



ERASMUS+ SPORT 2023

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

INCLUSION OF DISABLED
PEOPLE THROUGH
BASKETBALL

2023
2024

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the European Union

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the outcome of the partnership work within the project "Inclusion of disabled people through basketball", financed under the Erasmus+ Programme. The authors of the document, representing organizations from Greece, Cyprus, Serbia, and Romania, discuss the general situation of people with disabilities in sports across Europe, highlighting the progress and persistent challenges in achieving inclusivity and accessibility. We examined the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in participating in sports, existing policies, support systems, and areas for improvement. The booklet sets the stage for discussing the role of basketball, specifically wheelchair basketball, in improving inclusion, community engagement and breaking down stereotypes about disabilities.

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GENERAL SITUATION

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SPORT



In Europe, the situation for people with disabilities in sports has seen significant progress over recent decades, yet challenges persist. The European Union has been at the forefront of promoting inclusivity and accessibility in sports, aiming to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of ability. The European Union has enacted various policies and legislation to promote inclusion in sports, such as the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the European Pillar of Social Rights. These frameworks emphasize equal access to sports activities, facilities, and competitions for people with disabilities.

Although sports participation rates for people with disabilities have been increasing, they still lag behind those of the general population. Recent surveys by Eurostat indicate that over 40% of the EU population practice sports, fitness, or recreational physical activities at least once a week. No percentage is available concerning the participation of disabled people in sports in the EU. However, the available data from the Eurobarometer survey of 2018 shows that having a disability or illness is the third most frequently mentioned reason – by 14% of respondents – for not practicing sports more regularly. Therefore, the importance of the inclusion of people with disabilities in sports arises from the fact that a billion people in the world, of whom over 70 million in the EU, live with disabilities today. Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, numerous barriers hinder the participation of people with disabilities in sports. These barriers include a lack of accessible facilities, limited availability of adaptive equipment, financial constraints, and societal attitudes toward disability.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on inclusive sports programs that integrate people with and without disabilities. These programs aim to break down barriers, promote social inclusion, and foster a sense of community among participants.



Through the project, we have conducted the Questionnaire targeting experts working in the field of disability sports and inclusion to explore the situation of people with disabilities in our communities regarding sports participation, barriers, opportunities, and attitudes of the general population. The questionnaire aimed to gather comprehensive insights and perspectives from professionals with firsthand experience and expertise in addressing the needs and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in sports. The findings played a crucial role in shaping our project's approach to fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment in sports and physical activities.

Key areas covered in the Questionnaire were:

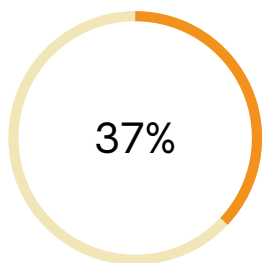
- the frequency and types of sports and physical activities in which individuals with disabilities participate;
- barriers and challenges that individuals with disabilities encounter when attempting to engage in sports;
- examination of existing programs, initiatives, and resources aimed at promoting sports inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities;
- assessment of public perceptions, attitudes, and awareness regarding disability sports and the importance of inclusion in sports.

The questionnaire was designed based on a thorough review of existing literature, policies, and best practices in disability sports and inclusion. Questions were crafted to stimulate qualitative and quantitative responses, allowing for a complete understanding of the issues. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to selected experts in relevant fields, including disability sports organizations, rehabilitation centers, academic institutions, and advocacy groups. Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous to encourage candid responses.

Responses from the questionnaire were collated, analyzed, and synthesized to identify common themes, trends, and challenges. The findings from the questionnaire were used to inform the development of our project's booklet, as well as interventions aimed at promoting sports inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities. Those data provided meaningful insights and recommendations for addressing gaps and improving the situation of people with disabilities in sports participation and inclusion.

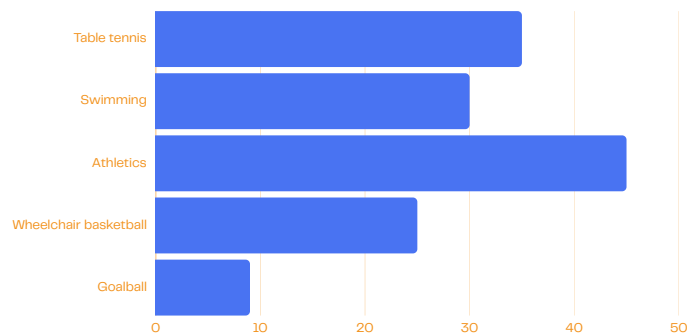
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Participation levels and barriers



- The overall level of participation in physical activities among disabled individuals is seen as low. Approximately 37% of people with disabilities are engaged in sport and physical activities. Most of them are involved in therapy and recreation,
- Significant barriers include insufficient financial support, infrastructural challenges, psychological barriers, and a lack of awareness and accessibility.
- Availability of specialized infrastructure like accessible courts and gyms is rated poorly, indicating a need for improvement.
- There is a lack of trained coaches and instructors specializing in working with disabled athletes.

A variety of sports are practiced by disabled individuals, with wheelchair basketball, athletics, swimming, and table tennis being prominent.



Societal attitudes and awareness

- There is a mixed perception of societal attitudes towards disabled athletes, with many respondents noting a need for improvement in support and recognition.
- There are many stereotypes regarding the participation of people with disabilities in sports.
- General public awareness of sports for disabled individuals is considered low, highlighting a need for increased visibility and education.

Benefits of sports participation

- Physical activities are universally recognized by the respondents as having a significantly positive impact on the health and well-being of disabled individuals, enhancing both their physical and mental health.
- Engaging in physical activities is viewed as having a positive impact on both physical and mental health, improving social inclusion, and enhancing self-esteem and independence among disabled individuals.
- There is a clear emphasis on the positive impact of basketball, including wheelchair basketball, in promoting physical health, team building, self-esteem, and social interaction among disabled individuals.

