

INTEGRATION INTO SPORTS PROFESSIONS: AGE, GENDER AND DISABILITY

REPORT ON THE FINAL EVENT OF THE PROJECT



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THE BEST INCLUSION PROJECT

The BeST Inclusion project is coordinated by EASE (European Association of Sports Employers), with the support of experts, academic partners and employers in the sports sector from 9 different European countries.

The main objective of BeST Inclusion is to achieve inclusion in sports professions. To achieve this, it will consider the inclusivity and diversity of the European sports workforce along three axes: gender, age, and disability. The goal of the BeST Inclusion project is to strengthen their employability by supporting sports employers and providing them with all the keys to hiring these different categories of workers without fear. The main objectives are:

- Assess the barriers to a more inclusive world of work in the sports sector in terms of gender, age and disability.
- Identify existing best practices in policy for a more inclusive workforce in the sports sector.
- Addressing sports workforce inclusivity with policy recommendations aligned with the economic reality of the sports sector.
- Increase the exchange of knowledge between economic actors in the sports sector and stakeholders working for more inclusive sport.
- Produce tools to take concrete action towards a more inclusive workforce in the sports sector.

The BeST Inclusion project addresses the issue of good governance in sport at the European level by addressing the theme of social inclusion in the sporting sector. It will contribute to European sports policies by strengthening exchanges between European sports stakeholders.





THE CONSORTIUM INVOLVED



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METHODOLOGY

The final event of the Best Inclusion project took place on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. It was held at the premises of the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF).

THE ORGANIZERS



The Alice Milliat Association was created to ensure that women occupy a more equitable place in the world of sport, both on the field and within governing bodies. Through its actions, the association advocates for gender equality in sport, promotes better representation of female athletes, and combats sexism, stereotypes, and all forms of discrimination or violence in the sporting world.



EASE is the European Association of Sport Employers, the only representative organization of sports employers in Europe. Its mission is to defend the interests of employers at the European level and to structure social dialogue at the Community level. EASE is currently present in seven countries, notably with COSMOS in France, but also in Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland, Sweden, and Finland.

GOALS

The purpose of this event was to present **the recommendations** created as part of the project and the **White Paper on the place of women in sports professions** written by SporTech. We wanted to close this project by bringing together stakeholders from the sports movement and the private sector so that they could share with us the best practices implemented in their organizations in terms of inclusion in the sports labor market based on age, gender, and disability criteria. The recommendations produced as part of the project and presented during the event can be viewed in the appendix to this report.



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PROFILE OF THE SPEAKERS

The event showcased, through two round tables and keynote speeches, a diversity of stakeholders from the sports movement and the professional world, in order to foster dialogue between these worlds and share examples of best practices. Nine speakers were invited as recognized experts at the national and European levels, representing both the public and private spheres.











FIRST ROUND TABLE

Sports organizations, players in inclusion in sports professions

			
			
VALENTINE DUQUESNE Chargée de recherche au Comité Paralympique et Sportif Français CPSF	FRANCINE RAVENEY Secrétaire exécutif adjoint - Accord partiel élargi sur le sport (APES)	EMMA LEONARDI Vice présidente (handicap & lutte contre les discriminations) à l'ANESTAPS	MAGALI TÉZENAS DU MONTCEL Référente féminisation du COSMOS

SECOND ROUND TABLE

New private sector solutions for inclusion

				
				
CAMILLE AMAR Responsable Inclusion & Féminisation chez la SporTech	YANN DE LA FOUCHARDIÈRE Responsable de l'activation des engagements du groupe Matmut	KARINE BOZZACCHI Responsable RSE et coordination Tour de France chez Amaury Sport Organisation (ASO)	CAMILLE STROZECKI Fondateur chez CLASSEOS	HICHAM OUSSENI Directeur général de Kunto



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OPENING REMARKS



Astrid Guyart, Secretary General of the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF).

The CNOSF executes programs:

- on diversity (Diversity conference addressing the feminization of sports professions; initiative for the leaders of tomorrow)
- on transidentity (Committee of Experts on Transidentity with the Ministry of Sports: conclusions to be published soon in a report). It was especially active during the Olympic Games on these matters by organizing a conference on the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals in sports at Club France, addressing parity, and partnering with the Pride House.

