will be decisive in the eventual reception of public subsidies.

## What are the barriers and challenges identified in creating an inclusive sports workplace in terms of disability ?

*How do physical barriers and lack of accessibility impact the participation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the sports industry ?*

One of the main barriers identified is the **lack of accessibility**.

Accessibility can, indeed, be seen as one of the core features of an inclusive workplace, as it is required for some of us even to enter the facilities of the work. If you cannot get into the office or to the site of an event, how are you supposed to conduct your tasks? In the best scenario, accessibility should be something considered already when choosing the location: the questions of whether it's easily reachable also with a wheelchair, e.g., or if with a hindrance of seeing or understanding you can find your way there, should be asked.

Even as accessibility is often thought of as solely referring to the needs of the people using a wheelchair or other equipment for moving, it is not restricted to the requirements of having an elevator, accessible toilets and doors that can be easily opened and entered without doorsteps. Accessibility is also needed when someone has problems seeing, understanding, or hearing well.

**All these different kinds of disabilities bring with them specific needs to be considered.** For persons with a seeing impairment, it is crucial to have good contrast of the light and dark colours to mark thresholds, doors, obstacles, etc., in the visual environment. Also, the light conditions impact how these persons can function in a particular space. For persons with an intellectual disability, it is essential to have clear signs indicating where different facilities are to be found. Also, the precise structure of space helps these individuals to be orienteered in a location. Persons with hearing impairment might need an induction loop to be able to use their hearing aid properly.

It's important to note that paying attention to accessibility issues means taking care of potential employees, customers, athletes, partners, sponsors, etc. As 15% of the world's population has some disability, we are not talking about minor minority issues here.

*What attitudinal barriers and stereotypes exist that limit opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in sports-related employment?*

On the side of physical accessibility issues, another type of challenge for the employment of people with disabilities in sports is related to **attitudes and beliefs**. A person with a disability is not likely to be seen as a potential employee in a sports workplace. To a certain extent, this might apply to not only the employers but also to the individuals with disability themselves: as long as



persons with disability are still at times excluded from school physical activity lessons (like at least in Finland still happens), how would they later grow up to the idea of making a career in sports? This is to highlight **the importance of a more significant cultural change in sports to accommodate more diversity in the future.**

A belief that reasonable accommodations are difficult to make and/or cost too much can be a barrier for employers in hiring a person with a disability. **Lack of knowledge on disability-related issues** is also a barrier. The problem of not having enough knowledge on the relevant issues is one central hindrance to the employment of persons with disabilities in sports.

Another potential barrier to the employment of persons with disability is to be **job advertisements not written in explicitly inclusive ways**. Unlike in many other job advertisements nowadays in Finland, in sports, it doesn't seem very common to include a notice that applicants from various backgrounds and with different abilities are appreciated. This kind of advertising might well encourage more persons with disabilities – as well as any other marginalized groups – to apply for sport-related jobs. Also, describing already in the job advertisement how accessibility requirements are met in the workplace would probably lower the threshold to use. Not targeting these issues seems to be related to the silent expectation of the potential employees to be non-disabled – even as the job in itself might as well be conducted by a person using a wheelchair, for instance.

*In what way do systemic issues such as discrimination and lack of accommodations hinder the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities in sports workplaces ?*

One of the problems recognised in the employment of persons with disability in the field of sport is also the **limited availability of study places and training options**. Without educational possibilities available, it is hard to get involved working in sport. Sometimes, the problem might be that the study places are inaccessible, and sometimes the curriculum or studying methods need to be more flexible to enable students with different abilities to participate and get the qualifications required for the sports working life.

In Finland, there used to be a low-threshold tailored studying program in sports for persons with disabilities. After it was finished (due to the lack of funding), it seemed more difficult for them to find a way to study and work in sports. **Tailored training and mentoring programs and different training options in sports organisations are picked to support inclusion in sports working life.**

Another significant barrier has been identified: **the lack of adaptability and accommodations in the workplace**. For persons with disabilities, more flexibility in terms of work methods, work locations, and working hours is crucial. This flexibility can significantly enhance their ability to contribute effectively to the sports sector.

It has been observed that **rigid working schedules and intense, inflexible expectations can hinder the employment of persons with disabilities**. There is a clear need for continuous education and awareness-raising about the support and accommodations that can be beneficial when employing a person with a disability. This shift in mindset and practices can significantly improve the employment prospects for persons with disabilities in the sports sector.



