Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit

A Practical Toolkit for Inclusive Sports Engagement



SPORT
Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit

BSDA
Bulgarian Sports Development Association

KARGENC CLUB
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1. Acknowledgements

This toolkit is the result of the experiences, lessons learned, and meaningful moments created throughout the SPORT – Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit project.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the coaches, sport experts, assistants, volunteers, and support staff who dedicated their time, knowledge, and energy to creating positive and inclusive sport experiences for people with intellectual disabilities. Through their commitment, professionalism, and belief in the potential of every participant, they helped transform sport activities into opportunities for growth, learning, friendship, and personal development.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the participants with intellectual disabilities who took part in the SPORT activities and international camps. Their enthusiasm, courage, determination, and willingness to embrace new experiences were the true driving force behind the project. Many participants experienced international travel, inter-cultural exchange, and new social environments for the very first time, proving that barriers can be overcome when opportunities are made accessible.

We are equally grateful to the families, caregivers, and support networks who placed their trust in the project and encouraged participants to take part in experiences that often meant stepping beyond familiar routines and comfort zones. Their support was essential in making these opportunities possible.

Special recognition is also due to the volunteers, local communities, educational institutions, sport organisations, public authorities, and all supporters who contributed to the implementation of SPORT activities. Their involvement demonstrated that meaningful inclusion becomes possible when different people and sectors work together around a shared purpose.

This toolkit is dedicated to everyone who believes that sport can open doors, build confidence, create connections, and empower people with intellectual disabilities to participate fully in society.

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2. About the SPORT Project



Background and Rationale

Across Europe and beyond, people with intellectual disabilities continue to face significant barriers to participation in sport, community life, and international mobility. While sport is widely recognised as a powerful tool for personal development, social inclusion, and wellbeing, many individuals with intellectual disabilities still have limited access to quality sport opportunities, particularly those that extend beyond their local communities.

The challenges are often greater for people living in rural or socially isolated areas, where opportunities for participation, travel, and intercultural exchange may be restricted. As a result, many individuals miss out on experiences that others take for granted, such as joining international activities, meeting peers from other countries, or representing their communities through sport.

The SPORT project – Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit – was developed in response to these challenges. The project aimed to create meaningful opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in sport, build confidence, develop social skills, and experience international mobility in a safe and supportive environment.

Through local activities, capacity-building initiatives, and international sport camps, SPORT demonstrated how sport can serve as a bridge between communities, cultures, and people, while promoting inclusion, equality, and active participation in society.

Objectives of SPORT

The SPORT project was designed to:

- Increase opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity;
- Promote social inclusion, self-confidence, and personal development through sport;
- Support international mobility and intercultural exchange for participants with intellectual disabilities;
- Strengthen the capacity of coaches, sport experts, and organisations working in the field of inclusive sport;
- Foster cooperation between stakeholders from different sectors and countries;
- Raise awareness of the abilities, potential, and contributions of people with intellectual disabilities.

Target Groups

SPORT was developed for a wide range of stakeholders involved in inclusive sport, including:

- People with intellectual disabilities;
- Coaches and sport experts;
- Grassroots sport clubs and organisations;
- Families, caregivers, and support networks;
- Volunteers and community members;
- Educational institutions and professionals working with people with disabilities.

Countries and Partners Involved

- The project was implemented through cooperation between organisations from Bulgaria and Türkiye.
- The consortium brought together partners with complementary expertise in sport, inclusion, youth work, and community engagement:
- Bulgarian Sports Development Association (BSDA) – Bulgaria;
- Kargenc Club – Türkiye.
- Together, the partners worked to create sustainable opportunities for participation, learning, and international exchange for people with intellectual disabilities.

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Donor and Support

SPORT was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union under the Erasmus+ Sport strand. The project was supported through European funding aimed at promoting social inclusion, participation in sport, international cooperation, and equal opportunities for all.

The implementation of SPORT was further strengthened through the involvement of local authorities, educational institutions, sport organisations, volunteers, families, and community stakeholders who contributed to the successful delivery of project activities.

Duration and Funding Framework

SPORT was implemented between 2024 and 2026 as an international cooperation project under the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

The project combined local sport activities, capacity-building initiatives, educational resources, and international mobility opportunities to create sustainable and transferable approaches to inclusive sport participation for people with intellectual disabilities.

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3. How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit was developed as a practical resource for everyone interested in creating more inclusive sport opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. It is based on the experiences, lessons learned, and good practices generated through the SPORT project and is designed to support both newcomers and experienced practitioners working in the field of inclusive sport.

Rather than being a document that needs to be read from beginning to end, this toolkit can be used flexibly according to the needs, experience, and role of each reader. Some users may benefit from exploring the entire publication, while others may focus on specific chapters that are most relevant to their daily work.

Who This Toolkit Is For

This toolkit is intended for:

- **Coaches and sport instructors** who wish to create more inclusive training environments and adapt activities to the needs of participants with intellectual disabilities.
- **Sport clubs and sport organisations** seeking practical guidance on developing inclusive programmes, events, and long-term participation opportunities.
- **Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** working in the fields of sport, disability, youth, education, social inclusion, or community development.
- **Educators and support professionals** interested in using sport as a tool for learning, personal development, and social participation.
- **Volunteers and peer supporters** who contribute to inclusive sport activities and wish to better understand how to support participants effectively.
- **Local authorities and community stakeholders** looking for practical examples of how different sectors can work together to promote inclusion through sport.

Regardless of professional background or previous experience, the toolkit aims to provide accessible and practical guidance that can be adapted to different settings and participant groups.

How the Toolkit Is Structured?

The toolkit is organised into six interconnected parts.

- **Part I** – Understanding Inclusive Sport introduces the core concepts of inclusion and provides a practical understanding of intellectual disabilities within sport contexts.
- **Part II** – From Values to Practice focuses on creating safe environments, adapting activities, and communicating effectively with participants.
- **Part III** – Working with People Around the Athlete highlights the important roles played by coaches, families, assistants, volunteers, and support networks.
- **Part IV** – Events, Camps, and International Activities presents practical guidance for organising inclusive sport events and international mobility activities.
- **Part V** – Monitoring, Impact, and Sustainability explores ways to measure outcomes, demonstrate impact, and ensure that inclusive practices continue beyond individual projects.
- **Part VI** – Practical Tools and Resources provides checklists, examples, and lessons learned that can be directly applied in real-life situations.

While the chapters build upon one another, each section can also be used independently as a stand-alone reference.

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Adaptability for Different Contexts

No two sport organisations, communities, or participant groups are exactly the same. For this reason, the recommendations presented in this toolkit should not be viewed as rigid rules, but as adaptable guidance that can be adjusted according to local circumstances.

The principles and practices described throughout the publication can be applied in different countries, sports, organisational settings, and community environments. They may be used in grassroots sport clubs, schools, disability organisations, municipalities, youth projects, community programmes, and international initiatives.

The experiences shared through SPORT demonstrate that inclusion is not dependent on having perfect conditions or extensive resources. What matters most is a willingness to learn, collaborate, and create opportunities that enable every participant to feel respected, valued, and involved.

We encourage readers to adapt the ideas presented in this toolkit to their own realities and to continue building more inclusive sport environments within their communities.



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PART I

UNDERSTANDING INCLUSIVE SPORT



SPORT
Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit



4. What Inclusive Sport Really Means

Sport has the power to bring people together in ways that few other activities can. It creates opportunities for communication, friendship, teamwork, personal achievement, and belonging. Yet for many people with intellectual disabilities, participation in sport is still limited by barriers that have little to do with physical ability and much more to do with attitudes, expectations, access, and opportunities.

Inclusive sport is often understood as simply allowing people with disabilities to join existing activities. While participation is an important first step, true inclusion goes much further. Inclusion is not only about being present. It is about being welcomed, respected, supported, and given meaningful opportunities to contribute, develop, and succeed.

Throughout the SPORT project, we learned that inclusion happens when people feel that they genuinely belong. It is the difference between being invited to an activity and being recognised as a valued member of a team or community. This distinction may seem small, but it has a profound impact on confidence, motivation, self-esteem, and long-term engagement.

For many people with intellectual disabilities, sport is much more than physical activity. It can be a pathway to friendship, independence, personal growth, and active participation in society. Inclusive sport creates spaces where people are recognised for their abilities and potential rather than defined by their limitations.

Inclusion vs Participation

Participation means taking part in an activity. Inclusion means being an active, respected, and valued member of that activity.

A participant can attend a training session without feeling included. They may be physically present but have little interaction with others, limited opportunities to contribute, or no real sense of belonging. In such situations, participation exists, but inclusion does not.

Inclusive sport seeks to remove these barriers. It creates environments where every participant can engage according to their abilities, build relationships, experience success, and feel respected by those around them.

A truly inclusive environment is one where people are not merely accommodated but actively welcomed. Participants are encouraged to contribute, express themselves, make choices, and develop meaningful relationships with others. Their presence is valued, and their participation matters.

During the SPORT camps in Türkiye and Bulgaria, inclusion was visible not only during sport sessions but also during meals, travel, social activities, and everyday interactions. Friendships developed between participants who spoke different languages and came from different cultural backgrounds. These connections often became some of the most meaningful outcomes of the project, demonstrating that inclusion extends far beyond sport itself.

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Why Inclusion Matters for Everyone

Inclusive sport is often discussed in terms of the benefits it provides for people with intellectual disabilities. While these benefits are undeniable, inclusion should never be viewed as a one-way process where one group receives support from another. In reality, inclusive sport strengthens entire communities.

When people with different abilities participate together, everyone learns. Coaches become more adaptable. Volunteers develop empathy and communication skills. Families build stronger support networks. Peers learn to appreciate diversity and challenge stereotypes. Communities become more open, welcoming, and connected.

Throughout the SPORT project, inclusion was not something that happened only to participants with intellectual disabilities. Students, volunteers, coaches, teachers, local authorities, and community members were also transformed by the experience. Many encountered people with intellectual disabilities in a meaningful way for the first time, often discovering that their assumptions did not match reality.

Inclusive sport therefore benefits everyone involved. It creates stronger communities and reminds us that diversity is not a challenge to overcome but a strength to embrace.



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The SPORT Values: Respect, Opportunity, and Team Spirit

The SPORT project was built around three core values that shaped every activity, decision, and interaction.

Respect

Respect means recognising the dignity, abilities, and individuality of every participant.

People with intellectual disabilities are often defined by what they cannot do. Inclusive sport encourages us to focus instead on strengths, interests, talents, and potential. Respect is reflected in the language we use, the expectations we set, and the way we interact with participants and their families.

Respect also means listening. Every participant has unique needs, preferences, fears, and aspirations that deserve to be acknowledged. Building trust starts with understanding people as individuals rather than viewing them through labels or assumptions.

Respect is the foundation upon which all other aspects of inclusion are built.

Opportunity

Opportunity is at the heart of inclusion.

Many participants involved in SPORT had never travelled abroad before. Some had never stayed in a hotel, participated in an international event, or met peers from another country. These experiences are often taken for granted by others but can be life-changing for people who have had limited access to such opportunities.

Inclusive sport creates pathways for people to discover new environments, develop new skills, build confidence, and gain experiences that contribute to personal growth and independence.

Creating opportunities does not always require large budgets or complex programmes. Sometimes it begins with something as simple as inviting someone to participate, believing in their abilities, and providing the support needed for success.

Team Spirit

Team spirit extends far beyond sport performance.

It is about supporting one another, celebrating achievements together, overcoming challenges as a group, and creating environments where everyone feels accepted and valued.

In SPORT, team spirit emerged naturally when participants encouraged one another during activities, helped each other overcome fears, and celebrated successes regardless of individual performance. These moments demonstrated that inclusion is not something delivered by organisations alone-it is created collectively by everyone involved.

When team spirit is present, differences become less important and shared experiences become more powerful.

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Why Sport Is a Powerful Tool for People with Intellectual Disabilities

Sport offers much more than physical activity.

It creates structured opportunities for learning, communication, cooperation, and social interaction. Through sport, participants can develop confidence, independence, problem-solving skills, emotional resilience, and a stronger sense of identity.

Sport also provides opportunities to experience success. For many people with intellectual disabilities, daily life may involve frequent reminders of limitations or challenges. Inclusive sport helps shift the focus towards abilities, achievements, and possibilities.

The SPORT project demonstrated that the impact of sport often extends far beyond the playing field. Participants developed friendships, gained confidence in unfamiliar environments, improved communication skills, and became more willing to try new experiences. Families frequently reported positive changes in self-esteem, independence, and social engagement following participation in project activities.

Perhaps most importantly, sport creates opportunities for visibility. When people with intellectual disabilities participate actively in community life, stereotypes begin to fade and perceptions begin to change. Sport provides a platform where abilities become visible and differences become less significant.

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Beyond Sport:

Creating Opportunities for Participation in Society

For many people, sport is simply a leisure activity. For people with intellectual disabilities, however, sport can often become a gateway to much broader forms of participation.

Joining a sport activity may be the first step towards meeting new people, developing communication skills, travelling independently, making decisions, or participating more actively in community life. Sport creates situations where people interact naturally, solve problems together, and experience shared success.

Many participants in SPORT arrived with limited experience of travelling, interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, or spending time away from their usual environments. Through sport, they developed confidence that extended well beyond the activities themselves.

The confidence gained during a training session can help someone feel more comfortable joining a community event. A friendship created during a sport camp can encourage greater social participation. A successful international mobility experience can increase willingness to explore new opportunities in the future.

In this sense, inclusive sport is not only about physical activity. It is about creating pathways towards fuller participation in society.



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Understanding the Barriers to Participation

Creating inclusive sport opportunities requires recognising the barriers that many people with intellectual disabilities continue to face.

These barriers are not always visible. In many cases, they are created by systems, attitudes, or assumptions rather than by the disability itself.

Attitudinal Barriers

Negative assumptions and low expectations remain among the most significant obstacles.

Sometimes people assume that individuals with intellectual disabilities are not interested in sport, cannot participate successfully, or require constant supervision. Such beliefs often limit opportunities before participation has even begun.

Inclusive sport starts with believing in people's potential rather than focusing on perceived limitations.



Communication Barriers

Complex instructions, unfamiliar terminology, unclear expectations, or a lack of visual support can make activities difficult to follow. Small adjustments in communication often have a significant impact on participants' ability to engage successfully.

Removing communication barriers does not require specialised expertise. It often begins with patience, clarity, active listening, and a willingness to adapt.

Access Barriers

Access is about much more than physical facilities.

Participants may face challenges related to transportation, financial resources, available support, accessible information, or the lack of suitable programmes within their communities.

In rural areas, these barriers can become even more significant, reducing opportunities for regular participation and social engagement.

The SPORT project highlighted how access barriers can affect international mobility as well. For some participants and families, obtaining travel documents, navigating visa procedures, or travelling to a major city for administrative appointments represented entirely new experiences.

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Common Myths About Inclusion

Many barriers to participation are rooted not in reality but in assumptions.

One common misconception is that people with intellectual disabilities are not interested in sport. Experience consistently shows the opposite. Given appropriate opportunities and support, participants often demonstrate remarkable enthusiasm, commitment, and enjoyment.

Another misconception is that inclusion requires expensive equipment, specialised facilities, or extensive resources. While accessibility is important, many inclusive practices begin with simple adjustments in communication, organisation, and attitude.

Some people also believe that participants with intellectual disabilities should only take part in separate activities. While specialised programmes can sometimes be appropriate, inclusive sport demonstrates that mixed environments can provide valuable opportunities for learning, friendship, and mutual understanding when properly supported.