CNOSF statistics on feminization indicate that women comprise 17% of sports management positions, with three national sports federations being led by women.

“ Sport is and must continue to be a medium for sharing and universalism. There remains significant progress to be made. These statistics indicate that the political commitment must persist. This is why we are collectively mobilized; it is essential to incorporate perspectives from both civil society and the business sector [...] this integration fosters greater intelligence, creativity, and productivity. ”



Francine Hetherington Raveney, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS).

2 Council of Europe initiatives:

- **“All In Plus: promoting enhanced gender equality in sport”** was implemented across 21 jurisdictions, focusing on three pillars: data analysis, the exchange of best practices, and collaboration with media outlets.
- **“Sport for All: Promoting Inclusion and Combating Discrimination Against Individuals with Disabilities”** will be launched around three foundational pillars: capacity building, sharing best practices, and raising awareness.

ALL IN PLUS statistics: 22% of women occupy positions in sports management, while 12-14% of sports federations are led by women.

“ Inclusion is a fundamental right; sports must be accessible to all, as it is not merely an option. Unfortunately, numerous challenges persist, particularly the gap between the stakeholders of field and sports policies. These are not limited to France; they are prevalent throughout Europe. We must endeavor to construct more connections. ”



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PRESENTATION OF THE WHITE PAPER ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SPORTS PROFESSIONS

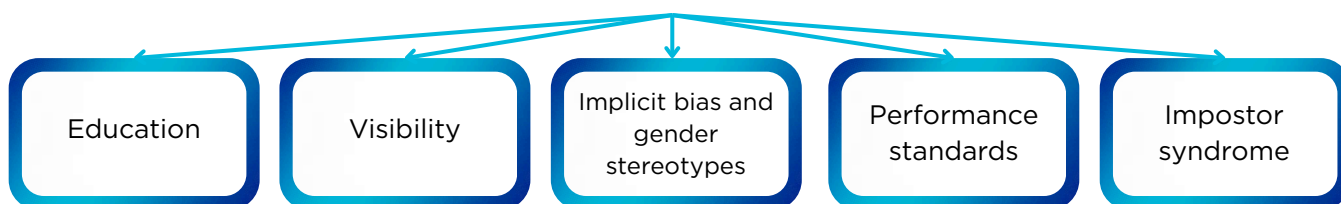


Camille Amar

Founder and CEO of Manita, a platform dedicated to making football accessible to all women, and Head of Inclusion and Feminization at SporTech.

This white paper represents the culmination of a reflective process initiated by SporTech regarding the inclusion of women in sports professions. Following a data collection phase, SporTech convened a diverse array of stakeholders from the sports sector on December 2, 2024, to address a pivotal question: **how can we promote the feminization of women in sports professions?** The event attracted over **150 participants** from various backgrounds, including representatives from federations, ministries, major organizations, sports entrepreneurs, and the broader sports community. Subsequently, SporTech compiled and elaborated on these insights in a white paper aimed at identifying concrete solutions to expedite change.

5 THEMES



3 observations:

- There is a **deficiency of objective quantitative data** regarding the inclusion of women in sports professions.
- It is essential to instigate a **transformation of social norms** to foster a more inclusive world. Concrete solutions must be provided to establish more inclusive conditions within the sports sector, emphasizing a model of integration rather than mere inclusion. Additionally, efforts should be directed toward reversing the model itself, a process that requires considerable time.
- Inclusion is a **shared responsibility**: it is essential for everyone to feel engaged. When discussing inclusion, it can be challenging to rally individuals who are not already persuaded or invested in the matter. It is crucial to engage companies equipped with the resources to tackle these issues and to leverage startups as catalysts for change.



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GLOSSARY

- AFDAS: Assurance Formation Des Activités du Spectacle
- AMA : Association Alice Milliat
- ANESTAPS : Association Nationale des Étudiants en STAPS
- APES/EPAS: Accord Partiel Elargi sur le Sport
- CNSOF: Comité National Sportif et Olympique Français
- COSMOS: Conseil Social du Mouvement Sportif
- CPSF: Comité paralympique et sportif français
- CSE: Comités Sociaux et Économiques
- EASE: Association Européenne des Employeurs du Sport
- IPACS: Partenariat International Contre la Corruption dans le Sport
- JOP: Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques
- RSE: Responsabilité sociale des entreprises
- STAPS : Licence de sciences et techniques des activités physiques et sportives



INCLUSION WITHIN SPORTS PROFESSIONS: CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The subsequent summary was formulated based on the insights of the experts convened during the event on April 1, 2025.