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING IN THE FIELD

Cyprus

ACTIVE PLANET LTD

Organization and planning training camps, children's camps and sporting events Worldwide. ACTIVE PLANET operates jointly with Cyprus Paralympic Committee to continuously improve conditions for athletes with physical and mental. Handling the needed information about athletic infrastructure and working collaboratively with sports organizations, clubs, and federations. We can organize training camps in Cyprus with comfortable accommodations for athletes with disabilities or physical impairments.

webpage : <https://activeplanet.com/en/>

APOLLON SPORTS CLUB

Apollon Limassol FC (Greek: Απόλλων Λεμεσού, Apollon Lemesou) is a Cypriot sports club, based in Limassol. It has football, basketball and volleyball teams. Founded in 1954, Apollon FC currently plays in the Cypriot First Division and has won the championship title four times, the cup nine times and the Super Cup four times. Last 15 years started to work with paraolympic teams with people with disabilities.

webpage : <https://apollonclub.com.cy/>

TO SPITI TOU MARIOU

The Day Center "The House of Mario" is housed at 50 Augustinou Street, in the Kapsalos area of Limassol. Individuals at the Day Center are divided into four small groups in order to provide a program tailored to individual needs. The training of the individuals was undertaken by four scientifically qualified trainers with the help of two pedagogues, under the supervision of a Social Worker. The educational program is supported by people of various specialties, through the purchase of services and volunteering. The operating hours are from 07:00 to 14:00 and it is possible to transport people to and from the Day Center. The purpose is to develop the skills of people with special needs to the maximum extent, with the ultimate goal of their integration into society as productive individuals. To achieve this goal, an effort is made through various activities to prepare for professional rehabilitation in the field they desire and have the ability.

KERAVNOS WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Keravnos Strovolos (Gymnastic Club of Strovolos "The Lightning") was founded in 1926 and is one of the oldest sports clubs in the country. It is based in Strovolos, the largest Municipality of Nicosia and its stadium is the "Kostas Papaellinas" Indoor Stadium with a capacity of 2,000 spectators. From 2014 Keravnos has a team of wheelchair basketball and other para olympic games.

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/KeravnosRollers>

Instagram page: https://www.instagram.com/keravnos_rollers

AGIOI THEODOROI "AXIZO"

The Association for the Care of People with Intellectual Disabilities of Rodopi "Agioti Theodori" was founded in January 1981 by parents of individuals with intellectual disabilities and concerned citizens of the Rodopi region. It operates as a charitable association and serves over 50 adult and minor members with intellectual impairments. Its members also participate in the Special Olympics Games.

webpage: <https://www.syd.gr/>

SPORTS CLUB FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES "KOTINOS"

"Kotinos" is a Sports Association for People with Disabilities in Alexandroupoli, with members from all over the Evros region. It operates independently in swimming, athletics, table tennis, shooting (in collaboration with the Shooting Club of Alexandroupoli), and therapeutic horse riding (in partnership with the Equestrian Club of Alexandroupoli)." (σε συνεργασία με τον Ιππικό Όμιλο Αλεξ/πολης).

webpage: www.kotinos.gr

MEGALONISOS AMEA

The Athletic Association of People with Disabilities (A.S.A.ME.A.) "Megalonisos" has forty (40) active athletes participating in sports events. Their training sessions are mostly hosted at the facilities of the National Sports Center of Heraklion. The president is Mr. Kapellakis, who is disabled and a gold Paralympic champion. He also serves as the chairman of the National Paralympic Committee.

MEGALONISOS AMEA

'Megas Alexandros' Club is based in Thessaloniki, where it maintains its history in the field since 1994 with numerous awards both in Greece and abroad. It exclusively deals with wheelchair basketball and is one of the oldest sports club for disabled people in Greece

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/megasalexandros1994/>

P.A.S.K.A.

The club, Panhellenic Sports Club for People with Disabilities (P.A.S.K.A.), was founded on April 7, 1987, and is based at the National Rehabilitation Center in Ilion, Attica. They are the first purely sports club for people with mobility impairments established in Greece. The club significantly contributed to the creation of the Panhellenic Championship for people with disabilities, which started in 1988. This year marks a milestone and signifies the future direction. Today, the club has over ninety (90) athletes in various competitive departments.

webpage: <https://paska.gr/>

Romania

FUNDATION MOTIVATION ROMANIA

Wheelchair basketball - participants use wheelchairs specially designed for this type of sport. Cycling - special bicycles are used, such as tricycles or three- or four-wheeled bicycles, which offer stability and accessibility. Athletics - includes different events such as running, shot put, discus throw or javelin throw, tailored to suit the needs of each participant.

webpage: <https://www.syd.gr/>

APH SPORTING CLUB GALATI

Wheelchair marathon - is a long race in which athletes cover distances of kilometres, using adapted wheelchairs to maintain their pace over the entire distance.

webpage: <https://aphsportingclubgl.ro/>

ASOCIATIA PRIMII PASI SPRE PERFORMANTA

Wheelchair Tennis - The wheelchair is considered part of the body and all rules applicable to the player's body will apply to the wheelchair. When a wheelchair tennis player is playing singles or doubles with or against a person without a disability, the Wheelchair Tennis Rules shall apply to the wheelchair player, while the Tennis Rules for players without a disability shall apply to the player without a disability. In this situation, the wheelchair player is allowed two bounces, while the player without a disability is allowed one bounce.

webpage: <https://appsp.ro/>

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webpage: <https://appsp.ro/>

ASOCIATIA JUDETEANA A SPORTULUI PERSOANELOR CU HANDICAP CONSTANTA

Wheelchair basketball - special wheelchairs are used for this type of sport. The height of the basketball hoop is at a lower height

webpage: <https://asjspdct.wordpress.com/>

The city of Niš is a shining example of the development of sports for people with disabilities in Serbia, and it all started thanks to the enthusiasm of one man. Prof. Dr. Marko Aleksandrović is a full-time professor at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education of the University of Niš, where he currently teaches at all levels of study a group of subjects dealing with the physical activity of people with disabilities. He studied and improved in the country and abroad, and since 2009, he has been selflessly investing his knowledge and skills in developing sports for people with disabilities in his city.

In the city itself, there are several entities that are actively engaged in improving the position of people with disabilities both in sports and in general life.