Perhaps the most harmful myth is that people with intellectual disabilities are defined by their limitations. Inclusive sport challenges this perspective by focusing on strengths, interests, potential, and personal growth.



What We Learned Through SPORT

The experiences gained during the SPORT project reinforced several important lessons.

First, people often achieve far more than others expect when they are given appropriate opportunities and support.

Second, trust is one of the most important foundations of inclusion. Participants are more willing to try new activities, travel to unfamiliar places, and engage with new people when they feel safe and supported.

Third, families play a crucial role in creating opportunities. In both Bulgaria and Türkiye, many families had understandable concerns about travel, safety, and participation. Building trust with families was therefore just as important as preparing the participants themselves.

Fourth, inclusion is strongest when many actors work together. The most successful activities involved cooperation between sport organisations, schools, universities, local authorities, volunteers, families, community stakeholders, and international partners.

Finally, we learned that inclusion is often built through small moments rather than large interventions: a new friendship, a shared meal, a participant overcoming a fear, a volunteer offering encouragement, or a community member seeing ability where they previously expected limitation.

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A Real Impact Stories



Bulgaria

Several Bulgarian participants who joined the international camp in Türkiye had spent most or all of their lives living in residential institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. For many of them, the camp represented a series of first experiences: travelling abroad, meeting peers from another country, staying in a hotel, and taking part in an international sport activity.

Throughout the week, they gradually became more confident, independent, and engaged in the life of the group. They were not seen through the lens of their living arrangements or support needs, but simply as teammates, friends, and participants sharing the same experiences as everyone else.

At the end of the mobility, one participant shared a reflection that stayed with the project team. He said that, for the first time in his life, he had felt like everyone else and that he wished the experience did not have to end. His words reflected the feelings of several participants, for whom the camp offered not only the opportunity to travel, but also a genuine sense of belonging.

This experience demonstrated that inclusion is about much more than participation in activities. When people with intellectual disabilities are given the opportunity to travel, build friendships, and contribute as equal members of a group, they gain confidence, discover new possibilities, and experience what it truly means to belong.



Türkiye

During the international camp in Bulgaria, one of the Turkish participants experienced a swimming pool for the first time in his life. Before the camp, he was very afraid of water and had never entered a swimming pool.

After returning home, he continued talking about the camp experience and, before going to bed on the evening of his return, he spontaneously told his mother that the swimming pool had been his favourite part of the entire camp. Although brief, this simple reflection became one of the most meaningful outcomes of the experience for his family.

This experience illustrates something that evaluation forms and statistics cannot always capture. When people are given supportive environments, meaningful opportunities, and encouragement to try something new, they often discover abilities, interests, and confidence that were previously hidden behind fear or limited expectations.

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Inclusion Without Borders

One of the most powerful aspects of the SPORT project was the opportunity to combine inclusion with international mobility.

For many participants from both Bulgaria and Türkiye, international travel was a completely new experience. Some had never left their local communities before. Others had never stayed in a hotel, crossed a border, or communicated with peers from another country.

These experiences demonstrated that the right to participate in international mobility should not be reserved for a limited group of people. People with intellectual disabilities should have the same opportunities to travel, learn, explore, and connect across borders as anyone else.

Sport provides an ideal platform for making this possible. It creates shared experiences that transcend language differences and cultural barriers. A game, a team activity, or a shared challenge can bring people together long before they learn how to communicate verbally.

Through the SPORT camps, participants discovered that they were capable of much more than they or others sometimes believed. They built friendships, gained confidence, explored new environments, and became part of an international community connected through sport.

Throughout the project, partners repeatedly observed that barriers were often created not by disability itself, but by limited opportunities and expectations. When participants were provided with supportive environments and meaningful experiences, they consistently demonstrated abilities, confidence, and independence beyond what many people initially assumed.

This was one of the most valuable lessons of SPORT: inclusion becomes even more powerful when it extends beyond local communities and opens the door to international experiences, new friendships, and a broader sense of belonging.



Key Takeaway

Inclusive sport is not about lowering expectations or creating separate opportunities. It is about removing barriers and creating environments where everyone has the opportunity to participate, contribute, develop, and belong.

When respect, opportunity, and team spirit guide our actions, sport becomes much more than a recreational activity. It becomes a powerful tool for participation, belonging, personal development, and positive social change.

And perhaps most importantly, it reminds us that inclusion is not about what people cannot do. It is about creating the conditions that allow them to show what they can do.

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5. Understanding Intellectual Disabilities in Sport Contexts

Creating inclusive sport opportunities begins with understanding people, not labels.

When working with participants with intellectual disabilities, it is important to move beyond assumptions and focus on the individual in front of us. Every person has unique abilities, interests, preferences, experiences, and support needs. While people with intellectual disabilities may share certain challenges related to learning, communication, or adapting to new situations, no two individuals are exactly alike.

This chapter focuses on practical understanding rather than medical definitions. Coaches, volunteers, and sport organisations do not need to become clinical experts. What they need is the ability to create environments where participants feel safe, understood, respected, and able to participate meaningfully.



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Understanding Intellectual Disabilities and the Evolution of Inclusive Sport

People with intellectual disabilities have always been part of our communities. However, the way society understands and supports them has changed significantly over time.

For many years, people with intellectual disabilities were often excluded from education, employment, sport, and community life. Opportunities to participate were limited, and decisions were frequently made on their behalf rather than with them. As a result, many individuals had little access to activities that could support their personal development, wellbeing, and social participation.

Over the past decades, important progress has been made towards recognising the rights, abilities, and contributions of people with intellectual disabilities. Today, there is growing recognition that every person should have the opportunity to participate fully in society, including in sport and physical activity.

In simple terms, intellectual disabilities may affect the way a person learns, understands information, solves problems, communicates, or adapts to new situations. The impact varies greatly from person to person. Some individuals require only limited support in daily life, while others may need more consistent assistance in certain situations.

What is important to remember is that intellectual disability does not define a person's identity, potential, interests, or aspirations. Like everyone else, people with intellectual disabilities have unique personalities, talents, strengths, and goals.

The development of adapted and inclusive sport has played an important role in changing perceptions. Over time, sport has evolved from a model that often separated participants with disabilities into specialised activities towards approaches that increasingly promote participation, inclusion, and equal opportunities.

The growth of initiatives such as Special Olympics, Unified Sports programmes, community-based sport projects, and inclusive physical activity programmes has helped demonstrate what many practitioners already knew: when barriers are reduced and support is available, people with intellectual disabilities can thrive in sport environments.



Today, inclusive sport is increasingly recognised not only as a matter of physical activity, but also as a matter of human rights, social participation, and equal opportunities. The focus has shifted from what people cannot do to what becomes possible when supportive environments are created.

This perspective forms the foundation of the SPORT project and of the approaches presented throughout this toolkit.

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Seeing the Person Before the Disability

People with intellectual disabilities are athletes, teammates, friends, students, family members, and community members. Their disability is only one aspect of who they are.

Unfortunately, many people are still introduced to intellectual disability through limitations and deficits. This can create low expectations and unnecessary barriers before any interaction even begins.

Inclusive sport encourages a different perspective.

Instead of asking:

"What difficulties does this person have?"

we can ask:

"What helps this person participate successfully?"

This simple shift changes the focus from limitations to opportunities.

Throughout the SPORT project, participants consistently demonstrated that abilities often become visible when barriers are reduced and appropriate support is provided. Individuals who initially appeared shy, hesitant, or dependent frequently became active team members, encouraged others, took initiative during activities, and developed confidence over time.

The goal is not to ignore challenges but to avoid allowing challenges to define the entire person.

Understanding Individual Differences

People with intellectual disabilities may process information differently, learn at different speeds, or require additional support in unfamiliar situations.

Some participants may need more time to understand instructions. Others may feel uncomfortable in large groups or become anxious when routines change unexpectedly. Some may communicate very openly and confidently, while others may need encouragement before expressing themselves.

These differences should not be viewed as problems. They are simply part of the natural diversity that exists among all people.

Effective inclusion is rarely about finding one perfect approach. Instead, it involves observing participants, listening carefully, and adapting when needed.

In practice, this often means:

- **allowing additional time for learning;**
- **explaining activities in different ways;**
- **providing opportunities to ask questions;**
- **breaking tasks into smaller steps;**
- **offering reassurance during new experiences.**

Small adjustments can have a significant impact on confidence and participation.

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Learning Styles and Communication Needs

Every person learns differently.

Some participants learn best by listening to explanations. Others learn through observation, demonstration, repetition, or hands-on experience. Many benefit from combining several approaches.

In sport settings, practical demonstrations are often more effective than lengthy verbal instructions. Showing an activity can be easier to understand than explaining it.

During SPORT activities, coaches frequently found that participants responded positively when information was presented clearly, visually, and consistently. Demonstrations, examples, visual cues, and peer support often proved more effective than complex explanations.

Several principles can support effective communication:

Keep Instructions Clear and Simple

Participants are more likely to succeed when instructions are concise and focused on one task at a time. Instead of presenting multiple steps simultaneously, it can be helpful to introduce activities gradually and build understanding step by step.

Demonstrate Whenever Possible

Visual learning is particularly valuable in sport environments. Demonstrating movements, exercises, or game rules allows participants to observe what is expected and reduces uncertainty.

Check Understanding

Understanding should never be assumed. Simple questions, repetition, or asking participants to demonstrate what they have understood can help ensure that information has been communicated effectively.

Allow Time

Some participants may need additional time to process information and respond. Creating space for reflection and avoiding unnecessary pressure can improve both learning and confidence.

Use Positive Reinforcement

Encouragement plays an important role in participation. Recognising effort, progress, and achievements helps participants feel valued and motivated to continue learning.

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A Strengths-Based Perspective

Inclusive sport is most successful when it focuses on strengths rather than limitations.

A strengths-based approach asks what participants can do, what they enjoy, and how these strengths can be used to support learning and development.

Many people with intellectual disabilities bring valuable qualities to sport environments, including:

- enthusiasm and motivation;
- honesty and authenticity;
- persistence and determination;
- strong team loyalty;
- willingness to support peers;

joy in participation and shared experiences.

These qualities contribute significantly to positive team culture and group dynamics.

During the SPORT camps, participants repeatedly demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and courage. Many travelled internationally for the first time, adapted to unfamiliar environments, interacted with people from different cultures, and embraced experiences far outside their usual routines.

These achievements remind us that focusing only on support needs provides an incomplete picture. Strengths, talents, and potential deserve equal attention.





The Importance of Predictability

For many participants with intellectual disabilities, predictability creates comfort and confidence.

Uncertainty can sometimes cause anxiety, particularly when people are entering unfamiliar environments, meeting new individuals, or trying new activities.

Predictability helps participants understand what will happen, what is expected of them, and how they can prepare.

Simple practices can increase predictability:

- providing schedules in advance;
- explaining daily routines;
- introducing activities step by step;
- informing participants about upcoming changes;
- using consistent communication methods.

During international SPORT camps, preparation before travel played a particularly important role. Participants and families often felt more comfortable when they knew where they would stay, what activities would take place, who would accompany them, and what to expect throughout the experience.

Predictability does not eliminate challenges, but it can reduce uncertainty and support successful participation.

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Building Trust

Trust is one of the most important foundations of inclusive sport.

Participants are more willing to try new activities, take risks, ask questions, and engage socially when they trust the people around them.

Trust is not created through a single conversation or activity. It develops gradually through consistent, respectful, and supportive interactions.

Coaches and volunteers build trust when they:

- keep their promises;
- communicate honestly;
- show patience;
- listen actively;
- treat participants with respect;
- respond calmly to challenges.

Families also need trust.

Many parents and caregivers have spent years advocating for their family members and navigating systems that have not always been supportive. Building positive relationships with families can therefore be just as important as building relationships with participants themselves.

The experiences from SPORT showed that trust often becomes the foundation upon which confidence, independence, and participation are built.



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Why Routine Matters

Routine provides structure and stability.

Many participants feel more comfortable when activities follow familiar patterns. Knowing what comes next can reduce stress and allow participants to focus their energy on learning and enjoying the activity.

This does not mean that routines should never change. New experiences are important and often beneficial. However, changes are usually easier to manage when they are introduced gradually and communicated clearly.

A predictable structure may include:

- welcoming participants in the same way at each session;
- following a familiar sequence of activities;
- using consistent communication approaches;
- ending sessions with reflection or feedback.

These routines help create a sense of security while still allowing flexibility and creativity within activities.



Supporting Participation Rather Than Controlling It

A common misunderstanding is that supporting people with intellectual disabilities means doing things for them. In reality, effective support is about creating opportunities for people to do as much as possible independently. The role of coaches, assistants, volunteers, and families is not to control participation but to enable it.

This may involve:

- providing encouragement rather than solutions;
- offering guidance instead of taking over;
- allowing time for decision-making;
- supporting problem-solving and independence.

The ultimate goal is not simply successful participation in a sport activity. It is helping participants develop confidence, autonomy, and a belief in their own abilities.

Many of the most meaningful moments observed during SPORT activities came when participants were given space to try, explore, make choices, and succeed in their own way. These moments often had a greater impact than the sport activity itself.

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From Understanding to Practice

Understanding intellectual disabilities is not about memorising characteristics or applying fixed rules. It is about recognising that every participant is unique and may require different forms of support at different moments.

The most effective coaches and practitioners are not those who have all the answers, but those who remain curious, flexible, and willing to adapt. By focusing on strengths, building trust, communicating clearly, and creating predictable environments, sport becomes more accessible and enjoyable for everyone involved.

This understanding provides the foundation for inclusive practice. The next step is translating these principles into everyday actions that help participants feel safe, respected, and confident in sport environments.

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PART II

FROM VALUES TO PRACTICE



SPORT
Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit

6. Creating a Safe and Respectful Sport Environment

Inclusive sport begins long before the first exercise, training session, or competition.

Participants are far more likely to learn, develop, and enjoy sport when they feel safe, respected, and accepted. While equipment, facilities, and programme design are important, the atmosphere created around participants often has an even greater impact on their experience.

For people with intellectual disabilities, a safe and respectful environment is not simply a desirable feature of a sport programme - it is the foundation upon which meaningful participation is built. When participants feel secure, understood, and valued, they become more willing to try new activities, communicate with others, build relationships, and challenge themselves. When they feel unsafe, judged, or excluded, participation often becomes more difficult regardless of the quality of the sport activity itself.

Throughout the SPORT project, one lesson became clear: people flourish when they feel that they belong. Creating this sense of belonging requires attention not only to physical safety, but also to emotional wellbeing, trust, communication, and everyday interactions.

Understanding Safety in Inclusive Sport

Safety is often associated with preventing injuries or managing risks during physical activity. While these aspects are important, inclusive sport requires a broader understanding of safety.

Participants should feel safe:

- physically;
- emotionally;
- socially;
- psychologically.

A participant who feels physically protected but emotionally uncomfortable may still struggle to engage fully. Similarly, a participant who feels welcome but is exposed to unnecessary physical risks cannot participate confidently.

Creating safe environments therefore requires a holistic approach that considers the whole person rather than focusing on a single aspect of safety.



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Physical Safety

Physical safety is one of the most visible responsibilities of coaches and organisers.

Participants should be able to engage in activities without unnecessary risks and with confidence that appropriate support is available when needed.

This does not mean removing all challenges or avoiding new experiences. Growth often happens when people step outside their comfort zones. However, activities should be planned carefully and adapted appropriately to match participants' abilities and needs.

Practical considerations include:

- ensuring facilities are suitable and well maintained;
- checking equipment regularly;
- providing clear instructions before activities;
- adapting activities when necessary;
- considering weather and environmental conditions;
- maintaining appropriate supervision;
- preparing emergency procedures.