Whereas the lack of knowledge poses a challenge for employers, there must be more **role models** for employees. In the sports sector, where the context of work is highly competitive and highlights the values of physical excellence, it's not self-evident for someone with a disability to see themselves working there. The lack of positive role models is a potential barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities in sports.

## What does an inclusive sports workplace look like in terms of disability?

*How can sports organizations ensure equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in all aspects of the sport industry?*

Undoubtedly, one of the most pressing issues in fostering equal work opportunities within sports organizations is accessibility. **It's crucial to view accessibility as a comprehensive concept, encompassing aspects such as mobility, vision, hearing, and comprehension.** Every employee should have the ability to engage in meetings, events, tasks, and even informal workplace activities like recreational days or trips.

In the Finnish round table, two persons – an employer and an employee using a wheelchair – have described a solution they have implemented in their company that organizes different events. As some related events and tasks cannot be fully accessible, they have adapted the work to suit the employee's situation. His tasks involve more planning that can be done in advance in the office and maybe fewer on-site activities. This adaptation was based on an open discussion of what is possible and not feasible for the employee. When something would be possible for him with reasonable accommodations, accommodations are made.

This is an excellent example of how adapting the work to meet the unique situation of a possible employee opens the sports working life for people with disabilities. **Adapting the working hours and ways of working, offering the possibility of remote work, and sharing responsibilities/teamwork are all excellent ways of personalizing the work to suit everybody.** Also, cooperation between clubs and organizations might provide one way to employ somebody when one club/organization cannot use one full-time employee – in case full-time work is preferred in the first place. The willingness to do these adaptations when needed shows attitudinal openness in practice.

**Employers should inform themselves about any legal requirements and possible financial or other support from the state to recruit persons with disabilities and make reasonable accommodations successfully.** Having all this information readily available would probably help lower the threshold for employing a person with a disability.

It's important to note that the journey towards inclusive employment continues after recruitment. **Once measures are in place to attract and employ persons with disabilities, evaluating the situation and collecting feedback continuously is crucial.** This ongoing process of inclusion, which also involves learning, requires active participation from all employees, including those from marginalized groups.

As mentioned earlier, ensuring a low threshold for everyone to participate in the sport, be it as an athlete, club member, etc., is crucial for making sports workplaces more inclusive. Without the opportunity for everyone to engage in sports, it's unlikely to achieve diversity in employment levels. Equally important is the recognition that while we emphasize our openness to adapt to the working environment and provide necessary accommodations, it's possible that not much adaptation or accommodations might be required for many potential employees with a disability. Even with the same disability, the abilities of two individuals might differ, **underscoring the importance of discussing a person's limitations and needs with them, fostering a sense of empathy and consideration towards persons with disabilities.**

*What strategies can be implemented to create accessible facilities, programs, and resources that accommodate the needs of employees and participants with disabilities ?*

**Education and raising awareness of disability-related issues is one way of creating more open attitudes and appreciation of diversity.** Using positive role models can help widen the idea of how a sports professional might look, move, see, or hear. Making examples visible encourages others—the employers and future employees.

As accessibility is non-negotiable in creating a more inclusive working life, **sports organisations could benefit from accessibility audits by certified professionals.** In these audits, the location's accessibility is evaluated through the different perspectives (moving, seeing, understanding, and hearing) and by considering the multiple roles a person with a disability entering the space might have. In these audits, the customer is also given insights, concrete ideas, and proposals on how to enhance accessibility immediately or when it will be time to renovate. In this way, accessibility audits support the idea of a longer-term development of an organisation.

Besides controlling the current situation and the possible need to make some changes in the physical working space, describing the location's accessibility will help a person with a disability understand whether or not she/he can enter and work there comfortably. Thus, **the description of accessibility should already be included in the job offer.** This is also one way of welcoming persons with disabilities to apply.

**Introducing more starter-level and training positions** is a strategic move that not only facilitates the entry of new talent into the sports industry but also paves the way for a more diverse workforce. This initiative is designed to benefit not just people with disabilities but also other underrepresented groups, such as young people and those of underrepresented genders, fostering a sense of optimism and inclusivity.