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL CLUB NAIS

The club was formed in 2017, but the training process and competition started in 2019. Neither the lack of equipment, inexperience, nor even the lack of a place for training in their own city for several months during 2020 and 2021 did not prevent these guys from achieving success from the very beginning. In their first competitive season, 2019/2020, they won fourth place in the First League of Serbia and third in the Serbian Cup, and in 2022, they crowned the year, no less, with the championship title. After only three years of active competition, they became state champions and left much more experienced clubs behind. In addition to the national competition, „Nais“ also competes successfully in the Balkan League, a regional competition where, as the only Serbian club, it fought on the floor with clubs from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria.

The club has made significant strides in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities through its remarkable achievements in the realm of competitive sports. By consistently participating and excelling in national and regional competitions, "Nais" has shattered stereotypes and proven that individuals with disabilities can compete at the highest levels of sports. Furthermore, through their achievements, "Nais" serves as a source of inspiration, empowering individuals with disabilities and fostering a more inclusive society.

official page: <https://www.facebook.com/naisklubkosarkeukolicima>

ACADEMIC SWIMMING CLUB FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES "DELFIN" NIS

"Delfin" is a club that deals with adaptive swimming. The term adaptive swimming refers to the swimming of people with disabilities, elderly and obese people, pregnant women and babies, as well as people with chronic diseases with the help and supervision of experts. From the original idea that people with disabilities, primarily children and young people, should receive organized swimming training and training as a form of rehabilitation, competitive successes were quickly performed, and "Delfin" has been achieving notable sporting successes at state championships and international competitions for a long time.

"Delfin" is one of the few clubs of its kind in Serbia, where daily training and swimming training is organized for children with different types of disabilities, the most numerous of which are children with cerebral palsy and children with autism.

By accommodating diverse needs, "Delfin" ensures that individuals with different disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in swimming activities and benefit from the therapeutic effects of swimming. Moreover, the involvement of experts in supervising swimming sessions ensures the safety and effectiveness of the training programs. Expert guidance is particularly crucial when working with individuals with disabilities, as it helps tailor the training to meet their specific needs and goals.

official page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/300570513304475/>

GOLBAL NAIS

Goalball is a unique collective Paralympic sport for blind and partially sighted people whose goal, as the name suggests, is to score a goal with a ball. The sports association "Golbal Nais" was founded in 2018 as the first sports association in Serbia that deals with goalball and its promotion among blind and partially sighted people. The club is open to all visually impaired people who want to play sports, regardless of how old they are and whether they have ever had the opportunity to play goalball. Unfortunately, there are many blind and partially sighted children in regular schools whose parents are not familiar with all the possibilities that exist for blind people, which is one of the major disadvantages of inclusive education.

One of the primary contributions of the club lies in its open-door policy, welcoming visually impaired individuals of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of prior experience with goalball. By providing a platform where individuals can come together to engage in a sport specifically tailored to their abilities, "Goalball Nais" actively combats the social isolation and limited opportunities often experienced by visually impaired individuals. Furthermore, by actively promoting goalball within the community, the club plays a vital role in raising awareness about the sport itself and the capabilities of visually impaired individuals in the realm of athletics. This not only serves to increase participation in goalball but also challenges societal perceptions and stereotypes surrounding disability and sports.

official page: <https://www.facebook.com/goalballNAIS/>

TABLE TENNIS CLUB FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES "NAIS"

The club was developed from a section within the Sports and Recreational Association of Persons with Disabilities, and since 2016, it has existed as an official sports club for persons with disabilities. Today, it is the most successful club for people with disabilities in south-eastern Serbia. Thirteen active competitors are currently training in the club, who are achieving notable results, both at domestic and international tournaments in their respective categories, and another fifteen young athletes with disabilities who are working hard to be ready for competitive challenges in the future, and special attention is paid to them.

Through its training programs, the club facilitates the development of table tennis skills among its members. This enhances their physical abilities and fosters a sense of accomplishment and confidence as they progress and achieve notable results in domestic and international tournaments.

FACULTY OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF NIS

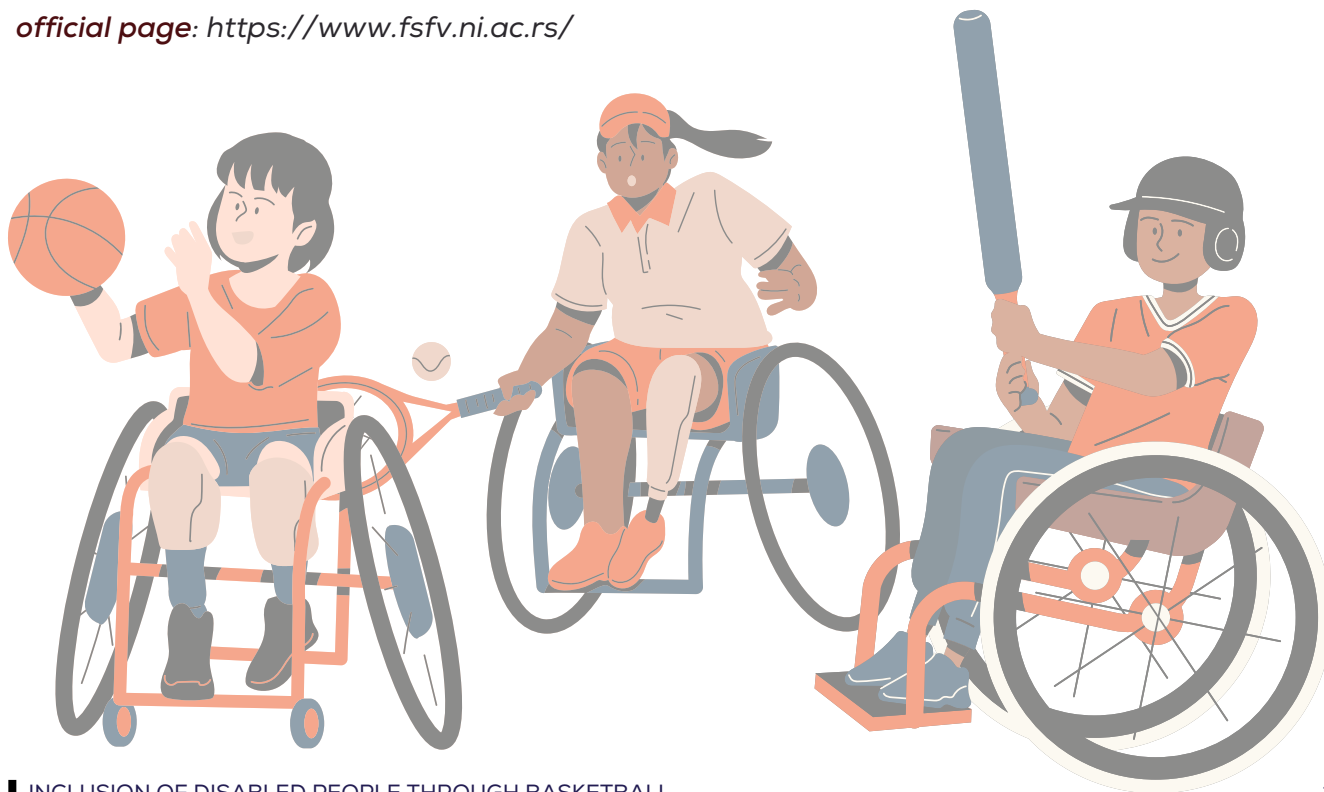
The Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Niš holds significant importance in the community, particularly regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities in sports and general life. By equipping students with knowledge, skills, and empathy, and by actively engaging with the community, the faculty contributes significantly to creating a more inclusive and accessible sporting environment for individuals with disabilities in Serbia.