During SPORT activities, careful planning was particularly important during international camps, where participants encountered unfamiliar facilities, accommodation settings, transport arrangements, and outdoor environments. Clear routines, preparation, and support helped participants explore these new experiences safely and confidently.

Physical safety should never become a barrier to participation. Instead, it should create the conditions that allow participation to happen successfully.

Emotional Safety

Emotional safety is often less visible than physical safety, but it can have an even greater influence on participation.

People learn and engage most effectively when they feel accepted and free from fear of embarrassment, rejection, criticism, or failure.

For many people with intellectual disabilities, previous experiences may have included exclusion, misunderstanding, bullying, or low expectations. These experiences can affect confidence and willingness to participate in new activities.

Creating emotional safety means ensuring that participants know they are valued regardless of performance, skill level, or experience.

Participants should feel comfortable:

- asking questions;
- making mistakes;
- trying new activities;
- expressing concerns;
- seeking support when needed.

A participant who feels emotionally safe is more likely to engage fully, take initiative, and develop confidence over time.

Small actions often make a significant difference. A welcoming greeting, patient explanation, encouraging comment, or supportive response to a mistake can help participants feel respected and accepted.

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Building Trust

Trust is one of the most valuable resources in inclusive sport.

Without trust, participants may hesitate to engage, communicate, or challenge themselves. With trust, they often become willing to explore new opportunities and develop greater independence.

Trust develops gradually through consistent experiences.

Participants build trust when coaches and volunteers:

- behave consistently;
- communicate honestly;
- keep promises;
- listen actively;
- show patience;
- demonstrate respect;
- respond calmly to challenges.

Trust also develops when participants know what to expect. Predictable routines, clear communication, and reliable support help create a sense of stability.

The importance of trust became particularly visible during the international SPORT camps. Many participants were travelling abroad for the first time, spending time away from familiar environments, and interacting with people from another country. These experiences required a high level of trust - not only from participants, but also from families and caregivers.

Trust was built long before the journeys began. It developed through communication, preparation, transparency, and relationships established over time.

One of the most important lessons learned through SPORT was that inclusion moves at the speed of trust. The stronger the trust, the greater the willingness to participate, explore, and grow.



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Respectful Language and Behaviour

Language shapes experiences.

The words used by coaches, volunteers, peers, and organisations can either promote inclusion or unintentionally reinforce barriers.

Respectful language begins by recognising people as individuals rather than defining them by a disability.

People should always be treated with dignity and addressed in ways that reflect respect and equality.

Respectful communication includes:

- speaking directly to participants rather than only to assistants or family members;
- using age-appropriate language;
- avoiding stereotypes and assumptions;
- focusing on abilities as well as support needs;
- listening actively and respectfully;
- allowing participants to express their views and preferences.

Respect also extends beyond language.

Behaviour communicates values just as strongly as words.

Participants quickly notice whether they are being genuinely included or simply accommodated. Respect is demonstrated through everyday actions such as inviting participation, acknowledging contributions, valuing opinions, and ensuring everyone has opportunities to be involved.

In inclusive sport, respect should never depend on performance, ability level, or achievement. Every participant deserves respect simply because they are a member of the community.





Creating a Culture of Belonging

A safe and respectful environment is not created by one person alone.

It is shaped collectively by coaches, volunteers, participants, families, assistants, and organisations.

Belonging occurs when participants feel that they are accepted as part of the group rather than treated as guests or outsiders.

Creating belonging often involves:

- encouraging interaction between participants;
- celebrating effort and progress;
- recognising individual strengths;
- creating opportunities for teamwork;
- promoting mutual support;
- ensuring everyone has a role to play.

During SPORT activities, some of the strongest moments of inclusion occurred outside formal sport sessions. Shared meals, conversations, travel experiences, and informal social interactions often strengthened relationships and created lasting memories.

These experiences remind us that inclusion is not limited to sport activities themselves. It is built through everyday human connections.

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The Role of Coaches

Coaches play a central role in shaping the environment around participants.

Participants often look to coaches for guidance, reassurance, and support. As a result, coaches influence not only learning and performance but also group culture and participant wellbeing.

An inclusive coach:

- creates clear expectations;
- encourages participation;
- adapts activities when needed;
- promotes respect among participants;
- responds constructively to challenges;
- recognises effort as well as achievement.

Perhaps most importantly, inclusive coaches believe in the potential of every participant.

This belief influences the opportunities that participants receive and the expectations that guide their development.

Coaches do not need to have all the answers. They need to remain open, flexible, and willing to learn alongside participants.



The Role of Peers

Peers can have a powerful influence on inclusion.

Friendships, encouragement, and positive social interactions often shape participants' experiences as much as organised activities do.

Peers help create environments where participants feel accepted and valued. They can model inclusive behaviour, offer support, celebrate achievements, and contribute to a sense of belonging.

When participants learn to support one another, inclusion becomes part of the culture rather than the responsibility of a single coach or organisation.

The SPORT camps demonstrated how quickly meaningful connections can develop when people are given opportunities to interact, collaborate, and share experiences. Despite language differences and cultural backgrounds, participants found common ground through sport, teamwork, and shared challenges.

These relationships often became some of the most valuable outcomes of the project.

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Responding to Challenges Respectfully

No sport environment is free from challenges.

Misunderstandings, disagreements, anxiety, frustration, and behavioural difficulties may occasionally arise. These situations should be viewed as opportunities for learning rather than failures.

When challenges occur, it is important to:

- remain calm;
- listen carefully;
- avoid public criticism or embarrassment;
- focus on solutions rather than blame;
- maintain respect for everyone involved.

Participants should always feel that mistakes are part of learning and that support remains available when difficulties arise.

The way adults respond during challenging moments often determines whether participants feel safe enough to continue engaging.

From Safety to Participation

A safe and respectful environment is not the final goal of inclusive sport - it is the starting point.

When participants feel physically safe, emotionally secure, respected, and valued, they become more willing to engage with activities, build relationships, develop new skills, and embrace new experiences.

Safety creates confidence. Confidence encourages participation. Participation creates opportunities for growth, belonging, and personal development.

For this reason, creating safe and respectful environments should never be viewed as an additional task within inclusive sport. It is the foundation that makes all other outcomes possible.



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7. Adapting Sports Activities

One of the most common misconceptions about inclusive sport is that activities need to be completely redesigned in order to include people with intellectual disabilities.

In reality, meaningful inclusion often depends on small, thoughtful adjustments rather than major changes. Most sports can be adapted in ways that allow participants with different abilities, experience levels, and support needs to take part successfully while preserving the spirit and objectives of the activity.

Adaptation is not about lowering expectations or reducing challenges. It is about creating conditions that allow every participant to engage, learn, contribute, and experience success.

The most effective adaptations are often simple. A change in rules, equipment, communication, space, or timing can transform an activity from frustrating and inaccessible into enjoyable and inclusive.

Throughout the SPORT project, coaches, volunteers, and sport experts regularly adapted activities to match the needs of participants while maintaining the fun, challenge, and social interaction that make sport meaningful.



Inclusion Through Flexibility

No adaptation works for every participant or every situation.

The goal is not to find a perfect formula but to remain flexible and responsive. What works well for one group may need adjustment for another. An activity that succeeds in a familiar environment may require modifications when introduced in a new setting.

Inclusive coaches constantly observe, reflect, and adapt.

Useful questions include:

- Are participants actively engaged?
- Do participants understand the activity?
- Is everyone able to contribute?
- Are participants experiencing success?
- Is anyone becoming frustrated, anxious, or disengaged?

Adaptation is often an ongoing process rather than a one-time decision.

The willingness to adjust activities based on participant needs is one of the strongest indicators of inclusive practice.

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Adapting Rules

Rules help provide structure, fairness, and challenge. However, rules should support participation rather than become barriers to it.

When participants struggle to understand or engage with an activity, adapting the rules may improve both learning and enjoyment.

Possible adaptations include:

- simplifying game rules;
- reducing the number of rules introduced at one time;
- modifying scoring systems;
- allowing additional attempts;
- introducing support from teammates;
- reducing competitive pressure;
- adjusting the complexity of decision-making.

For example, a football activity may initially focus on passing and teamwork rather than formal match rules. A basketball game might allow extra time to make decisions or take a shot. A bocce activity may use shorter distances while participants develop confidence.

The objective remains the same: participants should experience challenge while still having realistic opportunities for success.

Adapted rules should always help participants engage more fully rather than simply make activities easier.

Adapting Equipment

Equipment can significantly influence accessibility and participation.

Sometimes a small adjustment to equipment can make an activity more understandable, enjoyable, and successful.

Possible adaptations include:

- using larger balls;
- using lighter equipment;
- selecting brightly coloured materials;
- reducing equipment weight;
- using visual markers;
- introducing tactile elements when appropriate.

During introductory activities, larger and softer balls are often easier to catch and control. Visual markers can help define boundaries and movement patterns. Lightweight equipment may reduce frustration and encourage confidence.

Adaptations should be viewed as tools that support learning and participation rather than special accommodations.

As confidence and skills develop, equipment can be gradually adjusted to increase challenge when appropriate.



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Adapting Space

The environment in which an activity takes place can have a major impact on participation.

Large, crowded, or unfamiliar spaces can sometimes feel overwhelming. Clear organisation of space can improve understanding, reduce anxiety, and increase engagement.

Possible adaptations include:

- reducing the size of playing areas;
- creating clearly defined boundaries;
- limiting distractions;
- using visual signs or markers;
- organising participants into smaller groups;
- creating designated rest or support areas.

For some participants, smaller activity spaces improve concentration and reduce confusion. Others may benefit from visual cues that indicate where activities begin, end, or take place.

During SPORT activities, clear organisation of sport spaces proved particularly valuable when introducing new activities or working in unfamiliar facilities during international camps.

Well-organised spaces often create confidence before an activity even begins.



Adapting Time and Structure

Time is another important factor in inclusive sport.

Participants may require different amounts of time to understand instructions, practise skills, process information, or transition between activities. Rigid schedules can sometimes create unnecessary pressure.

Inclusive practice often involves adapting:

- the length of activities;
- the pace of instruction;
- transition times;
- rest periods;
- opportunities for repetition.

Some participants benefit from shorter activity blocks with frequent changes. Others prefer longer periods of practice that allow skills to develop gradually.

Providing additional time for learning should never be viewed as slowing progress. In many cases, it creates the conditions for deeper understanding and greater confidence.

Predictable structure is equally important.

Participants often feel more comfortable when sessions follow a familiar pattern. A consistent structure helps reduce uncertainty and allows participants to focus on the activity itself.

For example:

1. Welcome and introduction.
2. Warm-up activity.
3. Skill development.
4. Main activity or game.
5. Reflection and closing.

Such structures provide stability while still allowing flexibility within individual activities.

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Ensuring Meaningful Participation

Participation alone is not enough.

A participant may be physically present while remaining socially isolated, disengaged, or unable to contribute meaningfully.

Inclusive sport aims for meaningful participation.

Meaningful participation occurs when participants:

- understand their role;
- contribute actively;
- interact with others;
- experience challenge;
- experience success;
- feel valued by the group.

This requires careful attention to how activities are organised.

For example, assigning a participant a passive role simply to ensure they are present is rarely inclusive. Creating opportunities for active involvement, decision-making, teamwork, and contribution leads to much stronger outcomes.

Meaningful participation looks different for every individual.

For one participant, success may mean trying a new activity. For another, it may mean leading part of a warm-up or helping a teammate. For someone else, it may simply mean feeling confident enough to join the group.

The goal is not identical participation. The goal is meaningful participation.

Examples from Team Sports

Team sports provide excellent opportunities for inclusion because they naturally encourage cooperation, communication, and social interaction.

Adaptations may include:

- smaller teams;
- simplified tactical requirements;
- additional support from teammates;
- modified scoring systems;
- clearly defined roles.

For example, during a football activity, players may focus on maintaining possession and supporting teammates rather than formal competition. In basketball, coaches may emphasise passing sequences and team cooperation before introducing more complex game situations.

Team sports often create valuable opportunities for friendship, peer support, and a sense of belonging.

Examples from Individual Sports

Individual sports can be adapted just as effectively.

Activities such as athletics, swimming, table tennis, badminton, or fitness-based exercises allow participants to progress at their own pace while developing confidence and independence.

Adaptations may include:

- personalised goals;
- adjusted distances;
- simplified techniques;
- visual demonstrations;
- additional practice opportunities.

In many cases, individual sports provide participants with opportunities to focus on personal achievement rather than comparison with others.

This can be particularly beneficial for confidence-building and skill development.

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Examples from Mixed-Ability Settings

Mixed-ability environments bring together participants with different abilities, experiences, and support needs. When organised effectively, these settings can create powerful opportunities for mutual learning and inclusion. Successful mixed-ability activities often involve:

- cooperative challenges;
- peer support;
- flexible grouping;
- shared goals;
- recognition of different strengths.

Participants learn not only from coaches but also from one another.

During SPORT activities, mixed groups frequently demonstrated how quickly people can build connections when given opportunities to cooperate towards common objectives. Language differences, cultural backgrounds, and varying ability levels often became secondary to shared experiences and teamwork.

These environments help challenge stereotypes and promote genuine inclusion.

Adaptation as an Ongoing Process

Adaptation is not a sign that an activity is less valuable or less authentic.

On the contrary, adaptation reflects good coaching practice.

Every coach adapts activities in response to weather conditions, participant age, skill level, available facilities, or group size. Inclusive sport simply extends this principle by considering a wider range of participant needs.

The most successful inclusive practitioners do not ask whether an activity can be adapted.

They ask:

"What adjustments will help this group participate successfully today?"

This mindset shifts the focus away from limitations and towards possibilities.

From Adaptation to Inclusion

Adapting sport activities is not about changing the essence of sport.

It is about ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to experience what makes sport valuable in the first place: enjoyment, challenge, achievement, friendship, learning, and belonging.

When rules, equipment, space, and structure are adapted thoughtfully, barriers begin to disappear. Participants gain confidence, engage more actively, and discover new opportunities to succeed.

Inclusive sport is not created through perfect activities. It is created through flexible, participant-centred approaches that recognise diversity and respond to individual needs.

The next step is learning how to communicate these opportunities effectively, ensuring that every participant understands, engages with, and benefits from the activities being offered.

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8. Communication That Works

Communication is at the heart of inclusive sport.

No matter how well an activity is planned or adapted, participants cannot fully engage if they do not understand what is happening, what is expected of them, or how they can contribute. Effective communication creates confidence, reduces uncertainty, strengthens relationships, and supports meaningful participation.

For people with intellectual disabilities, communication can often be the difference between feeling included and feeling excluded. When instructions are clear, information is accessible, and interactions are respectful, participants are more likely to feel comfortable, successful, and motivated.

One of the most important lessons from the SPORT project was that effective communication is not about saying more. It is about helping people understand.

Many barriers that appear to be related to behaviour, motivation, or ability are actually communication barriers. When communication improves, participation often improves as well.



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Communication Is More Than Words

When people think about communication, they often focus on speaking and listening. In reality, communication happens in many different ways.

Participants receive information through:

- spoken language;
- demonstrations;
- body language;
- facial expressions;
- visual materials;
- routines and structure;
- interactions with peers;
- the behaviour of coaches and volunteers.

Everything communicates something.

A coach who patiently explains an activity communicates support. A volunteer who listens attentively communicates respect. A predictable routine communicates security. A smile can communicate welcome long before any words are spoken.