*How does the promotion of disability representation and visibility contribute to creating a culture of inclusivity in sports workplaces?*

Making our inherent differences visible and appreciated contributes to opening the overall atmosphere so that it might be easier for everyone to be themselves and bring their ideas and personal input to the joint discussion. Individuals with disabilities, as well as other marginalized groups, might experience the world from a slightly different perspective and can thus **enrich the way an organization sees its environment, target groups, opportunities, and challenges**. Encouraging this other point of view helps create an organization that can proactively accommodate the continuously changing world.

It's also important to remember that sports have a great potential to change culture and promote positive values and respect among people. Taking measures to increase diversity at the sporting level and in sports' working lives provides an excellent example for society.

## How can we implement and develop an inclusive workplace in the sports industry?

*What role do organizational policies and practices play in promoting accessibility and accommodation for individuals with disabilities in sports organizations?*

**Physical accessibility, work flexibility, and offering different types of jobs and training possibilities, especially at the entry-level, play critical roles in promoting inclusion in sports working life.** While most employers seem to show a positive attitude towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sports working life, the challenge remains to have the actual organisational policies and practices to enable this.

In the best Inclusion project, recommendations will be made for sports employers on how to proceed from a positive attitude to an inclusive workplace. Hopefully, these will serve as a concrete shared basis for improving the situation step by step and getting more persons with disabilities involved in working in the sports sector.

*How can training and education initiatives raise awareness about disability inclusion and foster a more inclusive culture within sports workplaces?*

The importance of raising awareness about disability inclusion in sports, in general, cannot be overemphasised. **The inclusion of persons with disability in sports workplaces all starts with including disabled people in the sport as athletes.** Without having the option to participate in sport in the first place, it is unlikely for someone to get interested in having a working career in sport. Thus, inclusion starts at the grassroots level by making hobbies open for all, which should be the aim of all sports organisations.

There is a lack of knowledge in sports organisations about disability-specific subjects, concepts,

possible accommodations, and different kinds of support offered by the state. **Education** on these subjects seems thus an important tool for enabling more inclusion in sports workplaces.

*What measures can be taken to ensure that recruitment and hiring processes are accessible and equitable for individuals with disabilities?*

Job offers that explicitly note that applicants with different backgrounds are valued and describe the accessibility of the working spaces are a good starting point. Added to this, **anonymous recruitment processes** and **job descriptions that allow for adapting the role based on the qualities of potential employees** make the recruitment process more equal for everybody.

For example, as the Finnish Paralympic Committee is working for the sport of people with disabilities, and as it is recognised that the number of persons with disability working in sports is deficient, it practises **positive discrimination in its recruitment processes**. This means a person with a disability is preferred over one without, in case the two applicants would otherwise be considered equally vital for the position. This kind of choice might be worth considering to balance the situation for under-presented groups of people.

In some other European countries, there exist quotas for persons with disability, which shows a state-level decision to help disabled people, many times in poor positions in the labour market, to find their careers. Quotas, however, don't fix anything in the long run if the attitudes, practises, and physical surroundings don't change to enable persons with disability to fully participate, advance in their career paths and make their own professional choices like everybody else.

**What is being done in European countries to achieve an inclusive sport workplace?**

*What legislative measures or government initiatives are in place to promote disability rights and accessibility within the sports sector?*

In some European countries, there are more **legislative initiatives** and **government policies** made to balance the under-presentation of persons with disability in the labour market.



In **Italy**, there are **quotas for employees with disability**, and also in **Ireland**, the government has set a **target percentage** to increase the representation of employees with disability.



In **Sweden**, the government makes **financial support available for hiring people with disabilities**, which employers actively use in sports.

In **Lithuania**, there is a **taxation benefit** to lower the threshold for employing people with disabilities.



*How do partnerships with disability advocacy groups and organizations contribute to advancing disability inclusion in the sports workplace?*

There is a need for more vital collaboration between sectors – NGOs, government, universities, etc.

In **France**, there is an association, especially for young people with disabilities, that offers **training and support for companies and young people**.



For instance, in **Sweden**, an association offers **training and support on how to adapt the working environment to meet the needs of a person with a disability**.



*Examples of sports organizations or initiatives that have successfully implemented inclusive practices for individuals with disabilities*

Issues can be raised about recruitment policies that might hinder persons with disabilities from getting hired or applying in the first place.





One great example of a more open recruitment process was the one of the **Dutch Football Federation**: instead of asking applicants to send a CV with a cover letter, they asked the applicants to **answer several questions and choose the ones to be interviewed based on their answers**. This is to exclude initial, many times maybe also unrecognised, bias based on a person (gender, disability, age, etc.), as the people analysing the answers do not know what kind of a person there is behind them.