Their program includes courses that cover adapted physical education, rehabilitation, and sports science specific to individuals with disabilities. By equipping students with specialized knowledge and expertise, it fosters the development of professionals who can effectively work with people with disabilities in sports and physical activities. Furthermore, the faculty conducts research into various aspects of disability sports, rehabilitation, and inclusion. Through research, they develop innovative approaches, technologies, and strategies to enhance the participation and performance of people with disabilities in sports. These findings not only benefit the academic community but also have practical applications that can improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities in the community.

Moreover, as a leading institution in the field of sports and physical education, the faculty has the platform and influence to advocate for policies and practices that promote the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities. Through advocacy efforts, they successfully influence decision-makers at local, regional, and national levels to prioritize inclusive policies, allocate resources for disability sports programs, and improve accessibility in sports facilities and infrastructure.

Finally, through its faculty members, students, and alumni, the Faculty serves as a role model for inclusivity and diversity in the community. By promoting values of respect, acceptance, and equality, they inspire others to embrace inclusivity in sports and general life.

official page: <https://www.fsvv.ni.ac.rs/>



GOOD PRACTICES

In the following section, we will highlight some existing good practices for the inclusion of people with disabilities in sports. These practices represent successful strategies, programs, and initiatives that various organizations, communities, and stakeholders implement to promote accessibility, participation, and empowerment in sports for individuals with disabilities. Each one of them demonstrates the power of collaboration, innovation, and commitment to advancing the inclusion of people with disabilities in sports. Those programs offer a wide range of adaptive sports and activities tailored to the needs and abilities of individuals with disabilities.

THE PLAY'IN TOGETHER PROGRAMME

Led by PLAY International, this project involves training educators and facilitators to improve inclusion through sports, particularly aiming to change perceptions about disabilities and creating mixed sports opportunities for children with and without disabilities. The project is articulated around 3 phases:

- A first phase focused on changing mindset on disabilities (with non-disabled children) during which the objective was to train facilitators and teachers in sessions of socio-sports activities designed to bring about a change in the perception of disabilities, and thus generate more inclusive behaviours.
- A second phase (currently in progress) aimed at encouraging children with disabilities to feel legitimate to practice sport and to make them aware of their potential. Educators from specialized institutions are targeted during this phase.
- A last phase focused on inclusion by creating opportunities for mixed sports games between children without and with disabilities.

A good practice that emerges first from this project is due to its nature since it is a project carried by a consortium of stakeholders from different sectors, associated here in a logic of complementarity.

source: <https://www.play-international.org/en/>

WOUNDED SOLDIERS PROJECT

The Wounded Soldiers Project is aimed at physically wounded soldiers, making them understand and experience their “new” body in order to be, and by being, active. The soldiers are trained and motivated by specific sport consultants on an individual level in order to understand that their limits have not been (re)moved – they just need to apply a new approach to reach them.

The concept of the project is based on close co-operation between the Danish Sports Organisation for the Disabled and the Danish Army, and combines pedagogical, psychological and physiological knowledge with resources from sport clubs. Activities for the current 34 soldiers include rowing, wheelchair basketball, archery, running, cycling, track and field, motor racing, triathlon and mixed martial arts.

They can be done during or after work at the local sports club, at schools or at the local military facilities. Both the soldiers and the sports club representatives are permanently accompanied by specific key contact persons (coach and physiotherapist).official page:

source: *Disability sport in Europe, 3rd edition of Handbook of good practices*

EQUIP FOR EQUALITY IN PRACTICE

This initiative, supported by the European Sports NGO, focuses on equality and inclusion in sports. It collaborates with various sports federations and organizations to promote inclusive sports practices across Europe.