1. Obstacles to Inclusion in Sports Professions

1.1. Absence of quantitative data

Given that the realm of sports has been **socially constructed by and for men**, scientific inquiry in this field is characterized by male predominance and has, for several decades, concentrated on a privileged demographic, notably excluding women, individuals with disabilities, and, more broadly, other marginalized groups. This socio-historical context results in a dearth of data and research biases.

The absence of quantified data in the sports industry **renders inequalities**—whether pertaining to gender, age, or disability—imperceptible, thereby hindering collective or institutional acknowledgment. In the absence of precise statistics regarding representation in sports industry professions, assessing the magnitude of these inequalities becomes challenging.

This absence of data impedes research and awareness initiatives, thereby restricting the involvement of **industry stakeholders**. In the absence of data, it becomes challenging for researchers, sports sociologists, and training managers to **examine the dynamics of exclusion and to provide suitable educational and awareness resources**.

Public policies require indicators to be targeted, effective, and measurable. In the absence of data, it becomes challenging to identify a target audience (who is excluded?), assess the actions taken (what hinders inclusion?), and advocate for necessary structural changes.

Ultimately, the absence of data frequently signifies a deficiency in mobilization and commitment among stakeholders. A lack of counting often equates to a refusal to acknowledge or confront reality. This perpetuates existing privileges and circumvents the challenge of prevailing norms within the realm of sports. Consequently, reliable data is crucial for fostering a more inclusive sports sector.



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1.2. Unconscious biases: impostor phenomenon and gender stereotypes

The notion that specific segments of the population possess an inherent disinterest in sports careers is a social projection, influenced by enduring (gender or ableist) stereotypes. Such representations constrain aspirations and shape career trajectories from an early age. A parallel can be established with the reflections of researcher **Henri-Jacques Stiker** regarding the **relationship to disability** in contemporary societies: confronted with deficiency, society fluctuates between invisibility and a focus on misery.

The **unconscious bias** in this context is twofold: firstly, there is an assumption that these individuals are unsuitable; secondly, the material and social conditions are not established to facilitate their access to these professions. Conversely, when society does not adopt a miserabilist perspective towards individuals with disabilities, it may swing to the opposite extreme by perceiving them as “superheroes” or “superheroines.” While this portrayal is more positive, it nonetheless reinforces the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the prevailing social norm.

These messages are internalized by individuals with limited opportunities, potentially leading to **imposter syndrome**, which obstructs their access to positions of responsibility or environments deemed “masculine” or exclusive to the able-bodied, such as sports. The influence of others’ representations and perceptions fosters a self-perpetuating sense of incompetence and doubt.

This situation fosters a phenomenon of **self-censorship**, wherein individuals with disabilities, women, or youth internalize the belief that they lack legitimacy in applying for certain positions. This **self-exclusion** does not signify a deficiency in competence or ambition, but rather a perceived absence of legitimacy, perpetuated by non-inclusive environments.

The speakers advocated for a paradigm shift: the emphasis should not be on limitations, but rather on attitudes, knowledge, backgrounds, experience, and adaptability. The challenge lies in envisioning genuinely inclusive sports environments as standard practice, rather than as exceptions, beginning from the design phase. **Altering one’s perspective entails prioritizing attitudes and potential over perceived limitations.**



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1.3. Insufficient accessibility of training

During the roundtable, speakers unanimously recognized the **absence of training in equality, inclusion, and anti-discrimination** issues as a fundamental barrier to sustainable transformation within the sports sector. Notably, there are ongoing deficiencies in STAPS (Sports and Physical Education) programs, which prepare future sports coaching professionals.

This content is currently inadequate, if not entirely absent, leaving young graduates vulnerable to exclusion based on gender, disability, or age. According to Valentine Duquesne (CPSF), **58%** of individuals with disabilities do not perceive the realm of sports as appealing.