In **the Netherlands**, they also use **AI to make or check job offers and descriptions** to ensure that they are inclusively written.

There is a need to pay attention to how the job offers and descriptions are written to make the process more inclusive.

How are we going to get there ?  
How can we do it better ?

*What are the key objectives and milestones for achieving disability inclusion in the sports industry, and how do we measure progress towards these goals?*

The measurable key objective for disability inclusion in the sports industry should be **the representation of persons with disabilities, more or less, by their percentage in society**. It is essential to set goals and continuously monitor and evaluate the situation to see whether we are moving towards them. This enables us to make minor or significant changes if we are not reaching the targets.

Inclusion is not something to be done at once; instead, it is a **continuous process of development** in which small steps count. So, instead of setting only rigorous, long-term goals for the future, we should also find the correct ways and controllable milestones to achieve them.

As the countries are all culturally different, setting one goal and shared milestones for the inclusion of persons with disability is not easy and maybe not even reasonable. Quotas work well in some countries, but they are counterproductive in others.

Also, **the general structure of the so-called sports industry varies** – in some countries, like Finland, sports are run more voluntarily when it comes to the level of sports clubs, coaching, etc. In some other countries, much more paid positions might be available at the grassroots level of sports work. The countries are also in different situations regarding the current representation of persons with disability in sports work. This makes it necessary **to set more precise targets and milestones for inclusion country by country**. Despite this, the measures to be made can probably be shared.

*What are the key objectives and milestones for achieving disability inclusion in the sports industry, and how do we measure progress towards these goals?*

**Creating guidelines for increasing the positive representation of role models of persons with disability** working or studying in sport might be one thing to do when it comes to the need for role models.

**Targeted training programs and education for sports employers about disability-related issues** are essential to raising awareness. **Creating more voluntary and mentoring programs** can also make entering into sports, working life easier and starting a career. **Organising inclusive training programs and events**, as well as creating policies for getting more persons with disability on the board position of organisations, are measures that would help us to proceed toward the goal of disability inclusion in sports workplaces.

*How can ongoing collaboration and feedback from individuals with disabilities inform and improve efforts to create a more inclusive sports environment?*

People with disabilities' participation is crucial in creating a more inclusive sports environment. These people should be involved throughout the process of finding solutions and evaluating them. **The development of inclusion in an ongoing dialogue.**

Collaboration with associations of people with disabilities is essential and has also occurred in many European countries. These associations can provide **insightful perspectives** on making sports more inclusive and be partners in education. At least in France and Sweden, these types of associations offer training and support for both persons with disability interested in working in sports and employers in need of further knowledge of adapting to the working environment, e.g.

Quotas are still discussed to ensure the representation of people with disabilities in decision-making and leadership sports positions in different European countries. Some people suggest specific, **controllable targets**, especially for these positions where decisions and initiatives for change are made. Nevertheless, as stated above, the idea of quotas is only sometimes welcomed, so in finding good, general recommendations, we must also consider these cultural differences to some extent.

# 10 best practices for creating an inclusive sports workplace



## Disability



### **01 Make sure the facilities of the work are accessible.**

Accessibility is the first step towards inclusion. To get proper information of the current situation as well as suggestions and advice on how to improve it, you can use accessibility auditors who are professionals in accessibility. Remember also to inform the customers, visitors and potential employees about the accessibility of the facilities. The description of the accessibility of your office e.g. should be found on your website.

### **02 Provide flexible options for working, e.g. flexible hours, remote work, part-time work or work-sharing.**

Work flexibility helps to accommodate the work for lived and differing situations of different kinds of persons. Too fixed working hours and no option for remote working makes the work suitable for only some, whereas leaving more space for adapting the ways and spaces of working helps to attract diverse potential employees. Options for work-sharing or part-time work might lower the threshold for persons with somekind of special needs.

### **03 Fight stereotypes and negative attitudes with education and representing diverse role models.**

Normalizing diversity opens up the space for everyone to join and give their full input. Fighting, many times also unrecognised, stereotypes and negative attitudes plays a crucial role in advancing inclusion and positive, accepting atmosphere in the workplace. Continuous education and paying close attention to the diversity of representation in all publications e.g. are good ways of doing this.