Understanding communication as a broader process helps create more inclusive environments for everyone involved.

Clear Instructions

One of the simplest and most effective ways to support participation is to provide clear instructions.

Many sport activities involve multiple steps, rules, and decisions. Participants may become confused if too much information is presented at once or if explanations are overly complicated.

Clear instructions help participants understand what to do and how to succeed.

Useful strategies include:

- using simple language;
- focusing on one message at a time;
- avoiding unnecessary jargon;
- breaking activities into smaller steps;
- repeating important information when needed;
- checking understanding before moving on.

For example, instead of explaining an entire activity at once, a coach might introduce one step, allow participants to practice it, and then gradually add new elements.

This approach often improves understanding while reducing anxiety and information overload.



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Keeping Information Manageable

Participants process information at different speeds.

In fast-moving sport environments, there can be a temptation to provide instructions quickly and move immediately into activities. However, some participants may need additional time to absorb information and prepare a response. Providing manageable amounts of information helps participants remain engaged and confident.

Consider:

- introducing activities gradually;
- allowing time for questions;
- pausing between instructions;
- avoiding multiple simultaneous tasks;
- revisiting key messages throughout the session.

Learning is often more effective when information is delivered in smaller, understandable pieces rather than large amounts all at once.

The goal is not to simplify sport itself but to make information easier to access.



Visual Aids and Demonstrations

Many people learn more effectively when they can see something rather than simply hear about it.

Visual communication can help participants understand activities more quickly and with greater confidence.

Visual support may include:

- demonstrations;
- pictures or symbols;
- visual schedules;
- diagrams;
- coloured markers;
- equipment placement;
- signs and cue cards.

In sport settings, demonstrations are particularly valuable.

Showing an activity often communicates more effectively than a detailed verbal explanation. Participants can observe movement patterns, positioning, timing, and expectations directly.

During SPORT activities, coaches frequently found that demonstrating first and explaining second improved understanding considerably. Participants were often able to imitate actions successfully even when verbal instructions alone were insufficient.

Visual supports are not only useful for people with intellectual disabilities. They often improve learning for everyone involved.

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The Power of Demonstration

Demonstration deserves special attention because it is one of the most effective communication tools available to coaches.

Participants learn by observing:

- movements;
- techniques;
- behaviours;
- interactions;
- expectations.

A good demonstration should be:

- visible to everyone;
- clear and slow enough to follow;
- focused on key elements;
- repeated if necessary.

Peer demonstrations can also be highly effective.

Participants often learn well from observing teammates, especially when the demonstration feels relatable and achievable.

Demonstration reduces uncertainty and increases confidence because participants can see exactly what success looks like.

Non-Verbal Communication

Communication happens even when no words are spoken.

Body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and tone of voice all influence how messages are received. Participants are often highly sensitive to non-verbal signals. A welcoming smile may encourage participation. A calm posture can reduce anxiety. Eye contact can communicate attention and respect. A positive tone can increase confidence.

At the same time, negative non-verbal signals may unintentionally create barriers.

For example:

- impatience;
- frustration;
- dismissive gestures;
- lack of attention;
- negative facial expressions.

These behaviours can discourage participation even when verbal messages appear supportive.

Inclusive communication requires awareness of both verbal and non-verbal messages.

Often, participants remember how people made them feel more clearly than the exact words that were used.



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Listening as a Communication Skill

Effective communication is not only about giving information.

It is also about listening.

Participants need opportunities to express their thoughts, preferences, concerns, and experiences.

Listening demonstrates:

- respect;
- trust;
- interest;
- recognition of individual needs.

Sometimes participants communicate verbally. At other times, they communicate through behaviour, emotions, body language, or actions.

Inclusive practitioners pay attention to all forms of communication.

Listening carefully allows coaches and volunteers to adapt activities, respond to concerns, and build stronger relationships.

Participants who feel heard are more likely to feel valued and included.

Feedback and Encouragement

Feedback plays an important role in learning and development. When delivered effectively, feedback helps participants understand what they are doing well, where they are improving, and how they can continue progressing.

Inclusive feedback should be:

- specific;
- constructive;
- encouraging;
- focused on effort as well as outcomes.

Rather than simply saying "good job," a coach might say:

"Great passing today. You looked for your teammates and stayed involved throughout the activity."

Specific feedback helps participants understand exactly what contributed to success.

Encouragement is equally important.

Many participants benefit from regular recognition of effort, persistence, improvement, and participation.

Encouragement builds confidence and reinforces positive experiences.

Throughout SPORT activities, coaches observed that participants often responded positively when achievements of all sizes were recognised and celebrated.

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Supporting Confidence Through Communication

Communication can either build confidence or undermine it.

Small interactions accumulate over time and shape how participants view themselves and their abilities. Supportive communication includes:

- acknowledging effort;
- celebrating progress;
- providing reassurance;
- encouraging independence;
- recognising individual strengths.

Confidence grows when participants experience success and receive messages that reinforce their potential. The most effective practitioners communicate belief in participants' abilities while also providing the support needed for success.



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Managing Misunderstandings

Misunderstandings are a normal part of any sport environment.

They do not necessarily indicate a problem. They simply provide opportunities to clarify information and improve communication.

When misunderstandings occur, it is important to:

- remain calm;
- avoid blame;
- clarify expectations;
- provide additional explanation;
- use demonstrations when necessary;
- check understanding again.

Public correction or criticism should be avoided whenever possible.

Participants should feel comfortable making mistakes and asking questions without fear of embarrassment.

Sometimes misunderstandings occur because instructions were unclear. At other times, participants may have interpreted information differently or become distracted.

The solution is rarely to repeat information louder. More often, it involves communicating differently.

Patience and flexibility are essential.





Communication across Cultures

The international SPORT camps highlighted another important aspect of communication: language is only one part of understanding.

Participants from Bulgaria and Türkiye often spoke different languages, yet they still built friendships, cooperated during activities, and supported one another.

They communicated through:

- gestures;
- demonstrations;
- shared experiences;
- teamwork;
- emotions;
- mutual support.

These experiences demonstrated that meaningful communication does not always depend on a common spoken language.

When people feel respected, welcomed, and connected through shared activities, communication often becomes easier than expected.

This lesson is valuable for any inclusive sport environment: relationships often develop through participation long before they develop through conversation.

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Communication as a Tool for Inclusion

Effective communication does more than transfer information.

It creates understanding, builds relationships, reduces anxiety, strengthens confidence, and supports participation. Inclusive communication is not a specialised technique reserved for experts. It is collections of practical habits that help people feel respected, informed, and involved. When communication is clear, accessible, and supportive, participants are better able to engage with activities, connect with others, and experience success.

For this reason, communication should never be viewed as a separate component of inclusive sport. It is one of the most powerful tools available for creating genuinely inclusive experiences.

The next step is understanding how inclusion extends beyond the participant and involves the wider network of coaches, families, assistants, volunteers, and supporters who contribute to successful sport experiences.



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PART III

WORKING WITH PEOPLE AROUND THE ATHLETE



SPORT
Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit

9. The Role of Coaches and Sport Experts

Inclusive sport does not happen by accident.

Facilities, equipment, programmes, and resources all contribute to successful participation, but one factor consistently has the greatest influence on participants' experiences: the people who lead and support them.

Coaches and sport experts play a central role in shaping inclusive environments. They influence not only how activities are delivered, but also how participants feel, how relationships develop, and whether individuals choose to remain engaged over time.

Participants often remember coaches long after they forget specific training sessions or activities. They remember how they were treated, whether they felt respected, whether someone believed in their abilities, and whether they felt that they belonged.

For this reason, the role of coaches in inclusive sport extends far beyond teaching technical skills. Coaches help create opportunities, build confidence, foster independence, and support personal development.

Throughout the SPORT project, one lesson became increasingly clear: successful inclusion depends less on having specialist expertise and more on having the right attitudes, willingness to learn, and commitment to supporting people as individuals.



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Beyond Teaching Sport

Traditionally, coaching is often associated with improving performance, developing skills, and achieving results.

While these objectives remain important, inclusive sport requires a broader perspective.

Coaches working in inclusive environments often take on multiple roles:

- instructor;
- mentor;
- facilitator;
- motivator;
- role model;
- communicator;
- supporter.

Participants may arrive with different levels of experience, confidence, communication skills, and support needs. As a result, coaching becomes as much about relationships as it is about sport itself.

The most successful inclusive coaches recognise that every participant brings something valuable to the group. Their role is to help individuals discover and develop that potential.





Attitudes Matter More Than Expertise

Many coaches hesitate to become involved in inclusive sport because they fear they lack specialised knowledge.

A common concern is:

"What if I do something wrong?"

While training and experience are valuable, the most important qualities often have little to do with technical expertise.

Inclusive coaching begins with attitude.

Participants benefit most from coaches who are:

- open-minded;
- respectful;
- patient;
- flexible;
- willing to learn;
- committed to inclusion.

No coach begins with all the answers.

What matters is the willingness to listen, adapt, and learn from participants themselves.

Throughout SPORT activities, coaches frequently discovered that participants responded far more positively to authenticity, encouragement, and respect than to complex technical approaches.

A supportive attitude often creates stronger outcomes than specialised knowledge alone.

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Building Positive Expectations

Expectations influence opportunities.

When expectations are too low, participants may never receive the chance to explore their potential. When expectations are unrealistic, participants may experience frustration and disappointment.

Inclusive coaching requires finding a balance between support and challenge.

Participants should be encouraged to:

- try new activities;
- develop skills;
- take responsibility;
- make decisions;
- overcome obstacles;
- experience success.

Believing in participants' potential does not mean ignoring challenges. It means recognising that growth is possible and creating opportunities for it to occur.

One of the most powerful lessons from SPORT was seeing participants exceed expectations when they were given appropriate support and meaningful opportunities.

Many individuals who were initially hesitant became confident travellers, active teammates, and valued contributors within international groups.

These transformations often began because someone believed they were capable.





The Importance of Self-Reflection

Inclusive coaching requires ongoing reflection.

Every participant, group, and environment is different. Strategies that work well in one situation may need adjustment in another.

Self-reflection helps coaches continue improving their practice.

Useful questions include:

- What worked well today?
- Which participants were most engaged?
- Who may have needed additional support?
- Did everyone have opportunities to contribute?
- How effective was my communication?
- What could I do differently next time?

Reflection encourages continuous learning and helps coaches identify both strengths and areas for development.

Importantly, self-reflection should not be viewed as self-criticism.

The purpose is not to identify failures but to create opportunities for growth.

The most effective coaches are often those who remain curious and willing to learn throughout their careers.

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Understanding Your Own Assumptions

Every person brings assumptions, experiences, and expectations into their work. These assumptions are often unconscious.

For example, coaches may unintentionally:

- underestimate participants' abilities;
- assume support needs before getting to know individuals;
- focus on challenges rather than strengths;
- compare participants to others rather than recognising individual progress.

Self-awareness helps reduce these risks.

Inclusive practitioners regularly examine their own attitudes and remain open to new perspectives.

The question is not whether assumptions exist. The question is whether we are willing to recognise and challenge them when necessary.

Many coaches involved in SPORT reported that their own understanding of intellectual disabilities evolved significantly through direct experience and interaction with participants.

Inclusion often changes practitioners just as much as it changes participants.

Balancing Support and Independence

One of the most important skills in inclusive coaching is knowing when to provide support and when to step back.

Providing too little support can create frustration and barriers to participation.

Providing too much support can unintentionally limit independence and personal growth.

The goal is to create opportunities for participants to do as much as possible for themselves while ensuring that support remains available when needed.

This may involve:

- encouraging decision-making;
- allowing participants to solve problems;
- supporting rather than directing;
- offering choices;
- recognising individual achievements.

Many meaningful moments occur when participants discover that they are capable of more than they initially believed.

These moments often require coaches to trust participants and allow them space to grow.



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Working as Part of a Team

Inclusive sport is rarely the responsibility of one person.

Successful programmes often involve cooperation between:

- coaches;
- assistants;
- volunteers;
- families;
- teachers;
- therapists;
- sport organisations;
- community stakeholders.

Coaches play an important role in bringing these different perspectives together.

Effective teamwork requires:

- communication;
- shared goals;
- mutual respect;
- willingness to collaborate.

The SPORT project demonstrated how powerful multi-stakeholder cooperation can be when everyone works towards a common objective: creating opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to participate, develop, and thrive.

Coaches often act as a bridge between participants and this wider support network.

Preventing Burnout

Inclusive coaching can be deeply rewarding, but it can also be demanding.

Many coaches invest significant emotional energy in supporting participants, managing challenges, organising activities, and maintaining relationships with families and stakeholders.

Without adequate balance and support, this can lead to stress, fatigue, and burnout.

Burnout affects not only coaches themselves but also the quality of support they provide.

Warning signs may include:

- constant exhaustion;
- reduced motivation;
- frustration or irritability;
- emotional detachment;
- feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities.

Recognising these signs early is important.

Sustainable coaching requires attention to personal wellbeing.

Strategies that may help include:

- setting realistic expectations;
- sharing responsibilities;
- seeking peer support;
- celebrating successes;
- maintaining healthy boundaries;
- taking time for rest and recovery.

Coaches often encourage participants to look after themselves. The same principle applies to practitioners.

Supporting others effectively begins with taking care of ourselves.

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Continuous Learning and Development

Inclusive sport continues to evolve.

New approaches, resources, research, and experiences regularly contribute to a deeper understanding of effective practice.

For this reason, learning should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a destination.

Continuous learning may involve:

- attending training courses;
- participating in workshops;
- exchanging experiences with colleagues;
- engaging with participants and families;
- exploring new resources;
- reflecting on practical experiences.

Some of the most valuable learning opportunities occur during everyday interactions.

Participants themselves are often the best teachers.

By listening, observing, and remaining open to feedback, coaches can continue developing their skills and understanding.

Throughout SPORT, coaches frequently reported that direct experience working alongside participants provided insights that no training course could fully replicate.

Learning happens most effectively when knowledge and experience come together.



Becoming an Inclusive Role Model

Whether they realise it or not, coaches influence how others view inclusion.

Participants observe how coaches communicate and behave. Families notice how coaches treat their children. Volunteers often follow the example that coaches set.

Every interaction sends a message.

When coaches demonstrate respect, patience, fairness, and belief in people's abilities, they help create cultures where inclusion becomes normal rather than exceptional.

Role modelling is therefore one of the most powerful tools available to coaches.

Through their actions, coaches show participants, peers, families, and communities what inclusion looks like in practice.

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From Coaching to Empowerment

The ultimate purpose of inclusive coaching is not simply to teach sport skills.

It is to help people develop confidence, independence, relationships, and opportunities for participation.

Inclusive coaches recognise that success is not measured only by performance or results. Success is also reflected in personal growth, new experiences, increased confidence, stronger relationships, and greater participation in community life.

When coaches create environments built on respect, trust, learning, and opportunity, sport becomes much more than an activity.

It becomes a platform for empowerment.

The next chapter explores another essential part of this process: the role of families, caregivers, and support networks in creating sustainable opportunities for participation and inclusion.

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10. Families, Assistants, and Support Networks

Inclusive sport is rarely an individual journey.

Behind every participant, there is often a network of people who provide encouragement, practical assistance, emotional support, and opportunities for participation. Families, assistants, caregivers, support workers, volunteers, and other trusted individuals all play an important role in helping people with intellectual disabilities engage in sport and community life.

While participants are at the centre of inclusive sport, sustainable participation often depends on the relationships and cooperation that exist around them.