Beyond the content of the training courses, their **accessibility** presents a significant challenge. Numerous establishments remain difficult to access for individuals with disabilities, whether due to facilities that **fail to meet accessibility standards, insufficient human support, or a lack of educational accommodations**. These physical and organizational barriers perpetuate inequalities in access to sports careers, particularly for those groups most distanced from conventional training programs. Consequently, this leads to a notable underrepresentation of these groups in management and decision-making positions within the sports sector.

1.4. The absence of alignment among the sector's stakeholders

A clear consensus emerged during the presentations: a gap exists that separates not only field actors from sports policies but also the various types of economic participants in the realm of sport, particularly large corporations and smaller entities such as startups or local associations. This sectoral divide hinders the development of a common, shared, and recognized framework concerning the issues of sport and inclusion.

On one hand, large corporations typically possess substantial resources, established networks, and institutional influence, enabling them to effect change in the realm of inclusion within sports professions. Conversely, smaller organizations, while innovative and attuned to grassroots realities, often struggle to integrate into institutional frameworks.

The **lack of intersectoral communication and collaboration** among these economic and institutional domains, as well as across various levels, hinders the alignment of practices and the establishment of a **unified framework**. Consequently, each entity operates autonomously, resulting in fragmented initiatives, redundant projects, and ultimately, a diminished overall impact of sports inclusion policies.



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To address these barriers, it is crucial to establish platforms for structured dialogue among all stakeholders, aimed at fostering the harmonization of practices, enhancing the clarity of action frameworks, and facilitating authentic multi-scale collaboration.

1.5. An exclusive offer

The deficiency of representation in sports professions primarily arises from the **unappealing nature** of these careers, particularly due to the absence of substantial structural reforms. This shortfall obstructs the development of a job market that is both tailored, inclusive, and appealing to recent graduates. As highlighted during the initial round table discussion, these challenges hinder numerous STAPS students from securing employment in the sports sector that aligns with their specific needs and ensures a work environment that honors diversity.

The conscious or unconscious invisibility of disabilities may serve as a significant factor in the inadequate implementation of necessary adaptations in both training programs and professional settings. As Valentine Duquesne (CPSF) notes, **most disabilities are invisible**, and many individuals affected either remain unaware of or choose not to disclose their disability status.

Beyond the job offer itself, company Social and Economic Committees (CSEs) provide employees with **opportunities that frequently lack inclusivity**. Due to insufficient awareness and training regarding disability issues, CSEs often present activities or benefits that do not consider the diverse circumstances of individuals, particularly those with disabilities, whether disclosed or not. This results in the silent exclusion of certain employees, perpetuating a sense of isolation and rendering professional environments less welcoming.

2. Mechanisms of influence

2.1. Dismantling obstacles and leveraging positive experiences

The initial lever for action centers on the necessity of **dismantling barriers** between current initiatives and effectively **leveraging experiences** from diverse contexts. Presently, numerous pertinent initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion, accessibility, and the adaptation of professional environments are spearheaded by associations, communities, or private organizations; however, their impact is often constrained by a lack of coordination. These efforts are typically not disseminated widely and are undervalued. It is imperative to establish a **European regulatory framework** that promotes the **exchange of best practices**, acknowledges inclusive initiatives, and fosters the development of common benchmarks.



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In this context, **collaboration among stakeholders** emerges as a strategic lever. Startups, as agile and responsive entities attuned to concrete needs, cultivate innovative solutions for inclusion. These **innovations** can invigorate broader strategies, particularly within more established companies that often face challenges in adapting their internal practices. Engaging with these nascent organizations not only facilitates the emergence of social innovation but also initiates a **bottom-up transformation** dynamic, wherein large organizations draw inspiration from local or experimental experiences to advance their HR, CSR, and managerial policies toward enhanced inclusivity.

2.2. The exemplary characteristics of the actors

Another vital lever resides in the **exemplary characteristics of the structures** and individuals that constitute the realms of sport and employment. To foster a cultural transformation, it is imperative that organizations maintain a coherent alignment between their rhetoric and their internal practices.

This necessitates, in particular, **genuine parity within decision-making bodies** (boards of directors, CSE, management) to ensure equitable representation of the sports movement and its employees in all their diversity. More inclusive governance conveys a powerful message, not only to employees but also to young trainees, who can envision themselves in varied career trajectories.

Role models are pivotal in this context. Showcasing the inspiring journeys of individuals from underrepresented groups, those with disabilities, or those who have thrived in historically exclusive environments serves to dismantle stereotypes and demonstrate that alternative pathways are attainable.