### **04 Learn about financial and other types of support available for the employment of a person with disability.**

It is necessary to build the capacity of adults working with young people in sport, including board members, coaches, teachers and youth workers to empower and educate their pupils in and through sport to realise and take advantage of the benefits of their participation in sport organisations. Another important aspect is adjusting the language of the discussions to reflect the developmental age of all participants.

### **05 Focus on solutions, not on restrictions. Accommodate and adapt where needed.**

The attitude of the employer plays a key role in making or breaking the possibilities. Focusing on solutions and strenghts rather than difficulties and restrictions is a good advice not only when it comes to the recruitment and employment, but also in general. If someone cannot do the thing the way others do, doesn't mean s/he cannot do it at all. The way we always have done a thing is not necessarily the only, let alone the best one. Be flexible and willing to consider options.

# 10 best practices for creating an inclusive sports workplace



## Disability



### **06 Offer options for training or other kind of low threshold possibilities to get involved with your organisation.**

For persons with disability themselves there might at least seem to be a bigger threshold to apply for a work in sport, compared to ablebodies persons. This might result from being excluded in doing sport, having less opportunities to study relevant subjects, not being sure if the work is suitable for them, or whatever kind of mixture of these aspects. Offering options for training and/or volunteering might provide for many a good way to get involved and try working as a part of your organisation.

### **07 Set measurable goals and follow them up, collect data and feedback.**

In taking measures to advance inclusion and diversity, it's important to set measurable goals and follow them up to know how the situation evolves and also to be able to change the course if needed. Collecting (anonymous) feedback from the employees is essential as it is the only way to get to know how they are experiencing the physical, psychological and social working environment.

### **08 Make sure the workplace is a safe and respectful, friendly space for everyone.**

Creating a positive, respectful atmosphere for everyone consist of not only diversity education and making policies that enhance inclusion but also recreational activities where everyone can get to know each other in a relaxed setting. Lead by example is another good tip for setting a tone for interaction and communication in the workplace.

### **09 Make sure your sport is open for all.**

Everything starts from the grassroots level. Making your sport open for all, regardless of their (dis)abilities, increases a lot the chances of having a diverse team working for it. Advancing inclusion in a local/sport club level should thus be high on the agenda of your organisation.

### **10 Continue to advance inclusion – it's an on-going process, not something done one and for all.**

Last but not least it's important to bear in mind that inclusion is a continuous process of learning and developing together. As our working environment, lived reality and social context keeps on changing fast, we cannot stay still. Be aware and willing to adapt!



## The main challenges for the employability of women, young people and persons with disability

Based on the previous sections concerning the different underrepresented groups in the sports workforce, the main challenges for their employment appear to be:

- **Stereotypes and attitudes;**
- **Lack of accessibility, accommodations and flexibility;**
- **Biased recruitment processes;**
- **Lack of knowledge of solutions and possibilities;**
- **Lack of role models and support.**

In tackling these difficulties, it's essential to pay attention to how the axes of age, gender and (dis)ability cross. A person with a disability, for instance, is always of a specific gender and age, too. Being a young woman with a disability comes with a different amount and type of challenges than being a middle-aged, non-disabled man, to make a harsh example. Even though we might agree on a general level that women typically face more challenges than men in the sports working life, this might not be valid if we consider men with disability: men with a disability might well be in much more difficult situations than non-disabled women, when it comes to employment and advancing in the career. Considering the axes of differences altogether, this intersectional viewpoint highlights the importance of sensibility to the unique situation of a potential employee. This situation may also vary in life: a non-disabled person might get disabled, for instance. **As the situations and needs of the employees already working in an organisation might also change, this calls for flexibility and readiness to adapt to any organisation.**

In this final part of the paper, the main challenges for the employment of women, young people, and persons with disabilities are discussed, along with ideas and examples of possible solutions.

## Stereotypes and attitudes

**Simplifying and generalizing stereotypes and harmful, restricting attitudes are recognized as one major hindrance to the employment of young people, women and persons with disability in the sports sector.** Stereotypes portray young people as less experienced and professional and less committed to work and the employer. According to the stereotypes, women are less decisive, ambitious and capable of taking on leadership positions. Women are also seen as actual or potential mothers who are taken to prioritize family life over a career. A person with a disability is seen as unable to manage many of the tasks required in a job and may not even be interested or involved in the field of sport.