Throughout the SPORT project, it became clear that successful inclusion is strongest when participants, families, coaches, assistants, and organisations work together towards shared goals. When communication is open, responsibilities are clear, and trust is established, participants benefit from a more consistent and supportive experience.

Understanding the Wider Support Network

Every participant's situation is unique.

Some individuals may attend activities independently, while others rely on varying levels of support from family members, assistants, or caregivers. Some participants have extensive support networks, while others may have very limited support outside the sport environment.

Understanding these differences helps coaches and organisations provide appropriate support without making assumptions.

Support networks may include:

- parents and family members;
- siblings and relatives;
- personal assistants;
- caregivers and support workers;
- teachers and educators;
- volunteers;
- community organisations.

Each person may contribute in different ways, but all can influence a participant's ability to access and benefit from sport opportunities.

The goal is not to involve every person in every decision. Rather, it is to recognise the value of collaboration and ensure that support is coordinated in ways that benefit the participant.



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The Importance of Family Engagement

Families are often the first and most important source of support in a participant's life.

They know the individual best. They understand personal preferences, strengths, routines, concerns, and support needs that may not be immediately visible to coaches or organisations.

For this reason, families can be valuable partners in creating positive sport experiences.

Family engagement helps:

- build trust;
- improve communication;
- support participation;
- identify individual needs;
- celebrate achievements;
- strengthen long-term involvement.

At the same time, families may also have concerns.

Some may worry about safety, social interactions, travel, unfamiliar environments, or whether their family member will be accepted by others. These concerns are often rooted in previous experiences of exclusion, misunderstanding, or limited opportunities.

Acknowledging these concerns and responding respectfully is an important part of building positive relationships.





Building Trust with Families

Trust does not develop automatically.

Just as participants need to trust coaches and organisations, families need confidence that their family members will be treated with dignity, respect, and care.

Trust is often built through:

- honest communication;
- consistency;
- transparency;
- reliability;
- responsiveness to concerns.

Families appreciate knowing:

- what activities will take place;
- who will be involved;
- how support will be provided;
- what expectations exist;
- how challenges will be managed.

The SPORT project highlighted the importance of this process, particularly during international mobility activities.

For many participants travelling internationally for the first time, families had understandable concerns about safety, accommodation, transport, communication, and well-being. Building trust before travel was therefore just as important as organising the activities themselves.

When families felt informed, included, and respected, they became stronger partners in supporting participation.

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Communication with Families

Effective communication should be regular, clear, and respectful.

Families generally do not need information about every detail of an activity, but they do benefit from feeling informed and connected.

Useful communication practices may include:

- providing schedules in advance;
- sharing important updates;
- discussing support needs;
- celebrating achievements;
- creating opportunities for feedback;
- informing families about changes when necessary.

Communication should be viewed as a partnership rather than a one-way exchange of information.

Listening is just as important as informing.

Families often provide valuable insights that can help improve the participant experience and strengthen inclusion.

The Role of Assistants

Many participants benefit from support provided by assistants, support workers, or caregivers.

Assistants can play a valuable role in helping participants access activities, understand instructions, manage transitions, and engage confidently in sport environments.

However, effective support is not simply about helping participants complete tasks.

The role of assistants should focus on enabling participation rather than controlling it.

Good assistants:

- encourage independence;
- support communication;
- help participants understand activities;
- provide reassurance when needed;
- promote confidence;
- facilitate social interaction.

Their goal is not to replace the participant's voice but to help ensure that the participant's voice can be heard.

When assistants support rather than direct, participants often become more confident and independent over time.

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Avoiding Over-Support

One challenge sometimes encountered in inclusive sport is over-support.

This occurs when well-intentioned adults provide more assistance than is actually needed.

For example:

- answering questions on behalf of participants;
- making decisions for them;
- completing tasks they could complete themselves;
- limiting opportunities for independent interaction.

Although usually motivated by care and concern, over-support can unintentionally reduce confidence and limit opportunities for growth. Inclusive practice encourages a different approach.

Whenever possible, participants should be given opportunities to:

- make choices;
- express preferences;
- solve problems;
- communicate directly;
- take responsibility appropriate to their abilities.

Support should be available when needed, but independence should always be encouraged where possible.

One useful principle is simple:

"Provide as much support as necessary, but as little as possible."



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Setting Healthy Boundaries

Positive relationships are important, but so are clear boundaries.

Coaches, assistants, volunteers, and families all have different roles and responsibilities.

When boundaries become unclear, misunderstandings and challenges can arise.

Healthy boundaries help create:

- consistency;
- professionalism;
- mutual respect;
- clear expectations.

For example:

- coaches are responsible for sport activities and participant engagement;
- assistants provide individual support where needed;
- families provide personal knowledge and ongoing encouragement;
- organisations coordinate activities and ensure safe participation.

Boundaries should not create distance between people. Rather, they help ensure that everyone understands how they can contribute most effectively.

Clear roles often lead to stronger cooperation and better outcomes for participants.

Shared Responsibility for Inclusion

Inclusion is not the responsibility of a single person.

It cannot depend entirely on a coach, a family member, an assistant, or an organisation.

Successful inclusion is created through shared responsibility.

Each person contributes something valuable:

- participants bring motivation, experiences, and strengths;
- families provide support and insight;
- assistants help facilitate participation;
- coaches create opportunities for learning and development;
- organisations provide structure and resources;
- communities create environments where inclusion can flourish.

When responsibility is shared, inclusion becomes more sustainable and more effective.

The SPORT project demonstrated this clearly. Successful activities depended not only on coaches and participants, but also on families, volunteers, local organisations, educational institutions, community partners, and support networks working together.

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Supporting Participation beyond Sport

The benefits of inclusive sport often extend well beyond the activity itself.

Families frequently report improvements in:

- confidence;
- communication;
- independence;
- social engagement;
- willingness to try new experiences.

Support networks play an important role in helping these benefits continue beyond sport sessions.

Encouraging participants to apply new skills in everyday life strengthens long-term impact.

For example:

- increased confidence may support participation in community events;
- new friendships may encourage social interaction outside sport;
- successful travel experiences may increase willingness to explore new opportunities;
- improved independence may support greater participation in daily activities.

When families and support networks reinforce these positive experiences, the impact of sport becomes even more meaningful.



Creating a Circle of Support

Inclusive sport is strongest when participants are surrounded by people who believe in their abilities and support their development.

This does not require large teams of professionals or complex support systems.

Often, it begins with simple relationships built on trust, communication, respect, and shared commitment.

Families, assistants, volunteers, coaches, and organisations each contribute to creating environments where participants can learn, grow, and succeed.

When these relationships work well together, participants are more likely to experience not only successful sport participation, but also greater confidence, independence, belonging, and opportunities for inclusion in wider society.

The next chapter focuses on another key group within inclusive sport: volunteers and peer supporters, whose contribution often helps transform inclusive activities into welcoming and connected communities.

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11. Volunteers and Peer Support

Inclusive sport is built on relationships.

While coaches, sport experts, and organisations play important roles, many of the most meaningful experiences in inclusive sport are created through everyday interactions between participants, volunteers, and peers. A welcoming conversation, a shared activity, a word of encouragement, or a helping hand can have a lasting impact on how participants experience sport and community life.

Volunteers and peer supporters often serve as the bridge between organised activities and genuine social inclusion. They help create environments where participants feel accepted, connected, and valued as members of the group.

Throughout the SPORT project, volunteers played an essential role in supporting activities, facilitating communication, encouraging participation, and helping participants navigate new environments. Equally important were the relationships that developed between participants themselves. These connections often became some of the most powerful examples of inclusion in action.

When volunteers and peers are prepared effectively, they contribute not only to successful sport activities but also to stronger, more inclusive communities.



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Why Volunteers Matter

Many sport programmes rely on volunteers to support activities, events, and participant engagement.

In inclusive sport, volunteers contribute far more than practical assistance.

They often help create:

- welcoming environments;
- social connections;
- opportunities for interaction;
- additional encouragement and support;
- positive participant experiences.

Volunteers may assist with:

- activity organisation;
- participant support;
- communication;
- transportation and logistics;
- event management;
- social activities.

Their presence can increase the level of individual attention available to participants and help activities run more smoothly.

However, the true value of volunteers often lies in the relationships they build. Positive interactions with volunteers can strengthen confidence, reduce anxiety, and increase participants' sense of belonging.



Recruiting the Right Volunteers

Successful volunteer programmes begin with recruitment.

Many organisations focus primarily on finding enough volunteers. While numbers are important, attitude is often even more important.

Inclusive sport does not require volunteers to be experts in disability or sport.

Instead, effective volunteers are often people who are:

- respectful;
- open-minded;
- patient;
- reliable;
- willing to learn;
- comfortable working with diverse groups.

A positive attitude and willingness to engage are usually more valuable than previous experience.

Recruitment can take place through:

- schools and universities;
- community organisations;
- sport clubs;
- youth groups;
- volunteer networks;
- local events and campaigns.

The recruitment process should clearly communicate both the responsibilities and the rewards of volunteering. Potential volunteers are more likely to remain engaged when they understand the purpose of their role and the impact they can have.

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Preparing Volunteers for Success

Good intentions alone are not always enough.

Volunteers need preparation in order to feel confident and effective in their roles.

Preparation does not need to be complicated or highly technical. In many cases, a simple introduction to inclusive sport principles, participant needs, and communication approaches is sufficient.

Volunteer preparation may include:

- understanding the goals of the programme;
- learning about inclusion;
- communication techniques;
- safeguarding and safety procedures;
- expectations and responsibilities;
- practical examples and scenarios.

Many volunteers initially feel nervous because they worry about saying or doing the wrong thing.

Providing opportunities to ask questions, discuss concerns, and learn from experienced practitioners helps build confidence before activities begin.

One of the most effective messages for new volunteers is simple:

"You do not need to be perfect. You need to be respectful, supportive, and willing to learn."

Creating Positive First Experiences

The first experience often shapes future involvement.

Participants who feel welcomed are more likely to return. Volunteers who feel supported are more likely to remain engaged.

Creating positive first experiences may involve:

- introducing people properly;
- explaining activities clearly;
- pairing new volunteers with experienced individuals;
- creating opportunities for informal interaction;
- celebrating contributions and successes.

During SPORT activities, volunteers often reported that their initial concerns disappeared quickly once they began interacting with participants. Many discovered that inclusion felt far more natural than they had expected.

Positive first experiences help build confidence on both sides.

Understanding Unified Sport Principles

One of the most powerful approaches to inclusion in sport is the concept of unified participation.

Unified sport brings together people with and without intellectual disabilities as teammates, training partners, or participants in shared activities.

The focus is not on creating separate experiences but on creating opportunities for meaningful interaction, cooperation, and mutual learning.

Unified approaches are built on several key principles:

- respect for all participants;
- equal value of every contribution;
- shared experiences;
- teamwork and cooperation;
- mutual support;
- opportunities for friendship.

The objective is not simply participation in the same activity. The objective is genuine connection.

When implemented effectively, unified sport challenges stereotypes and demonstrates that people with different abilities can learn, play, and succeed together.

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The Power of Peer Support



Participants often learn as much from one another as they do from coaches.

Peer support occurs when participants help, encourage, guide, and learn from one another.

This support may be formal or informal.

Examples include:

- helping a teammate understand an activity;
- offering encouragement during challenges;
- demonstrating a skill;
- celebrating achievements;
- providing reassurance in unfamiliar situations.

Peer support creates opportunities for participants to contribute actively rather than simply receive support.

It also strengthens group cohesion and helps create a sense of shared responsibility.

During the SPORT camps, participants frequently supported one another despite language differences and cultural backgrounds. Shared activities often created connections that required very few words.

These moments demonstrated how inclusion can develop naturally when people are given opportunities to work together.

Learning Through Relationships

One of the greatest strengths of volunteer and peer support programmes is their ability to create learning opportunities for everyone involved.

Participants learn new skills and gain confidence.

Volunteers learn about inclusion, communication, and diversity.

Peers develop cooperation, leadership, and empathy.

Unlike formal training sessions, these lessons emerge through real experiences and relationships.

Many volunteers involved in SPORT reported that their understanding of intellectual disabilities changed significantly through direct interaction with participants. Assumptions were challenged, confidence increased, and new perspectives emerged.

This learning process benefits individuals, organisations, and communities alike.

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Developing Empathy

Empathy is often described as the ability to understand and appreciate another person's perspective.

Inclusive sport provides powerful opportunities for developing empathy because it brings people together around shared experiences.

Empathy grows when people:

- spend time together;
- work towards common goals;
- share challenges;
- celebrate achievements;
- build relationships.

Importantly, empathy is not the same as pity.

Inclusive sport encourages participants, volunteers, and peers to recognise strengths, abilities, and potential rather than focusing solely on challenges.

True empathy involves understanding people as individuals and recognising their value as equal members of the community.

The friendships formed through inclusive sport are often among the strongest examples of empathy in action.

Creating a Culture of Inclusion

Volunteers and peers help shape the culture of a programme.

When they model respect, kindness, cooperation, and inclusion, these behaviours often spread throughout the group.

A positive culture develops when:

- everyone feels welcome;
- differences are respected;
- contributions are valued;
- support is offered freely;
- participation is encouraged.

Culture is created through everyday actions rather than formal policies alone.

A welcoming greeting, an invitation to join a group, or a simple act of encouragement can contribute to a more inclusive environment.

These small actions often have a lasting impact on participants' experiences.



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Volunteers as Community Ambassadors

The influence of volunteers often extends beyond sport activities themselves.

Volunteers return to schools, universities, workplaces, sport clubs, and communities carrying new experiences and perspectives.

As a result, they often become ambassadors for inclusion.

By sharing what they have learned, challenging stereotypes, and promoting positive attitudes, volunteers help extend the impact of inclusive sport beyond the boundaries of a single programme or event.

This wider community impact is one of the most valuable outcomes of volunteer engagement.

Inclusion becomes stronger when more people understand it, support it, and actively contribute to it.



From Support to Belonging

Volunteers and peer supporters do much more than help activities run smoothly.

They contribute to something far more important: belonging.

Through encouragement, friendship, cooperation, and shared experiences, they help create environments where participants feel accepted, valued, and connected.

Inclusive sport is most successful when people support one another not because it is their responsibility, but because it becomes a natural part of the community they are building together.

When volunteers, peers, coaches, and participants work side by side, inclusion moves beyond participation and becomes a lived experience.

The next chapter explores how these principles can be applied when planning and delivering inclusive sport events, camps, and larger community activities.

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PART IV

EVENTS, CAMPS, AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES



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12. Organising Inclusive Sport Events

Inclusive sport events have the power to create memorable experiences, strengthen communities, build confidence, and provide opportunities that extend far beyond sport itself. Whether the event is a one-day activity, a local tournament, a community festival, or an international sport camp, successful organisation requires careful planning and a participant-centred approach.

Throughout the SPORT project, inclusive events and international camps served as some of the most powerful learning environments. Participants developed new skills, built friendships, explored unfamiliar places, and experienced opportunities that many had never imagined possible. At the same time, organisers learned that successful inclusion depends not on creating perfect events, but on creating environments where people feel welcomed, supported, and able to participate meaningfully.

Organising an inclusive event is not fundamentally different from organising any other sport event. The difference lies in the attention given to accessibility, communication, support, and participant experience from the very beginning of the planning process.

Starting with the Participant Experience

Many event organisers begin planning by focusing on venues, schedules, logistics, and budgets. While these elements are important, inclusive planning benefits from starting somewhere else: the participant experience.

A useful question to ask throughout the planning process is:

"What will the participant experience from the moment they hear about this event until they return home?"