EQUIP and its experts have gathered the most highly regarded practices and policies on various equality themes. Whilst the content of this Index is heavily influenced by the composition of the contributors and by the project group, it has been conceived to bring useful inspiration for sport organisations and policy makers to continue working on equality in sport. With a general overview of the existing tools, policies, practices, and processes to address inequalities in sport, the EQUIP project developed a project methodology to equip the sport federations and sport clubs with the organisational capacity and support to be able to use the existing tools and practices in real time with their stakeholders and communities. The key component to the proposed methodology was the role of the umbrella or coach organisations to not only coach and mentor the sport organisations and federations but also to find ways to bring them together to form local and regional networks of equality within sport practitioners, advocates, and organisations.

source: <https://www.engso-education.eu/projects/equip/>

KA205: ANOTHER WAY – A DIFFERENT PROJECT FOR INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Erasmus+ KA205 Strategic Partnership for youth called "ANOTHER WAY" - Creating touristic nature and other paths for people with vision disability. Under the work done within the project, ACPELIA, together with partners, created a handbook of different methods for touristic routes in 4 countries to be accessible to people with vision disability. Throughout the project, the Italian, Bulgarian, Spanish, and Cypriot staff - trainers, coaches, and participants - have worked with commitment and passion. They have discussed with each other to choose the best solutions for the correct use of the territory. They have designed texts, defined sensory performances, and selected useful tools to build the itineraries. The project achieved the three planned intellectual outputs:

- A training course on the "Peraltravia-Another way" method and transnational learning in Italy
- 12 itineraries built using the "Peraltravia-Another way" methodological approach
- Validation of the method and handbook

The implementation of the activities also allowed the activation and consolidation of further synergies with public bodies and associations active in the field of disability and social inclusion, and fostered development of networks fundamental to building a Europe of peoples in line with the principles of the program.

DISCOVER EU FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

DiscoverEU is an action of the Erasmus+ programme. It gives 18-year-olds from all backgrounds the opportunity to travel across Europe, learn from other cultures, build new friendships with fellow Europeans, and explore their European identity. To be eligible, young people must be EU citizens or legal residents of the EU, as an 18-year-old resident of the European Union or of one of the third countries associated with the Erasmus+ Programme like Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey. DiscoverEU allows you to participate in a travel experience that will enable you to explore Europe's diversity, learn about its cultural heritage and history, and connect with people from all over the continent. Furthermore, DiscoverEU enables young person to develop life skills of value to their future, such as independence, confidence, and openness to other cultures. Selected participants receive a DiscoverEU European Youth Card that allows them to have discounts on cultural visits, learning activities, sports, local transportation, accommodation, food, etc. More than 1 million youngsters have applied for the 248,000 travel passes available over eight application rounds in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023 to give a perspective of how many young people are interested in this possibility. Until recently, young people with various obstacles and disabilities couldn't participate. However, in October 2022, the first Call of DiscoverEU which was more inclusive and allowed 18-year-old youngsters to travel in groups with a leader and even with their assistants or family members. With the framework of this program, a lot of young people with disabilities can now take part in the program and discover Europe, having a chance that they never had before.

source: https://youth.europa.eu/discovereu/faq_en

BOYS MOVE

Boys Move is a professional development programme designed to equip educators with the principles of how to use sport and play to address the mental health and behaviour issues of adolescent boys, improve their wellbeing, and engage them with school. Focused on improving the participation of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in physical education and school sports, this program addresses the declining activity levels of disabled children as they age.

The vision of the programme is to support working class boys to increase their physical activity, improve their mental health and wellbeing and unlock their potential. It offers various resources and toolkits to make sports more accessible and inclusive. The aim of the project was to equip the boys with the tools to manage their emotions inside and outside school through understanding how they reacted in different situations and developing mechanisms to display positive reactions. This was done through practical and classroom based activities.

source: <https://youthsporttrust.org>

THE SPORT THERAPY CENTER FOR DISABLED PERSONS

The Center launched in 2013 by Climb Again Association, is an example of how sports can be adapted for people with disability and raise their social inclusion. Climb Again Association is a non-governmental organization affiliated with the Romanian Federation of Mountaineering and Climbing (FRAE), founded and led by Claudiu Miu, former Balkan climbing champion. Since 2014, Climb Again has organized free climbing therapy sessions and psycho-emotional and kineto-therapeutic support for children and young people with disabilities: visual impairment, hearing impairment, neuromotor impairment, and associated impairments. Climb Again is also the coordinator of the Romanian Paraclimbing Team.

The Sports Therapy and Paralympic Training Centre is a therapeutic and sports space for different types of disabilities and will be accessible with visual or auditory cues for deaf, blind, or visually impaired children, with multi-functional and multi-sensory play and recovery surfaces designed according to the sports therapy scheme and easy access routes. Among the attractions provided at the Climb Again Centre are adventure trails for children and young people with disabilities, including wheelchair-accessible zip lines, rock climbing, glamping, kayaking, tandem and single handbike trails, table tennis, field tennis, ball sports, martial arts.

Furthermore, the Center hosts camps with Paralympic athletes in several disciplines: climbing, table tennis, field tennis, archery, and athletics. The Center has a total area of 5 hectares, a play and sports area of 5,000 square meters, and is dedicated to children and young people with special needs from all over the country and the local community.

The beneficiaries of this initiative have reconfigured their lifestyles and achieved things that seemed impossible, whether we're talking about those who feel ready to find a job, blind young people who have overcome their embarrassment about going out in public with a walking stick, or those who are now performing in national and international para-climbing competitions.

ERASMUS+ PROJECT "INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY"

Outward Bound Romania is a non-profit organization specializing in outdoor activities (education and recreation). Since its foundation, Outward Bound Romania has been running quality programmes, especially for young people. They have implemented a 10-day program dedicated to ordinary young people, young people with fewer opportunities, and young people with mild physical disabilities, focusing on inclusion and diversity. The programme promoted a friendly connection between participants from diverse backgrounds, instructors, and the world around them.

The project focuses on specific goals:

Supporting the inclusion of young people with disabilities and those with fewer opportunities through live-learn-act-develop together in a large and diverse group.

- to raise young people's awareness of the issue of diversity and inclusion.
- to increase interpersonal links and encourage social inclusion of young people among 28 young people from 5 European countries in different areas (rural and urban).