Combatting the stereotypes is one crucial way of making the sport working life more inclusive. **Ways of doing this include education and representation of role models that make the differences within the groups visible.** Education for employers and leaders on diversity issues and



how to support and advance inclusion in the workplace is crucial in making the change. Stereotypes and attitudes are usually partly unrecognized, and education can help to make one conscious of them. As there is a limit to the extent to which this attitudinal change might be done, and as the positive or neutral attitudes of the employer and fellow employees are not enough to make the working environment inclusive, structural changes and changes in the policies are required.

For instance, in recruitment processes, unconscious bias and attitudes can make it much more difficult for certain people to be selected for the interview, let alone for the work itself. Diversity education can partly address this problem – pursuing to change attitudes and challenge stereotypes – but concrete changes in the processes are needed. Recruitment processes where the personal details about the applicants are not to be seen by those selecting the ones to be interviewed support the idea of emphasizing the skills and experience over the attributes of a person (such as gender, age or (disability)). In some organizations, this is already the policy, and others should consider following too.

It's essential to note that **stereotypes and restricting attitudes go not only for those representing the so-called majority or hegemony**. Women themselves have internalized negative attitudes about women and persons with disability and have unconscious prejudice about persons with disability, etc. This highlights the need for education and awareness raising within the underrepresented groups to encourage more diversity in the sports working life. One way of raising awareness in general is through role models.

**Role models** give the face and voice to the underrepresented groups of people. By doing this, **they can help open up the fixed attitudes and, more importantly, encourage others in the same reference group to work in sport**. For instance, a woman in a leading position in the sport, which in most countries is not very typical, can help to make visible that despite this being rare at the moment, it's nevertheless possible to be both a woman and a leader. Role models sharing their stories can give meaningful advice, new viewpoints, support and encouragement to others in the same reference group. In the best case, they can also act as mentors, supporting others' career paths in a more structured way. Mentorship is recognized as a critical tool in increasing the diversity of sports' working lives.

## Accessibility, accommodations and flexibility

**Accessibility is one of the most essential things in advancing inclusion in sports organisations.** Persons who move differently compared to the expected "normal" don't always have physical access to the facilities where the work should be done. Somebody with a hindrance to seeing, hearing, or understanding might already be left out because these differences were not considered when planning the facilities, guidance, and information.

Accessibility should be considered when choosing the office location (or any other site where the work should be done). Still, it can be advanced in many cases afterwards, e.g., accessibility audits. These are conducted by professionals who evaluate a location's current situation and give concrete advice on how to improve it. Also, describing the workplace's accessibility is essential in job advertisements. This information helps persons with particular accessibility needs to choose whether or not it makes sense for them to apply.

Accommodations are one central way of making sport work open, possible and appealing for everybody. Even as they might be usually taken to respond to the needs of persons with disability, **accommodations also help other underrepresented groups to enter the sports workforce.** Due to possible responsibilities as mothers, women might use more flexible working hours and the option of working from home, whereas young people generally appreciate the flexibility of the work. **Accommodating or adjusting the work, working space, working hours, and ways of working (shared work and working in pairs, e.g.) will allow more diversity, as the employees' unique situations vary throughout their careers.**

Flexibility is a crucial aspect of job descriptions. As noted in previous sections, overly rigid job descriptions can inadvertently exclude potential applicants based on factors such as disability, age, and gender. **By keeping job descriptions more flexible, we can tap into the unique talents and skills of each employee.** In the best-case scenario, this not only leads to a more diverse team but also a more productive and creative one, as each employee can contribute their unique perspective to advancing the common cause.

## Knowledge of the solutions and possibilities

**Lack of knowledge of the solutions and possibilities** can pose a hindrance to the employment of especially persons with a disability, but to an extent also of women and young people. In many countries, different kinds of financial and other support aim to encourage employing persons with disability. This support may vary from taxational benefits to helping with the accommodations needed. **Generally, it seems that the employers in the sports sector are not fully aware of this support from the state and thus might see employing someone with a disability as a financial or other risk.** Educating employers on these matters is critical to advancing inclusion in sports work.