Thinking through the event from the participant's perspective often reveals important considerations that might otherwise be overlooked.

Will participants understand the information provided? Will they know what to expect? Will they feel welcome upon arrival? Will they have opportunities to interact with others? Will support be available if challenges arise?

By focusing on the participant journey, organisers can identify barriers early and create more positive experiences for everyone involved.



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Planning for Inclusion from the Beginning

Inclusion is most effective when it is built into the planning process rather than added later.

When accessibility and participant support are considered from the start, organisers are able to make better decisions about venues, schedules, staffing, communication, and activities.

During the SPORT camps, inclusion influenced every aspect of planning. Decisions about accommodation, transportation, meal arrangements, activity schedules, and staffing were all made with participants' needs in mind.

This approach helped ensure that support was integrated naturally into the event rather than becoming a last-minute consideration.

Inclusive planning often involves asking:

- Who will participate?
- What support might be required?
- What barriers could participants face?
- How can we reduce those barriers before the event begins?

The earlier these questions are addressed, the smoother implementation is likely to be.

Accessibility Beyond Physical Access

When people hear the word accessibility, they often think about physical access to buildings and facilities.

While physical accessibility is important, inclusive events require a broader understanding.

Participants also need access to:

- information;
- communication;
- transportation;
- social activities;
- decision-making opportunities;
- support systems.

An accessible venue is of limited value if participants do not understand how the event will work or feel overwhelmed upon arrival.

For this reason, organisers should consider accessibility as a complete participant experience rather than a single technical requirement.

Before finalising an event, it can be helpful to review the following questions:

- Is the venue easy to navigate?
- Are instructions clear and understandable?
- Is transportation realistic and accessible?
- Are support persons available if needed?
- Are participants informed about what to expect?
- Are rest areas available?
- Is there a plan for responding to individual support needs?

Accessibility is often achieved through many small decisions rather than one major intervention.

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Registration as the First Step of Inclusion

Registration is often viewed as an administrative process.

In reality, it is usually the participant's first interaction with the event. A positive registration process helps build confidence and trust long before activities begin.

Registration forms should collect information that supports participation without becoming unnecessarily complicated. Organisers may need information about support requirements, dietary needs, mobility considerations, communication preferences, emergency contacts, or previous participation experience.

However, registration should never feel like an assessment of whether someone is capable of participating.

The objective is to understand how to provide appropriate support, not to identify reasons why participation might be difficult.

The tone of communication during registration also matters. Clear, welcoming, and respectful communication helps participants and families feel that they are genuinely invited and valued.

Communicating Before the Event

One of the most effective ways to reduce anxiety is to provide information before participants arrive.

People are generally more confident when they know what to expect.

This is particularly important when participants are attending an event for the first time, visiting an unfamiliar venue, or travelling away from home.

Useful information may include:

- where the event will take place;
- how participants will travel;
- what activities are planned;
- what to bring;
- who will be present;
- whom to contact for support.

During the SPORT international camps, preparation before travel proved especially important. Many participants and families had never experienced international mobility before. Sharing practical information, explaining procedures, and maintaining regular communication helped create confidence and trust long before the journey began.

Good communication starts before the event and continues throughout the entire experience.



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Providing Participant Support

Support should be visible, available, and responsive without becoming intrusive.

Every participant will require different levels of support. Some individuals may participate independently, while others may benefit from guidance, reminders, reassurance, or assistance during specific situations.

Effective support begins with preparation.

Organisers should ensure that coaches, volunteers, assistants, and staff understand their roles and know how to respond if participants need help.

Support is often most effective when it focuses on enabling independence rather than doing things on behalf of participants.

The goal is not to remove every challenge. The goal is to provide enough support for participants to engage confidently and successfully.

Throughout SPORT activities, some of the most successful support strategies were surprisingly simple: clear communication, familiar routines, patient guidance, and the presence of trusted individuals.

Creating a Safe and Positive Atmosphere

Participants remember how an event made them feel.

A welcoming atmosphere encourages participation, interaction, and confidence.

Creating such an environment involves much more than organising activities. It involves creating a culture where people feel respected, valued, and accepted.

Simple actions can make a significant difference.

Greeting participants personally, introducing people properly, encouraging interaction, celebrating achievements, and responding positively to questions all contribute to a stronger sense of belonging.

During the SPORT camps, some of the most memorable moments occurred outside formal sport activities. Shared meals, informal conversations, cultural visits, and social activities often strengthened relationships and helped participants feel part of a wider community.

These experiences remind us that inclusion is built through human connections as much as through sport itself.

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Safety and Wellbeing

Participant wellbeing should remain a priority throughout every stage of an event.

Safety includes physical considerations such as facilities, equipment, supervision, and emergency procedures. However, it also includes emotional wellbeing, comfort, and psychological safety.

Participants should feel confident that support is available if needed and that they will be treated with dignity and respect.

Organisers should consider how they will respond to:

- illness or injury;
- anxiety or emotional distress;
- communication challenges;
- unexpected changes;
- participant concerns.

Preparing for these situations does not mean expecting problems. It means ensuring that support systems are in place if they become necessary.

The safest events are often those where participants feel comfortable asking for help.



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Learning from SPORT: Inclusion Through Experience

One of the most important lessons from the SPORT project was that inclusive events create opportunities that extend far beyond sport participation.

For many participants, the camps represented much more than a sport programme. They involved travelling abroad for the first time, meeting people from another country, staying away from home, building new friendships, and developing confidence in unfamiliar environments.

These experiences became possible because organisers looked beyond the sport activities themselves and considered the whole participant journey.

Successful inclusive events are not defined by perfect logistics or flawless schedules. They are defined by the opportunities they create and the experiences participants take home with them.

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From Events to Opportunities

An inclusive sport event is ultimately about creating opportunities.

Opportunities to participate.

Opportunities to learn.

Opportunities to connect.

Opportunities to discover new strengths and experiences.

When events are planned with inclusion in mind, they become more than isolated activities. They become platforms for confidence, friendship, personal development, and community building.

For organisers, this means looking beyond the event itself and focusing on the impact it can have on the people who take part. When participants leave feeling welcomed, valued, and proud of what they achieved, the event has already succeeded.

The next chapter explores how these principles can be applied in one of the most powerful forms of inclusive sport activity: international and intercultural sport programmes.



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13. International and Intercultural Sport Activities

Sport has a unique ability to connect people across borders.

Regardless of language, nationality, culture, or background, sport creates opportunities for interaction, cooperation, friendship, and shared experiences. For many participants, international sport activities become much more than opportunities to practise a sport. They become opportunities to discover new places, meet new people, challenge assumptions, and develop a broader understanding of the world.

Throughout the SPORT project, international cooperation between Bulgaria and Türkiye demonstrated the powerful role that sport can play in bringing communities together. Participants who had never met before, spoke different languages, and came from different cultural backgrounds quickly found common ground through shared activities and experiences.

At the same time, international activities require careful preparation and thoughtful planning. Organisers must consider not only logistics and sport programmes but also cultural differences, communication needs, participant wellbeing, and the unique challenges that may arise when people travel beyond familiar environments.

When managed effectively, international sport activities can become some of the most transformative experiences participants will ever have.

Why International Experiences Matter

For many people, international travel is a normal part of education, work, or leisure. For many people with intellectual disabilities, however, opportunities for international mobility remain limited.

Barriers related to confidence, support needs, accessibility, financial resources, and societal expectations often reduce opportunities to travel and participate in international activities. As a result, experiences that many people take for granted can remain out of reach for years.

This is one of the reasons why international sport programmes can have such a profound impact. They create opportunities not only to visit another country, but also to develop confidence, independence, social skills, and a stronger sense of belonging.

During the SPORT camps, many participants experienced international mobility for the first time. For some, crossing an international border was a completely new experience. Others had never stayed in a hotel, travelled as part of a group, or spent several days away from their familiar environment.

What may appear ordinary to some people can become a life-changing experience for others. International mobility provides participants with an opportunity to discover not only the world around them, but also new possibilities within themselves.





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Understanding Intercultural Learning

International activities are about much more than travel.

Whenever people from different backgrounds spend time together, opportunities for intercultural learning emerge naturally. Participants begin to discover how others live, communicate, celebrate, eat, learn, and interact. At the same time, they often realise that people have much more in common than they initially expected.

One of the most valuable aspects of intercultural learning is that it rarely happens in formal sessions. It develops through shared meals, conversations, games, walks, travel experiences, and everyday moments.

The SPORT project demonstrated this repeatedly. Participants from Bulgaria and Türkiye often arrived with limited knowledge of each other's cultures. Yet after only a short period of time, they were sharing activities, encouraging one another, laughing together, and building friendships.

These experiences help participants develop curiosity, openness, and respect for diversity. They also remind us that cultural differences should not be viewed as barriers but as opportunities to learn and grow.



Cultural Sensitivity in Practice

Working in international environments requires awareness that participants may bring different experiences, expectations, and perspectives.

Cultural sensitivity does not mean becoming an expert on every culture represented in an activity. Rather, it means approaching differences with respect, curiosity, and a willingness to learn.

Simple aspects of daily life can vary significantly between countries and communities. Communication styles, routines, food preferences, religious practices, concepts of time, and social interactions may all differ. These differences should not be treated as problems that need to be solved. They are part of what makes international activities valuable.

Throughout the SPORT project, organisers learned that participants felt most comfortable when their identities and backgrounds were respected while also being encouraged to engage with others. Creating space for participants to share aspects of their own culture often helped build mutual understanding and stronger relationships.

The goal is not to remove differences but to create environments where differences can be appreciated and explored positively.

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Language Barriers Are Not Always the Biggest Barrier

One of the most common concerns when planning international activities is communication.

Organisers often worry that participants will struggle because they do not share a common language. While language differences certainly present challenges, experience shows that they are rarely the biggest obstacle.

During the SPORT camps, participants regularly communicated through gestures, demonstrations, facial expressions, shared activities, and simple words. A smile, a high-five, a football pass, or a helping hand often communicated more effectively than lengthy conversations.

Sport itself provides a common language. Participants learn together through movement, teamwork, observation, and shared experiences. Communication becomes something that happens naturally rather than something that depends entirely on vocabulary.

This does not mean language should be ignored. Clear communication remains essential, and organisers should always seek ways to make information accessible. However, it is important not to underestimate people's ability to connect through non-verbal communication and shared experiences.

In many cases, participants discover that friendship develops much faster than language skills.





Travel Considerations

Successful international activities begin long before participants arrive at their destination.

Travel planning involves much more than booking transport and accommodation. For participants, especially those with limited previous travel experience, the journey itself can be both exciting and intimidating.

Organisers should think carefully about every stage of the participant experience, from departure to return home. Transportation, accommodation, meals, schedules, support arrangements, and emergency procedures all contribute to participants' comfort and confidence.

What matters most is not creating a perfect plan but creating a plan that participants understand and trust.

When participants know what to expect, they are more likely to approach new experiences with confidence rather than anxiety. The same is true for families and caregivers, who often place significant trust in organisers when supporting participation in international activities.

Good preparation reduces uncertainty and allows participants to focus on learning, enjoying activities, and building relationships.

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Supporting Participants before Their First International Mobility

One of the most valuable lessons learned through SPORT was that international mobility begins long before participants leave home.

For many participants from both Bulgaria and Türkiye, travelling abroad was a completely new experience. Some had never travelled independently. Others had never crossed an international border, stayed in a hotel, or spent several days away from their families.

These situations naturally created excitement, but they also created uncertainty.

Preparing participants therefore became just as important as organising the mobility itself.

Participants benefited from having opportunities to discuss the upcoming journey, learn about the destination, understand travel procedures, and become familiar with the programme. Knowing where they would stay, what activities would take place, and who would accompany them helped transform uncertainty into anticipation.

Families required preparation as well. In many cases, parents and caregivers were placing trust in an international activity for the first time. Open communication, transparency, and regular updates helped create confidence and reassurance.

Perhaps the most important lesson was that people are often capable of much more than they initially believe. Once participants experienced success during their first mobility activity, many became more confident, independent, and willing to embrace future opportunities.

The first journey often becomes the foundation for many others.





Creating Inclusive International Environments

Bringing people together in the same place does not automatically create inclusion.

True inclusion requires intentional efforts to create opportunities for interaction, cooperation, and relationship-building.

One of the most effective approaches is to avoid allowing participants to remain exclusively within national groups. While people naturally feel comfortable with familiar individuals, meaningful intercultural experiences emerge when participants are encouraged to interact across cultures and backgrounds.

During SPORT activities, some of the strongest relationships developed not during formal sport sessions but during informal moments. Shared meals, cultural visits, travel experiences, and free-time activities often created opportunities for genuine connection.

Inclusive international environments are built when participants feel that they are part of one community rather than separate groups sharing the same venue.

The goal is not simply to organise an international event. The goal is to create an international experience.

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Managing Challenges During International Activities

Every international programme faces challenges.

Participants may experience homesickness, anxiety, fatigue, communication difficulties, or uncertainty when adapting to unfamiliar environments. These reactions are normal and should be expected rather than feared.

The most successful organisers are not those who avoid challenges altogether, but those who respond calmly and supportively when challenges arise.

Participants often adapt more successfully when they know support is available. A reassuring conversation, a familiar routine, additional explanation, or simply having someone listen can make a significant difference.

Challenges should be viewed as part of the learning process. In fact, many participants gain confidence precisely because they successfully navigate situations that initially seemed difficult.

Growth often happens outside familiar comfort zones.

Learning Beyond Sport

One of the most significant outcomes of international activities often has little to do with sport performance.

Participants learn how to navigate unfamiliar environments, communicate with new people, solve problems, adapt to change, and build relationships across cultures. They develop confidence in their own abilities and discover that they can succeed in situations that once seemed intimidating.

For many participants involved in SPORT, the most important achievement was not a score, result, or medal.

It was the discovery that they could travel, belong, contribute, and thrive in an international environment.

These experiences often become lasting reference points that influence future decisions, ambitions, and opportunities.

From Mobility to Belonging

International sport activities are often described in terms of mobility, exchange, or cooperation. While these terms are accurate, they do not fully capture their deeper significance.

At their best, international activities create belonging.

Participants realise that they are part of something larger than their local community. They discover that friendship, teamwork, and inclusion can exist across borders, languages, and cultures.

The SPORT project demonstrated that international mobility should not be viewed as a privilege reserved for a limited group of people. People with intellectual disabilities should have the same opportunities to explore, travel, learn, and connect as anyone else.

When sport creates these opportunities, international cooperation becomes more than a project activity. It becomes a pathway towards greater confidence, participation, independence, and inclusion.

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PART V

MONITORING, IMPACT, AND SUSTAINABILITY



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14. Measuring Impact in Inclusive Sport

One of the most important questions in inclusive sport is also one of the most difficult to answer:

"How do we know whether we are making a difference?"

At first glance, the answer may seem simple. We can count participants, record attendance, measure the number of activities delivered, or calculate how many volunteers were involved. While this information is useful, it rarely tells the full story.

Inclusive sport is not only about participation. It is about confidence, belonging, friendship, personal growth, and opportunities that may not have existed before. Many of the most important outcomes cannot be measured with a stopwatch, a score sheet, or a registration form.

This does not mean they cannot be evaluated. It simply means that inclusive sport requires us to think differently about what success looks like and how we recognise it when it happens.

Throughout the SPORT project, some of the most meaningful outcomes emerged in moments that could never be fully captured through statistics alone. A participant travelling abroad for the first time. A parent expressing pride after seeing their child become more independent. A friendship formed between people from different countries. These moments became important indicators of impact because they reflected real changes in people's lives.