THESSALONIKI NIGHT MARATHON

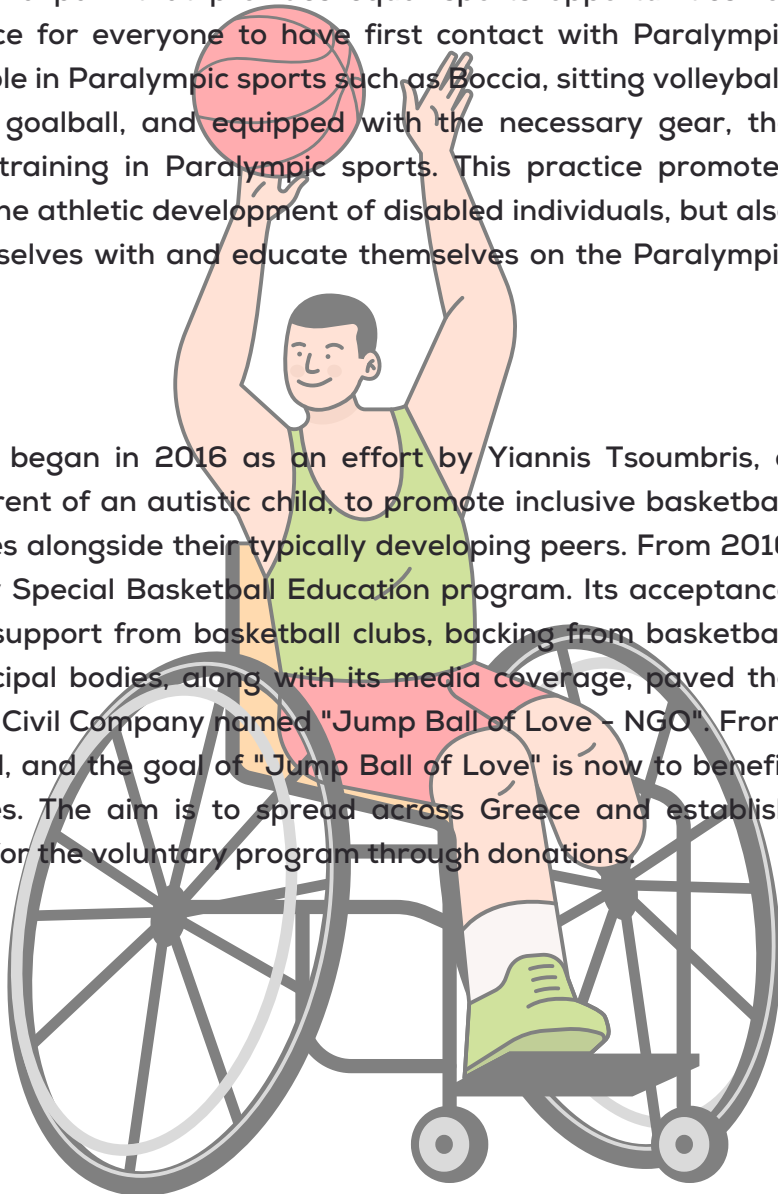
Every year, the Night Marathon and Half Marathon take place in Thessaloniki, providing an opportunity for everyone, disabled and non-disabled alike, to participate equally in a fully accessible marathon. The goal for all is to finish, enjoy, socialize, and engage in sports. PERPATO Association participates in this race with wheelchairs, handbikes, and electric wheelchairs encouraging every disabled individual to participate accordingly. This serves as a good practice for the social inclusion of disabled people by engaging in social activity and raises public awareness to get to know and understand that disabled people can participate equally.

PARALYMPIC PARK

After being granted the outdoor fields of the Municipality's Sports Center in Komotini, the PERPATO Association has created a park that provides equal sports opportunities for everyone. This park offers a chance for everyone to have first contact with Paralympic sports. With staff fully knowledgeable in Paralympic sports such as Boccia, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, rugby, and goalball, and equipped with the necessary gear, the association provides schools with training in Paralympic sports. This practice promotes Paralympic sports, contributing to the athletic development of disabled individuals, but also allows students to familiarize themselves with and educate themselves on the Paralympic Movement.

"JUMP BALL OF LOVE"

The "Jump Ball of Love" initiative began in 2016 as an effort by Yiannis Tsoumbiris, a Physical Education teacher and parent of an autistic child, to promote inclusive basketball activities for children with disabilities alongside their typically developing peers. From 2016 to 2019, it evolved into a voluntary Special Basketball Education program. Its acceptance by the children and their families, support from basketball clubs, backing from basketball personalities, educators, and municipal bodies, along with its media coverage, paved the way for establishing the Non-Profit Civil Company named "Jump Ball of Love - NGO". From 2023 to 2024, the effort expanded, and the goal of "Jump Ball of Love" is now to benefit even more children with disabilities. The aim is to spread across Greece and establish partnerships and financial support for the voluntary program through donations.





THE POWER OF THE

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Wheelchair basketball's origins trace back to post-World War II rehabilitation efforts. Dr. Ludwig Guttmann, a German-born British neurologist, organized wheelchair sports, including basketball, as part of the rehabilitation program for veterans with spinal cord injuries at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in England.

These early initiatives aimed to improve physical fitness, motor skills, and psychological well-being among individuals with disabilities. Over time, wheelchair basketball evolved from a therapeutic activity to a competitive sport, gaining recognition for its ability to empower individuals with disabilities and showcase their athleticism internationally.

Since its inception, wheelchair basketball has experienced exponential growth, spreading to more than 80 countries worldwide and captivating audiences with its compelling blend of athleticism and excitement. The establishment of the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) in 1993 further solidified the sport's governance and provided a platform for international cooperation and development.



HOW DIFFERENT IS A WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Wheelchair basketball, much like its traditional counterpart, embodies the essence of teamwork, skill, and competition. Each team comprises five players on the court, with seven substitutes available for strategic rotations during breaks in the game. The objective remains simple yet exhilarating: to outscore the opposing team by successfully shooting the ball into their basket while defending against their offensive maneuvers.

Despite minimal differences in rules and equipment compared to able-bodied basketball, the use of wheelchairs fundamentally alters the dynamics of the game, requiring athletes to master the intricacies of maneuvering their chairs with precision and agility. Wheelchair basketball welcomes participants with a range of mobility impairments, including spinal cord injuries, amputations, cerebral palsy, and other conditions, fostering inclusivity and diversity within its ranks. It provides a distinctive chance for wheelchair users to compete in a team sport and showcase their skills and athleticism on the court. With its high-energy gameplay and inclusive nature, wheelchair basketball has gained popularity worldwide and has become a symbol of the power of sports to unite people.



SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Players in wheelchair basketball are classified based on their functional ability to play the sport, ranging from 1.0 (most impaired) to 4.5 points (least impaired). The classification system ensures fairness and equal competition by grouping players with similar levels of impairment on the court at any given time.

The equipment used in wheelchair basketball besides regular ball (similar to those used in able-bodied basketball, with specifications for size, weight, and inflation) also includes a specific wheelchair. Custom-built wheelchairs designed specifically for the sport, featuring additional support, stability, and maneuverability. Wheelchairs are tailored to meet the individual needs and preferences of each player.

Wheelchair basketball promotes inclusion, diversity, and empowerment by providing individuals with physical disabilities the opportunity to participate in a challenging and competitive team sport. Beyond the physical benefits of exercise and athleticism, wheelchair basketball fosters social connections, teamwork, and personal development, empowering individuals to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential. The sport also raises awareness about disability rights, accessibility, and the importance of inclusive sports programs in promoting equality and social integration within communities.

BENEFITS IN THE REALM OF INCLUSION

Wheelchair basketball offers many benefits for social inclusion, especially for individuals with disabilities. This sport is a powerful tool for promoting inclusion, enhancing physical health, and fostering community bonds.



Wheelchair basketball is played by individuals with some form of physical disability, making the sport an important promoter of accessibility and equality. By adapting the traditional basketball rules, the sport demonstrates that participation in competitive and recreational sports can be inclusive of all ability levels.



Participation in wheelchair basketball provides significant health benefits. Regular physical activity improves cardiovascular health, increases strength and endurance, and helps manage weight. For individuals with disabilities, these health benefits are crucial as they often face higher risks of health issues related to sedentary lifestyles. Engaging in sports like wheelchair basketball helps mitigate these risks and promotes a healthier lifestyle.



Wheelchair basketball also offers mental and emotional benefits. It can improve self-esteem, reduce depression, and increase overall life satisfaction. Further, the competitive nature of the sport can provide a sense of achievement, while the team dynamics offer support and connections that are essential for emotional health.



Team sports provide a social framework where individuals can meet others with similar experiences and challenges, which fosters a sense of belonging and community. Team sports are particularly effective in building strong interpersonal relationships and social networks. These connections can extend beyond the sports environment, helping individuals integrate more fully into various social settings.



Wheelchair basketball plays a significant role in breaking down barriers and misconceptions about individuals with disabilities. By showcasing the athletic abilities of its participants, the sport challenges common stereotypes that often characterize disabled individuals as dependent or incapable. Therefore, their visibility through sport helps challenge societal perceptions of disability and encourages a more inclusive approach to all community activities.



Finally, wheelchair basketball events often draw attention from the broader community, media, and policymakers. This visibility is crucial for advocacy efforts related to disability rights, opportunities, and accessibility. It helps raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and the potential for sports to push social change.

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL IN PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL IN CYPRUS

In Cyprus, wheelchair basketball is emerging as a powerful tool for social inclusion and empowering individuals with disabilities. Through the collaborative efforts of organizations, educational institutions, and government entities, this sport is not just about competition; it's a beacon for change, challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive society.

Active Planet organizes wheelchair basketball camps in Limassol, offering a comprehensive program that includes physical rehabilitation, psychological support, full-board accommodation, and additional services such as professional sports massage, manual therapy, and rehabilitation gymnastics. These camps cater to professional paralympic athletes and enthusiasts of all ages with varying degrees of injuries and restrictions. The initiative is supported by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Cyprus, emphasizing the government's commitment to promoting sports tourism and inclusivity through financial grants for teams and clubs participating in these camps.

The University of Nicosia has also played a role in promoting wheelchair basketball by hosting exhibition games, which not only showcase the sport but also foster a sense of community and awareness about people with disabilities. These events are significant as they provide a platform for interaction, learning, and the breaking down barriers, contributing to the broader educational and social inclusion goals.

Another huge event in Cyprus about wheelchair basketball was 3on3. 3on3 Cyprus LTD held a corporate games tournament during OPAP Cyprus 3x3 competitions with the main goal of raising funds for the Cypriot Wheelchair Basketball Clubs. The Access4All Festival in Limassol has successfully achieved its aim of improving the accessibility and integration of disabled people in the city's social, economic, and cultural life. Through collaborative efforts with various primary schools, the festival has effectively educated the youth and introduced the sport of 3x3 basketball to teachers and the educational system. This initiative has played a crucial role in fostering the growth of 3x3 basketball and maximizing its potential in Cyprus.

The involvement of public figures and institutions in Cyprus further illustrates the country's commitment to promoting wheelchair basketball. For instance, the Education Minister participated in a wheelchair basketball game with students. This act underscores the importance of integrating sports into educational settings to create awareness and foster inclusivity.

Participation in wheelchair basketball indicates a growing interest and infrastructure for the sport within the country. For Cyprus to further enhance its standing in wheelchair basketball, a continued focus on grassroots development, increased public awareness campaigns, and providing more facilities and opportunities for participation at all levels are essential.



WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL IN GREECE

The sport of wheelchair basketball was first played in Greece in 1988 between the athletes of two clubs during the 1st Greek Championship for People with Disabilities in Athens.

In this historic meeting, on July 2nd, 1994, on the initiative of people who loved wheelchair basketball, a Federation was born to organize the sport nationwide. About a year later, on May 5th, 1995, at a meeting of the representatives of the 8 clubs that existed all over Greece and with the support of all the Wheelchair basketball players, a complete statute was written to best describe the goals of the Hellenic Wheelchair Basketball Federation (Hwbf).

The Hellenic Wheelchair Basketball Federation is a member of the Hellenic Paralympic Committee and the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF), which is a member of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA). Specifically, the Federation belongs to the European Zone of the IWBF, which means that the distinguished Greek teams in the championship and in the cup, as well as the National team, participate in respective European institutions.

Hellenic Wheelchair Basketball Federation (HWBF) since 1995 has organized 23 Panhellenic Championships and 22 Panhellenic Cups. The HWBF force includes 18 teams that extend throughout Greece, from Komotini to Crete, which participate in the national championships of the A1 national category (6 teams) and the A2 national category (12 teams), organized by HWBF, as well as in the Panhellenic Cup. The total number of athletes in the teams is 272.