Finally, **mentoring programs** strengthen this dynamic. They foster intergenerational connections, assist young individuals in their integration, and encourage skills development within supportive environments. Mentoring also facilitates the transfer of values and experiences, contributing to the establishment of a more equitable and nurturing corporate culture.

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2.3. The necessity of an employer commitment

The **employer promise** encompasses all the tangible and intangible benefits that an individual derives from their professional engagement. From an inclusive standpoint, this promise must ensure that employees are provided with a **respectful environment that is attuned to their needs and acknowledges their commitment**.

This entails guaranteeing tangible acknowledgment of the contributions made by employees, especially those with disabilities or those seeking special accommodations. A robust employer commitment enhances the appeal of careers in sports and fosters a more equitable and sustainable corporate culture.

1.3. Illustration of exemplary practices

3.1. Research and analyses conducted in the field

As previously noted, the absence of data regarding inequalities in access to sports professions serves as a barrier to inclusion within these fields. The organizations involved provided us with the studies and reports they have undertaken.



• COSMOS Guide to Feminization in Sports

This Guide of Good Practices (May 2024), developed from feedback provided by COSMOS member organizations, was created as part of **the survey on the feminization of the sports environment** and seeks to promote the feminization of sport and sports organizations. Following this report, **44% of the surveyed structures have appointed or will appoint a representative for feminization; 60% have initiated or will initiate an action related to feminization in 2023 and/or 2024.**



• AFDAS Employment and Training Study

This study indicates that the sports sector predominantly employs young individuals, primarily through work-study programs. Another significant finding is the underrepresentation of women in the sector. Female employees are projected to constitute **35% of the workforce in 2023, in contrast to 49% across the broader economy**. Although their numbers have risen, the proportion of women within the workforce is decreasing.



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- **EPAS All In Plus Report**

EPAS recently released a report titled All in Plus, which follows an extensive data collection initiative focused on gender equality in sports. This report addresses critical areas including leadership, coaching, participation, media representation, gender-based violence, and gender equality policies and programs. The primary objectives were to emphasize the relative invisibility of women in sports and to raise awareness of the gender imbalance and associated issues within the field.



- **Research within the CPSF**



The CPSF established a **research unit** in 2023, overseen by Valentine Duquesne. This unit allocates 70% of its efforts to research topics and 30% to **ethics and the combat against discrimination**.

She specifically developed Réglo'Sport, a tool designed to prevent violence in sports for licensees, professionals, and employers.

- **SporTech: White Paper**



Refer to page 8 of this report.

3.2. Current institutional programs

Representatives from sports organizations informed us about the current initiatives within their frameworks aimed at promoting inclusion in sports professions.

Council of Europe

- **Programme Hey and Help**

The Council of Europe has established two complimentary **online training programs focused on combating gender discrimination**: the first, Help, targets adults and emphasizes human rights, while the second, titled Hey, is tailored for youth and includes a dedicated module on business and human rights.

- **The IPACS working group will evaluate a European framework for effective governance.**

IPACS emphasizes effective practices to foster solidarity in sports and advocates for the education of stakeholders within the sports sector to enhance awareness of inclusion matters.



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CPSF

- **Inclusive club**

Inclusive Club is a program established by the French Paralympic and Sports Committee for clubs that wish to welcome individuals with disabilities and seek support in this endeavor. By the 2024-2025 sports season, the goal is to assist and raise awareness among 3,000 new clubs while addressing the barriers associated with prejudices regarding the reception and supervision of individuals with disabilities.

3.3. Events

The speakers also highlighted the various events organized by their organization that provide visibility to the issue of inclusion for the general public.



CPSF

- **Women's Parasport Seminar**

Fortified by the success of the JOP, the CPSF sought to maintain its momentum by organizing a **seminar focused on women's parasports**. This seminar convened all stakeholders from the Paralympic federations to engage in a collective reflection on female Paralympic performance and to explore solutions aimed at increasing the number of female athletes in future delegations for the Paralympic Games.