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Why Impact Matters

Evaluation is often associated with reporting requirements, funding applications, or project administration. While these are important considerations, impact measurement serves a much broader purpose.

When organisations understand the effects of their activities, they are better equipped to improve future programmes, respond to participant needs, and demonstrate the value of their work to communities and stakeholders.

Most importantly, evaluation helps ensure that participants remain at the centre of decision-making.

Without meaningful reflection, organisations may assume that activities are successful simply because they are well attended or well organised. However, a successful event is not necessarily one that runs smoothly. A successful event is one that creates positive experiences and meaningful outcomes for the people involved.

Understanding impact helps practitioners move beyond assumptions and learn directly from the experiences of participants.





Looking Beyond Numbers

Numbers are important.

They help organisations understand the scale of their activities and provide useful information about participation, reach, and engagement. Knowing how many participants attended an event, how many sessions were delivered, or how many organisations became involved can help paint part of the picture.

However, numbers rarely explain what participants actually experienced.

Two programmes may involve exactly the same number of participants, yet produce very different outcomes. One group may attend regularly without feeling particularly connected to the activity. Another group may develop friendships, confidence, and a strong sense of belonging that continues long after the programme ends.

The difference cannot always be measured through attendance records.

Inclusive sport challenges organisations to look beyond what can easily be counted and pay greater attention to what participants actually gain from the experience.

The most important question is often not how many people participated, but how participation affected their lives.

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Listening to Participants

Participants themselves are often the most valuable source of information.

Too often, evaluation focuses on the perspectives of organisations, professionals, or funders while overlooking the people the programme was designed to support.

Inclusive evaluation begins by recognising that participants are experts in their own experiences.

This does not mean evaluation must become complicated. In many cases, a simple conversation at the end of an activity can provide more meaningful insights than a lengthy questionnaire.

Participants can tell us what they enjoyed, what challenged them, what helped them feel comfortable, and whether they would like to participate again. They can describe friendships they formed, moments they are proud of, and experiences that made them feel included.

For people with intellectual disabilities, evaluation methods should be adapted in the same way that sport activities are adapted. Some participants may prefer conversations rather than written surveys. Others may respond more effectively to visual tools, simple questions, or supported discussions.

The goal is not to collect perfect data. The goal is to understand participant experiences as accurately and respectfully as possible.



Learning from Families and Coaches

Participants are not the only people who observe change.

Families, coaches, assistants, and volunteers often witness developments that may not be immediately visible during activities.

Parents and caregivers, for example, frequently notice changes that emerge after participants return home. Increased confidence, greater independence, improved communication, or enthusiasm for future activities often become visible in everyday life.

Throughout the SPORT project, families regularly shared stories about participants discussing camp experiences long after activities had ended. Some reported increased willingness to try new things. Others described participants speaking proudly about friendships, travel experiences, and achievements that had previously seemed out of reach.

Coaches and volunteers bring another perspective.

Because they interact directly with participants during activities, they are often able to observe changes in engagement, communication, teamwork, confidence, and social interaction. Over time, they may notice participants becoming more comfortable, more independent, and more willing to take initiative.

When these different perspectives are combined, organisations gain a much richer understanding of programme impact.

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Understanding Qualitative and Quantitative Impact

Effective evaluation usually involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative information.

Quantitative information tells us what happened.

It helps organisations understand the scale of an activity by providing information such as attendance, participation rates, event numbers, or volunteer involvement.

Qualitative information helps explain why those numbers matter.

It focuses on experiences, stories, observations, reflections, and personal perspectives. It captures the human side of inclusion and provides context that statistics alone cannot provide.

Neither approach is sufficient on its own.

Numbers help demonstrate reach, while stories help demonstrate meaning.

Together, they provide a more complete picture of impact.

One without the other often leaves important questions unanswered.

Capturing Small Changes

One of the most valuable lessons in inclusive sport evaluation is that impact is not always dramatic.

Many practitioners begin looking for major transformations and overlook the smaller changes that often represent significant progress.

A participant who joins a group discussion for the first time.

Someone who feels confident enough to ask a question.

A new friendship that develops during an activity.

A participant who chooses to travel internationally despite initial fears.

These moments may appear small from the outside, yet they often represent meaningful personal achievements.

Throughout SPORT, many important outcomes emerged gradually rather than suddenly. Confidence developed through repeated experiences. Friendships grew through shared activities. Independence increased through opportunities to make decisions and navigate unfamiliar situations.

Recognising these incremental changes is essential because inclusion is often built through a series of small successes rather than one dramatic breakthrough.



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The SPORT Experience: Measuring What Really Matters

The SPORT project reinforced the idea that some of the most important outcomes of inclusive sport cannot be reduced to numbers alone.

The project certainly produced measurable results. Participants attended activities, camps were organised, volunteers were engaged, and partnerships were established.

Yet when partners reflected on the most meaningful achievements, they rarely spoke first about statistics.

Instead, they spoke about participants travelling abroad for the first time.

They spoke about families who overcame fears and placed trust in international mobility experiences.

They spoke about friendships between participants from Bulgaria and Türkiye.

They spoke about participants who arrived uncertain and hesitant but returned home with greater confidence and a stronger belief in their own abilities.

These experiences demonstrated that impact is often found in personal stories, emotional moments, and changes that extend far beyond the duration of a single activity.

Measuring these outcomes requires practitioners to pay attention not only to what happened, but also to what changed.

From Evidence to Improvement

Evaluation should never be viewed as the final stage of a project.

Its true value lies in helping organisations learn and improve.

When practitioners listen carefully to participants, families, coaches, and volunteers, they gain insights that can strengthen future activities. They identify successful approaches, recognise areas for development, and better understand the needs of the communities they serve.

In this sense, evaluation is not simply about demonstrating impact. It is about creating better opportunities for future participants.

Inclusive sport creates value in many different forms: confidence, friendship, independence, belonging, community engagement, and personal growth. Measuring these outcomes helps ensure that they are recognised, understood, and strengthened over time.

Ultimately, the purpose of evaluation is not to prove that activities took place.

It is to understand how people's lives were influenced because they did.

The next chapter explores how organisations can build on these outcomes and ensure that the benefits of inclusive sport continue long after individual projects, events, and funding periods have come to an end.

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15. Sustainability Beyond the Project

One of the greatest challenges in inclusive sport is not organising activities.

It is ensuring that opportunities continue once a project, event, or funding period comes to an end.

Many successful initiatives create enthusiasm, build partnerships, and generate positive outcomes while they are active. Participants develop new skills, families become engaged, and communities begin to recognise the value of inclusion. Yet without a clear plan for sustainability, these achievements can gradually fade when resources become limited or project activities conclude.

For this reason, sustainability should never be viewed as something that happens after a project. It should be considered from the very beginning.

The most successful inclusive sport initiatives are those that create lasting change within organisations, communities, and local systems. They leave behind more than memories and reports. They leave behind knowledge, relationships, practices, and opportunities that continue benefiting people long after the original project has ended.

Throughout the SPORT project, sustainability was not viewed as a separate activity. It was embedded within the way partnerships were built, participants were supported, and local stakeholders were engaged. The objective was not simply to organise camps and activities, but to create conditions that would allow inclusion to continue beyond the lifetime of the project itself.



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Thinking Beyond Individual Activities

It is natural for organisations to focus on the immediate success of events, training sessions, or camps. These activities are visible, measurable, and often become the centre of project implementation.

However, long-term impact depends on what happens after participants return home.

A successful camp may last a few days. A successful project may last a few years. Sustainable inclusion should last much longer.

This requires organisations to ask different questions:

- What opportunities will participants have once the project ends?
- Who will continue supporting inclusion locally?
- How can knowledge and experience be transferred to others?
- What structures can remain in place after funding concludes?

Thinking beyond individual activities encourages organisations to focus not only on delivering programmes but also on strengthening the environments in which inclusion can continue to grow.





Building Sustainable Sport Clubs

Sport clubs are often among the most important actors in creating long-term opportunities for participation.

Projects can introduce new ideas, provide resources, and create momentum, but local clubs are frequently the organisations that remain present in communities long after projects have ended.

For this reason, sustainability is often strongest when inclusive practices become part of everyday club culture rather than separate project activities.

This does not necessarily require major organisational changes.

In many cases, sustainability begins when clubs:

- develop confidence in working with diverse participants;
- train coaches and volunteers;
- establish relationships with families;
- adapt existing activities to become more inclusive;
- view inclusion as a normal part of sport participation.

When inclusion becomes part of how a club operates, activities are more likely to continue regardless of external funding opportunities.

The goal is not to create project-dependent inclusion. The goal is to create club-owned inclusion.

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The Importance of Community Partnerships

No organisation can create sustainable inclusion alone.

Inclusive sport is strongest when different sectors work together towards common goals.

Throughout the SPORT project, cooperation extended far beyond sport organisations themselves. Local authorities, educational institutions, volunteers, community organisations, families, and international partners all contributed to creating opportunities for participants.

These partnerships increased not only the quality of activities but also their long-term sustainability.

When multiple stakeholders become invested in inclusion, responsibility becomes shared rather than concentrated within a single organisation.

Community partnerships help create:

- broader support networks;
- access to facilities and resources;
- volunteer engagement;
- increased visibility;
- stronger advocacy for inclusion.

Perhaps most importantly, they help ensure that inclusion becomes a community priority rather than a project objective.

The stronger the network, the greater the likelihood that opportunities will continue over time.

Creating Local Ownership

One of the most effective sustainability strategies is creating local ownership.

People are far more likely to continue activities when they feel that the initiative belongs to them rather than to an external project.

Local ownership develops when communities actively participate in planning, implementation, and decision-making.

It grows when local coaches gain confidence, volunteers become engaged, families feel involved, and participants themselves contribute to shaping activities.

The SPORT project demonstrated that sustainable inclusion is not something that can be delivered to a community. It must be built with the community.

When local stakeholders recognise the value of inclusive sport and see positive outcomes firsthand, they become more motivated to continue supporting activities in the future.

Ownership transforms projects from temporary interventions into lasting community resources.



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Scaling Inclusive Practices

Many organisations assume that sustainability requires significant financial investment or large-scale expansion.

In reality, sustainable growth often occurs through gradual and manageable steps.

Inclusive practices can spread from one activity to another, from one coach to another, or from one organisation to another.

A successful approach developed within a single club may inspire neighbouring clubs. A volunteer may become a future coach. A participant's positive experience may encourage other families to become involved.

Scaling inclusion does not always mean creating bigger programmes.

Sometimes it means helping more people adopt practices that are already working.

Knowledge sharing plays an important role in this process. Training materials, practical resources, peer learning opportunities, and examples of good practice all help organisations replicate successful approaches within their own contexts.

The objective is not to copy activities exactly. It is to transfer principles that can be adapted and applied in different environments.



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From Projects to Long-Term Strategies

Projects often create opportunities to test ideas, develop resources, and build partnerships.

However, sustainable inclusion requires moving beyond project cycles.

Organisations that achieve long-term impact often develop clear strategies for inclusion that extend beyond individual funding opportunities.

These strategies may include:

- integrating inclusion into organisational policies;
- allocating resources for inclusive activities;
- investing in staff and volunteer development;
- maintaining partnerships;
- engaging participants and families continuously.

The most sustainable organisations do not treat inclusion as an additional programme. They treat it as part of their identity.

When inclusion becomes embedded within organisational values and decision-making processes, it becomes far more resilient to changes in funding, leadership, or external circumstances.





The Role of Participants and Families

Sustainability is often discussed in organisational terms, but participants and families also play a crucial role.

When participants have positive experiences, they become advocates for future participation. They encourage others to become involved, return to activities, and help strengthen inclusive communities.

Families contribute in similar ways.

Throughout SPORT, many families became important supporters of inclusion because they witnessed the benefits directly. Seeing participants gain confidence, independence, and new experiences strengthened their commitment to future engagement.

Long-term sustainability is easier to achieve when participants and families believe in the value of what has been created.

Their support often becomes one of the strongest foundations for future development.

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Sustaining the Impact of International Experiences

One of the most valuable lessons from SPORT was that international mobility should not be viewed as an isolated experience.

The impact of an international activity is strongest when it continues influencing participants after they return home.

Participants often return with new confidence, friendships, ambitions, and perspectives. Organisations have an important role in helping these experiences continue generating positive outcomes.

Follow-up activities, local engagement opportunities, continued communication between participants, and ongoing involvement in sport can all help sustain the benefits of international experiences.

The objective is not simply to create memorable moments. It is to transform those moments into lasting opportunities for growth and participation.

Creating a Legacy of Inclusion

The most meaningful legacy of any inclusive sport initiative is not a report, a website, or a set of statistics.

It is the lasting change that remains within people, organisations, and communities.

A coach who becomes more confident in working with people with intellectual disabilities.

A sport club that opens its doors to new participants.

A family that begins to believe more strongly in the potential of their child.

A participant who gains the confidence to pursue opportunities that once seemed impossible.

These outcomes often continue long after a project has officially ended.

They become part of the community itself.

From Sustainability to Social Change

Sustainability is ultimately about more than continuing activities.

It is about continuing opportunities.

When inclusive sport becomes embedded within clubs, communities, partnerships, and local systems, its impact extends far beyond individual projects.

Participants gain ongoing access to opportunities for sport, friendship, learning, and community participation. Organisations become more confident and capable of supporting diverse groups. Communities become more welcoming and inclusive.

The SPORT project demonstrated that meaningful inclusion is not achieved through isolated events or temporary interventions. It is achieved through long-term commitment, cooperation, and the belief that every person should have opportunities to participate and belong.

When these principles continue beyond the life of a project, sustainability becomes more than a goal.

It becomes a pathway towards lasting social change.

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PART VI

PRACTICAL TOOLS & RESOURCES



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16. Practical Checklists

Throughout this toolkit, we have explored the principles, experiences, and practical lessons that support inclusive sport. While every participant, organisation, and community is different, certain questions arise repeatedly when planning activities, working with participants, or evaluating practice.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide simple tools that practitioners can use in their everyday work. These checklists are not designed as formal assessments or compliance tools. Instead, they serve as practical reminders that help coaches, volunteers, clubs, and organisations create more inclusive experiences.

No checklist can replace professional judgement, flexibility, or meaningful relationships. However, they can help identify potential barriers, encourage reflection, and support continuous improvement.

The most important principle remains the same: inclusion is not about perfection. It is about creating environments where people feel welcomed, respected, supported, and able to participate meaningfully.



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Tool 1: Event Accessibility Checklist

Before organising an inclusive sport event, consider the following questions.

Before the Event

- ☐ Have participants received clear and understandable information about the event?
- ☐ Have families or support persons received all necessary information?
- ☐ Is the registration process accessible and easy to complete?
- ☐ Have individual support needs been identified and considered?
- ☐ Have transportation arrangements been reviewed?
- ☐ Do participants know who to contact if they have questions?

Venue and Environment

- ☐ Is the venue easy to find and navigate?
- ☐ Are activity areas clearly marked?
- ☐ Are rest areas available if needed?
- ☐ Are toilets and other facilities accessible?
- ☐ Is the environment welcoming and free from unnecessary barriers?

Activities

- ☐ Are activities adaptable to different abilities and support needs?
- ☐ Have coaches and volunteers been briefed beforehand?
- ☐ Are instructions clear and easy to understand?
- ☐ Are demonstrations and visual supports available where appropriate?
- ☐ Does every participant have opportunities for meaningful participation?