**Lack of knowledge of the possibilities** also affects potential employees. As for the persons with disability, it's important also for them to know which kind of support the state is to help in employment. Also, and more profoundly, being aware of the possibility of finding work in the sports sector is crucial – considering that this might not be the first thing in mind when considering the possibilities of employment. As stated above, the importance of role models cannot be underestimated. Seeing somebody representing (more or less) the same reference group and working successfully in the sports sector makes this option visible. It opens up the possibility for others to pursue this kind of path. **In many countries, some NGOs provide education and information for persons with disability on employment, rights and options in working life in general.**

**Regarding women, knowledge of the possibilities refers mainly to insufficient examples representing the possible career options in sports.** Women in sports work mainly on an administrative level, whereas in higher positions, they are underrepresented. This makes it more difficult for women to imagine themselves in a leading position, which causes a vicious circle of them not even pursuing to get there. Historically seen as quite masculine, many women working in sports prefer to have leadership education mainly targeted at women and conducted in groups of women.

**For young people,** who might not yet have that much experience and skills valued in a specific working position in sport, **options of doing a training period in a sports organisation or working as a volunteer might provide a good way of getting more experience expected by the**

**employers.** Knowledge of these possibilities plays a crucial role in encouraging young people to consider sports work as one relevant option for the future. Providing this kind of low-threshold possibilities for young people to enter and try working in sports also makes sense for sports organisations, as they will, after all, be the future workforce anyway.



THIS SECTION WAS CONDUCTED BY



# The essential suggestions to make sport workplaces more inclusive



## **01 Recruitment process that supports inclusion.**

Advancement of inclusion in sports working life starts with ensuring that workplace policies and practices support inclusion and diversity. The recruitment process is a key element to consider, and there are a few concrete suggestions on how to make it more inclusive.

## **02 Job description and advertisement.**

Expect more flexibility in work than maybe older generations do. Thus, paying attention to this helps the organizations see the future.

## **03 Attitudes and education of the employers and employees.**

One key hindrance to the employment of young people, women and persons with disability in the sports sector is the negative attitudes and stereotypes that make these people seem – in one way or another – not correctly suitable for the work. These attitudes are not something only the employer part might have. Quite the contrary: young people, women, and persons with a disability might as well not see themselves working in the sector based on internalized attitudes. For instance, a person with a disability might find it challenging to enter a sport already as an athlete. When sports appear to be something mainly for non-disabled persons, it's easy to understand that not that many persons with a disability apply and pursue a career in its context. This underlines the need to advance inclusion starting from the grassroots level, even as we now handle the specific employment issue. More diversity in the sports working life entails more diversity in sports in general.

Combatting negative attitudes and restricting stereotypes is possible via education and the representation of diverse role models who make the inner differences in the reference groups visible. Diversity education for employers and all employees working in sports can make a difference in how young people, women, and persons with disabilities are met and perceived as possible employees and colleagues. This kind of education is a continuous process and has to go hand in hand with other policies and the lived reality of the organization, which has a real impact.

Education also for young people, women, and persons with disabilities can help these underrepresented groups recognize the possibilities, options, and solutions in working life and empower them to get involved. This kind of education is conducted in many countries by NGOs.



# The essential suggestions to make sport workplaces more inclusive



## 04 Collecting data and feedback, measurable goals and following up on the situation.

Making changes in the policies and advancing diversity and inclusion in the workplace is only enough if we follow up on how the situation evolves. Systematically collecting data and feedback gives information on which measures are effective and what we should improve. Data on the actual situation also helps us react and change our course if some measures don't work, or something is going wrong. Feedback collected from the employees can provide crucial information on many aspects of advancing inclusion and diversity. For instance, if employees are provided with a diverse education, it's essential to follow up on the changes in attitudes and actions this facilitates.

Providing employees with education to check the box of "education" in their diversity plan is not an accurate measure of making the workplace more inclusive.

In many countries, sports organizations must have a diversity plan. This is a good starting point as it directs the attention to various issues that might not otherwise be on the agenda. A good diversity plan is based on the facts about an organization's current situation. This organization station organization and concrete, realistic steps for getting from the starting point towards the set goals and following up systematically on how the different aspects of the plan are developing shows a real commitment and dedication to the change.

## 05 The question is about employment and the sport in general - who is included and welcome to join ?

Even as in this project, we are handling the issues of employment in sports; it's essential to bear in mind that getting young people, women and persons with a disability interested and involved in working in sports (in most cases) entails getting them involved and interested in sport in general. We must ensure the world of sports stays up to date and keeps developing more open, accessible, and safe for everyone, regardless of age, gender, or (dis)ability. These issues should thus be high on the agenda of every sports organization. Only through the inclusion on the grassroots level of sports clubs and local hobbies can we move forward into a future of a more diverse workforce in sports.