ANESTAPS

- **National Day of Sport and Disability**

This national event enjoys significant recognition and facilitates the inclusion of youth, as it is exclusively organized by students. The objective of this day is to offer the **general public** introductory experiences in parasports and inclusive sports through an activity village designed to engage a diverse array of participants. Numerous **stakeholders from the sports and disability sectors** are invited to showcase their various projects and services aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities. Throughout the day, institutional sessions are organized to foster discussions on the conditions for engaging in physical and sporting activities for people with disabilities. This event is now fully recognized and organized by students, representing a national initiative led by youth.



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ASO

- **Women's Tour de France with Zwift (TDFFAZ) and Special Disability Day during the Men's Tour de France**

The Tour De France Femmes avec Zwift provided a platform to highlight women's cycling, achieving greater impact through its branding. Female cyclists had long anticipated this event, as other circuits lacked comparable visibility. The TDFFAZ has also created new career opportunities and training programs for women, attracting diverse profiles in roles such as regulators, commentators, and speakers. A.S.O. actively engages all stakeholders involved in the Tours—cycling teams, partners, media, and communities—on corporate social responsibility issues and best practices regarding gender equality and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. This initiative includes enduring partnerships with grassroots organizations and the organization of dedicated events during the Tours.

Karine Bozzacchi articulated during the round table that she was engaging with the Tour's stage towns to advocate for the feminization of sports facilities, which would contribute to enhancing the visibility of female athletes.

Council of Europe



- **Launch event of the collaborative European Union - Council of Europe initiative "Sport for All: Promoting Inclusion and Combating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities." Strasbourg, France, 15 May 2025**

This project builds upon existing initiatives aimed at cultivating a more inclusive sporting culture by tackling obstacles to the participation of individuals with disabilities in sports and promoting a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. The primary objective of the project is to investigate effective strategies by:

Creating secure and inclusive environments

- Enhancing visibility and representation
- Promoting awareness of integration practices
- Fostering athletic communities



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3.4. Technical and Practical Solutions



Kunto

The Kunto app presents a comprehensive solution for all employees by delivering **customized sports programs**. Additionally, it provides **healthy and balanced nutrition plans** along with **personalized support from sports and health professionals**. The app distinguishes itself through its partnership with Endofrance, which assists individuals with endometriosis and PCOS in engaging in suitable physical activities and maintaining a nutritious diet.

MATMUT



- **Sourdline:**

To enhance accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing members and prospects, the Matmut Group has partnered with **Sourdline**, a telephone platform that provides **videoconference calls in French sign language**, enabling deaf individuals to contact MATMUT and acquire the information they require.

- **Mentoring program for the development of future female executives.**

A **new collective agreement on gender equality** was signed with social partners on **February 21**. Its aim is to guarantee equal treatment for individuals with comparable skills at all stages of their professional careers. This agreement builds upon a series of prior social accords on the topic, including the one signed on December 3, 2021, which resulted in the establishment of a mentoring program within the company to enhance the representation of female executives.

- **Support for elite athletics**

MATMUT has been providing support to athletes in the parasport sector for several years. The organization has prominently integrated Alexis Hanquiquant into its team and is committed to fostering his athletic career. Additionally, MATMUT has launched an all-female initiative by establishing a female duo in motorsport.



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Manita

Manita enables companies to establish their own women's soccer teams and provide their employees with training sessions and/or matches, both internally and externally. These clubs allow organizations to showcase their **dedication to women's rights and equality**, fostering an environment that benefits all women through the advantages of team sports in the workplace. This initiative promotes connections and cohesion through sport, facilitates networking on and off the field, and enhances the retention of female talent.



Classeos:

Classeos collaborates with diverse individuals to facilitate their professional integration. One of the initial lessons derived from this commitment is that employees and employers in **privileged positions** must take a proactive approach to inclusion. For those who do not occupy privileged roles, Classeos recommends providing support to fellow employees and offering practical assistance to help them succeed within the organization. Additionally, it is advised not to acquiesce to the conditions of able-bodied environments and to inquire about the levels of adaptation available. From the employer's perspective, it is imperative to ensure that all necessary resources are in place to facilitate the adaptation of the employer rather than placing the burden on the employee.



RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE BEST INCLUSION INITIATIVE

Finalized in January 2025, the recommendations were crafted to assist sports employers throughout Europe by providing tangible solutions to enhance inclusion in sport at all levels.



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RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE BEST INCLUSION INITIATIVE



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