Safety and Wellbeing

- ☐ Are emergency procedures known to staff and volunteers?
- ☐ Are participants aware of where to seek help?
- ☐ Are support persons available if needed?
- ☐ Is participant wellbeing monitored throughout the event?
- ☐ Is there a plan for responding to unexpected situations?

Reflection After the Event

- ☐ Did participants feel included?
- ☐ Did participants enjoy the experience?
- ☐ What worked particularly well?
- ☐ What could be improved next time?

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Tool 2: Coach Self-Reflection Checklist

Inclusive coaching begins with reflection.

Use the following questions regularly to review your own practice.

Before the Session

- ☐ Have I planned activities that can be adapted if necessary?
- ☐ Have I considered the needs of all participants?
- ☐ Am I prepared to modify activities if challenges arise?
- ☐ Have I created opportunities for everyone to contribute?

During the Session

- ☐ Did I communicate clearly?
- ☐ Did I use demonstrations where appropriate?
- ☐ Did I encourage participation from everyone?
- ☐ Did I focus on strengths rather than limitations?
- ☐ Did I provide opportunities for participants to make choices?
- ☐ Did I create a safe and respectful environment?
- ☐ Did I notice anyone becoming disengaged or excluded?

After the Session

- ☐ Which participants appeared most engaged?
- ☐ Who may have needed additional support?
- ☐ What adaptations worked particularly well?
- ☐ Did everyone have opportunities for success?
- ☐ What would I do differently next time?

Personal Development

- ☐ Am I continuing to learn about inclusive practice?
- ☐ Have I sought feedback from participants or colleagues?
- ☐ Am I maintaining healthy boundaries and looking after my own wellbeing?
- ☐ What is one thing I would like to improve as an inclusive coach?

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Using the Checklists Effectively

These tools are not intended to be completed mechanically or used as formal evaluation instruments. Their value lies in encouraging reflection and supporting practical decision-making.

The most effective practitioners are not those who can tick every box. They are those who remain open, flexible, and willing to learn from experience.

Inclusive sport is built through hundreds of small decisions made before, during, and after activities. These checklists simply help ensure that those decisions remain guided by the same principles that underpin the SPORT project: respect, opportunity, participation, and team spirit.



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17. Good Practice Examples from SPORT

Throughout this toolkit, we have explored the principles, approaches, and practical methods that support inclusive sport. However, one of the most valuable sources of learning often comes from real experiences.

The SPORT project provided an opportunity to test ideas in practice, bringing together participants with intellectual disabilities, families, coaches, volunteers, educational institutions, local authorities, and community organisations from Bulgaria and Türkiye. Rather than focusing only on theory, the project created real environments where inclusion could be experienced, observed, and continuously improved.

This chapter presents some of the most important lessons and examples that emerged during implementation. These examples are not intended to be viewed as models that must be replicated exactly. Every community is different, and every organisation operates within its own context. Instead, they demonstrate how inclusive sport principles can be translated into practice and adapted to different realities.

More importantly, they illustrate that successful inclusion is rarely the result of a single activity. It emerges when people, organisations, and communities work together towards a common goal.

Building Inclusion at Local Level

One of the strongest lessons from SPORT was that meaningful inclusion begins locally.

Before participants travelled internationally or took part in large-scale activities, they first developed confidence through local sport opportunities, community engagement, and regular interaction with coaches and support networks.

Both in Bulgaria and Türkiye, national activities played an essential role in preparing participants for broader experiences. These activities allowed participants to become familiar with sport environments, build relationships with coaches and peers, and develop the confidence needed to engage in future opportunities.

The local activities also provided valuable learning opportunities for organisations. Coaches gained practical experience, volunteers became more comfortable working in inclusive settings, and families developed greater trust in the possibilities that sport could offer.

Importantly, local activities demonstrated that inclusion does not require large budgets or complex infrastructure. Many of the most meaningful outcomes emerged through consistent engagement, supportive relationships, and opportunities for participants to be active members of their communities.

The national activities created the foundation upon which all later project achievements were built.





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The Bulgarian Experience

The Bulgarian activities demonstrated the importance of creating opportunities for participants who are often excluded not only because of disability but also because of social and geographical circumstances.

Many participants came from institutional settings or communities where opportunities for travel, social participation, and international engagement were limited. For these participants, involvement in SPORT represented far more than participation in a sport programme.

Being selected to take part, preparing for international activities, and eventually hosting international guests created a strong sense of pride and responsibility. Participants were not simply beneficiaries of a project. They became active contributors to an international experience.

Particularly significant was the opportunity to host the international camp in Bulgaria. Participants who had previously travelled abroad as guests were now welcoming others to their own country and community. This shift strengthened confidence and created a sense of ownership that extended beyond the activities themselves.

The experience demonstrated that inclusion becomes particularly powerful when participants are given opportunities not only to receive support but also to contribute, lead, and share their own experiences with others.



The Turkish Experience

The Turkish activities highlighted a different but equally important aspect of inclusion. Many participants came from rural communities where disability remains heavily stigmatised and opportunities for participation can be limited. For a significant number of families, involvement in SPORT represented a step into unfamiliar territory.

Some families had never considered international mobility as a realistic possibility for their children. Others faced practical and emotional barriers linked to travel, independence, and participation in activities outside their local environment.

The project demonstrated that these barriers can be overcome when trust is established gradually and support systems are in place. Participants who initially arrived with uncertainty and hesitation quickly became active members of the group. Through sport, shared experiences, and supportive environments, they developed confidence that extended beyond the project itself.

The Turkish experience highlighted an important lesson: inclusion often begins with creating opportunities that challenge expectations. When participants and families are given the chance to experience success, perceptions about what is possible can change significantly.

Another important aspect of the Turkish implementation was the active involvement of local institutions and community stakeholders. The project engaged a local university, a school serving people with disabilities, and the municipality, creating a wider support network around participants and their families. This cooperation helped increase visibility for inclusion within the local community and demonstrated that meaningful change becomes more sustainable when educational institutions, public authorities, and civil society organisations work together.

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International Camps as Catalysts for Change

While local activities provided an essential foundation, the international camps became some of the most transformative experiences within the project.

For many participants, these camps represented a series of firsts.

- First international journey.
- First time crossing a border.
- First stay in a hotel.
- First experience of living and participating in an international group.
- First friendships with people from another country.

These experiences created learning opportunities that extended far beyond sport.

Participants developed confidence by navigating unfamiliar environments. They learned to communicate across language barriers. They became more independent and discovered abilities that may previously have gone unnoticed.

The camps also challenged assumptions held by others.

Families observed participants succeeding in situations they had previously considered difficult or impossible. Volunteers and students encountered participants with intellectual disabilities in meaningful and positive ways. Local communities witnessed inclusion in action rather than hearing about it as an abstract concept.

Perhaps most importantly, participants themselves began to view their own potential differently.

The camps demonstrated that international mobility should not be reserved for a limited group of people. With appropriate preparation and support, people with intellectual disabilities can participate successfully in international experiences and benefit from them just as profoundly as anyone else.

Capacity-Building Beyond Participants

Although participants remained at the centre of SPORT, the project also invested heavily in developing the people around them.

Coaches, volunteers, sport experts, and support staff all benefited from opportunities to strengthen their understanding of inclusion and inclusive practice.

The capacity-building activities were particularly valuable because they combined theory with direct experience. Rather than discussing inclusion only in training rooms, participants had opportunities to apply learning immediately within real sport environments.

This practical approach helped transform attitudes as well as skills.

Many coaches reported increased confidence in working with people with intellectual disabilities. Volunteers became more comfortable supporting inclusive activities. Organisations gained greater understanding of how to adapt sport environments and create meaningful participation opportunities.

These outcomes contribute directly to sustainability because knowledge and experience remain within communities long after project activities have ended.



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Learning Through Experience

One of the strongest findings from SPORT was that inclusion is learned most effectively through direct experience.

People often begin projects with uncertainty. Coaches worry about making mistakes. Volunteers fear they may not know how to provide support. Organisations question whether they have sufficient expertise.

Yet many of these concerns diminish once people begin working together.

Throughout the project, participants, volunteers, students, coaches, and community members repeatedly discovered that inclusion was far more natural than they had expected.

The most significant learning often happened through everyday interactions rather than formal training sessions.

- A conversation during a meal.
- A shared activity.
- A team challenge.
- A friendship that developed unexpectedly.

These moments helped challenge stereotypes and create a deeper understanding of inclusion than any presentation or workshop could achieve on its own.

Lessons Learned

The SPORT project generated many valuable lessons that may be useful for organisations planning similar initiatives.

One of the most important was that trust is the foundation of participation. Before participants can engage fully, families, caregivers, and participants themselves need confidence that the environment will be safe, supportive, and respectful.

The project also demonstrated the importance of preparation. Successful international mobility did not begin at the airport. It began months earlier through communication, relationship-building, and gradual confidence-building.

Another important lesson was that inclusion becomes stronger when participants are given meaningful roles rather than passive participation. People develop confidence when they are trusted, valued, and given opportunities to contribute.

The project further highlighted the importance of flexibility. Inclusive environments are created not through rigid plans but through the willingness to adapt to individual needs and circumstances.

Finally, SPORT reinforced the idea that inclusion is most sustainable when it involves the wider community rather than only the participants themselves.

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The Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation Model

One of the most distinctive aspects of SPORT was its ability to bring together stakeholders who do not always work closely with one another.

The project created cooperation between sport organisations, local authorities, educational institutions, volunteers, families, community organisations, and international partners.

In Bulgaria, this cooperation included municipalities, members of the National Parliament, local schools, university students and volunteers from the National Sports Academy, sport clubs, teachers, local communities, and civil society organisations. The project also benefited from support provided through diplomatic channels, particularly through the Bulgarian Embassy in Türkiye, which helped facilitate participant mobility and international cooperation.

In Türkiye, the partnership model was equally strong. The project actively engaged the municipality, a local university, and a school for people with disabilities, creating a supportive ecosystem around participants and their families. These institutions contributed not only facilities and expertise but also visibility, credibility, and opportunities for broader community engagement. Their involvement demonstrated how public authorities, educational institutions, and grass-roots organisations can work together to create sustainable pathways for inclusion.

What made this model particularly effective was that each stakeholder contributed something different. Sport organisations brought practical experience and participant engagement. Educational institutions contributed knowledge, volunteers, and learning opportunities. Municipalities provided local support and visibility. Families offered trust and ongoing encouragement. International partners expanded horizons and created mobility opportunities.

Together, these actors created an environment in which inclusion became a shared responsibility rather than the task of a single organisation.

Rather than expecting one institution to solve complex challenges alone, SPORT demonstrated the value of collective action. The project connected policy, education, sport, community engagement, and international cooperation within a single framework, producing outcomes that would have been difficult to achieve through isolated efforts.

A Model That Can Be Adapted

The experiences presented in this chapter should not be viewed as fixed formulas.

Every community has different resources, challenges, and opportunities. However, the principles that guided SPORT are widely transferable.

Building trust, investing in preparation, involving families, empowering participants, supporting volunteers, strengthening local partnerships, and creating opportunities for meaningful participation are approaches that can be adapted to many different contexts.

The success of SPORT did not come from any single activity. It came from the combination of relationships, commitment, cooperation, and belief in the potential of every participant.

These are the elements that organisations can carry forward into future projects and initiatives.

The final chapter of this toolkit brings together the key messages of SPORT and reflects on the future of inclusive sport, participation, and international cooperation.

SPORT Strengthening Potentials through Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit
BSDA Bulgarian Sports Development Association
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FINAL SECTION



SPORT
Strengthening Potentials through
Opportunities, Respect, and Team-spirit

18. Key Messages & Takeaways

Every project eventually comes to an end.

Activities are completed, reports are submitted, and partnerships move on to new initiatives. Yet the most important outcomes of inclusive sport are rarely found in project documents or statistics. They remain with the people whose lives have been touched by the experience.

Throughout the SPORT project, participants travelled across borders, built friendships, discovered new abilities, and experienced opportunities that many had never imagined possible. Families placed trust in unfamiliar experiences and witnessed their children achieve more than they thought possible. Coaches, volunteers, students, and community members learned that inclusion is not a complicated concept reserved for specialists. It is something that happens when people come together with openness, respect, and a willingness to support one another.

The experiences presented throughout this toolkit lead to several important conclusions.

Inclusion is not about creating separate opportunities. It is about ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate, contribute, and belong.

People with intellectual disabilities do not need lower expectations. They need opportunities, support, and environments that recognise their strengths and potential.

Sport is far more than physical activity. It is a powerful tool for confidence-building, friendship, learning, independence, community participation, and social change.

Trust is the foundation of successful inclusion. Trust between participants and coaches. Trust between organisations and families. Trust between partners, communities, and institutions. Without trust, participation becomes difficult. With trust, possibilities expand.

Preparation matters. Successful inclusion rarely happens by chance. It is created through thoughtful planning, clear communication, flexibility, and a commitment to understanding individual needs.

Families are not observers of inclusion. They are partners in the process. Their support, knowledge, and confidence play a crucial role in creating sustainable opportunities.

Volunteers, peers, and community members are equally important. Inclusion becomes stronger when responsibility is shared and when people learn directly from one another through experience and interaction.



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International mobility should not be viewed as a privilege reserved for a few. People with intellectual disabilities should have the same opportunities to travel, learn, explore, and build connections across borders as anyone else. The SPORT project demonstrated that, with appropriate support, these experiences are not only possible but transformative.

Perhaps the most important lesson of all is that inclusion is not achieved through a single event, programme, or project. It is an ongoing process. It is built through relationships, everyday actions, and the collective effort of people who believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to participate fully in community life.

The SPORT project showed what can happen when this belief is translated into action.

- It showed that barriers can be reduced.
- It showed that confidence can grow.
- It showed that communities can become more welcoming.
- It showed that friendships can overcome language, cultural, and social differences.

Most importantly, it showed that people are often capable of far more than others expect when they are given the opportunity to succeed.

As you move forward and apply the ideas presented in this toolkit, remember that inclusive sport is not about creating perfect conditions. It is about creating opportunities.

- Opportunities to participate.
- Opportunities to connect.
- Opportunities to learn.
- Opportunities to belong.

Every inclusive training session, every adapted activity, every welcoming conversation, and every opportunity offered to a participant contributes to something larger than sport itself.

It contributes to a society where diversity is valued, participation is encouraged, and everyone has the chance to reach their potential.

This is the legacy of SPORT.

And this is the future that inclusive sport can help create.







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19. About the Partners

Bulgarian Sports Development Association (BSDA)

The Bulgarian Sports Development Association (BSDA) is a non-governmental organisation based in Sofia, Bulgaria, dedicated to promoting sport, physical activity, social inclusion, and lifelong learning. Established in 2010, BSDA has extensive experience in implementing European initiatives, particularly under the Erasmus+ programme, focusing on grassroots sport, inclusion, education, youth development, and community engagement. As coordinator of the SPORT project, BSDA led the overall implementation of the initiative, coordinated international cooperation, and supported the development of inclusive sport opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

Kargenç Club

Kargenç Club is a civil society organisation based in Türkiye that works to promote social inclusion, youth participation, community development, and equal opportunities. Through cooperation with local institutions, educational organisations, municipalities, and community stakeholders, the organisation creates opportunities for personal development and active participation for vulnerable groups. Within the SPORT project, Kargenç Club played a key role in engaging participants and families from Türkiye, organising local activities, supporting international mobility, and strengthening local partnerships that contributed to the project's inclusive and community-based approach.

Together, BSDA and Kargenç Club combined their experience, expertise, and commitment to inclusion to create meaningful opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities through sport, demonstrating the value of international cooperation in building more inclusive communities.

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