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL IN ROMANIA

In the 1990s, sports began to gain popularity, so the Romanian Federation of Sport for People with Disabilities was established. Sports organizations, clubs, and associations for people with disabilities were involved in promoting and developing this sport in Romania. Wheelchair basketball is a well-developed and practiced sport in Romania, offering people with disabilities the opportunity to get involved in sport and to develop physically and socially through this sport.

Today, there are many wheelchair basketball clubs and teams across the country, and the sport has competitions and championships. These clubs have become centers for developing the sport and providing training and competitive opportunities for players. Romanian wheelchair basketball players have also represented the country in international competitions and achieved notable results. Romania has participated in international wheelchair basketball competitions such as the European Championships and the World Championships. The international successes have helped to promote the sport and increase interest among players and local communities. Wheelchair basketball players from Romania had the opportunity to represent the country at the Paralympic Games, which increased the sport's visibility and motivated new young people to get involved.

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL IN SERBIA

The Association of Wheelchair Basketball Players of Serbia was founded on July 21, 2004, as an association of clubs of wheelchair basketball players in Serbia. Its purpose is to organize basketball sports and realize special and common interests and needs in the field of wheelchair basketball. The Association was founded by the union of seven clubs and now has four clubs. It is a national civic sports association, the only one competent to organize and regulate wheelchair basketball for men and women in the Republic of Serbia. In achieving its goals and tasks and performing sports activities, the Association independently arranges its internal organization and work, develops the program of organizational and sports activities, organizes sports competitions, and creates other goals and tasks in accordance with its general acts.

One of the biggest successes of the Association is the silver medal at the European Championship of the C division in 2019 in Sofia. In 2021, the Serbian national team participated for the first time in the European Championship of the B division and took 7th place, while in 2022, the European Championship of the B and C divisions was organized in the Balkans division from the Serbian national team and where the competition was held in Sarajevo, it won the gold medal as the first C Division. Today, Serbia has 10 wheelchair basketball clubs, which compete in different ranks. In addition to the domestic league, these clubs also participate in the Adriatic and Balkan leagues.





TRAINING COURSE ON THE

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

TRAINING COURSE BACKGROUND

Research findings and the state of wheelchair basketball in participating countries formed the decision to organize a training course on wheelchair basketball. The questionnaire conducted as part of the project revealed critical insights into the current state of sports participation among individuals with disabilities, highlighting low participation levels and significant barriers. Despite the recognized benefits of physical activities, including positive impacts on health and well-being, there are challenges such as insufficient financial support, infrastructural limitations, and a lack of trained coaches and instructors. Additionally, societal attitudes towards disabled athletes vary, with a need for improved support and recognition, as well as enhanced public awareness of disability sports.

On the other hand, the presence of local initiatives and collaborative efforts in countries like Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia further emphasized the importance and potential of wheelchair basketball. Activities such as wheelchair basketball camps, exhibition games, corporate tournaments, and the involvement of public figures and institutions highlight a growing interest in and infrastructure for the sport. These initiatives promote sports' inclusion and contribute to broader social and educational goals, fostering awareness, breaking down barriers, and enhancing community integration. Still, despite the progress made in promoting wheelchair basketball, there is a recognition of the need for continued efforts in grassroots development, public awareness campaigns, and provision of facilities and opportunities at all levels.



TRAINING CONTENT

- Special wheelchairs for players
- Basketball court (regular size)
- Basketballs
- Spare tires and tubes for wheelchairs
- Wheelchair basketball expert (coach)
- Cone
- Ball storage rack
- Ramp for user wheelchair
- Participation certificates

EQUIPMENT

- Straps for secure attachment of athletes to the wheelchair
- 2 hoops
- Separating jerseys
- Tools for fixing wheelchairs
- Referee
- Whistles
- Translator
- Transfer boards for safe and easy transfer from wheelchair

DAY 1

During the first afternoon session, we started with a presentation of the hosting organization, the sports club Irodikos. The participants were informed about the main functions of the club, the team history, and the future goals. We continued the session with an ice-breaker where participants split into two groups and were handed out paper cards and pens. Then, we instructed them to write down three main characteristics that represent them as people. After gathering all the cards, we shuffled them and handed them out again to all the participants so they could identify which person wrote each card. When everyone was identified, each participant was given a minute to talk about themselves and to give some information about their lives. Within the same framework, the president of PERPATO, Alexandros Taxildaris, welcomed the participants, briefly introduced the project, and explained the following week. To end the day, participants had the opportunity to explore the town's landmarks through a city tour on their way to dinner.



Before we began training to develop our wheelchair basketball skills, we discussed the rules of the sport we would play, what referees are obligated to do, and how to deal with them. All players from different countries and clubs gathered for a presentation to prepare them theoretically for wheelchair basketball. Next, we talked about the classification that each player receives. Classification represents the disability level of each athlete. During games, teams are required not to exceed the classification limit set by the organization for all players (Greece 14.5/international 14.0). Classification is a tool used to balance the teams and make the game fairer. For the morning session, our athletes were trained in wheelchair handling to get acquainted with it before hitting the court. This also gave them basic knowledge that would be useful either as wheelchair users in their daily lives or as non-users learning to assist people with disabilities when needed.



After the athletes were ready to enter the court, the first training session on the court was held in the afternoon. Initially, there was an introduction to the wheelchairs and the players. With the help of the coach and assistants, each found a wheelchair that suited them and learned to secure themselves in it, following the rules and safety measures. Then, some exercises without the ball were conducted to help players learn to move around and control the wheelchair. Once everyone showed understanding, we moved on to screens. The screen is the most important "weapon" a team can have against its opponent, making it easier to free players and attack the opponent's basket. After finishing the screen exercises, the training continued with free throws from all positions, allowing players to have their first contact with the basket and adding a bit of competition to the training. At the end of the first day, the coach divided the players into two groups. The first group consisted of beginners who had just started playing, and the second group consisted of advanced players who were already playing for a club. This division aimed to smoothly continue the training so that all players could meet its demands. To wrap up the day, the defensive tactics of a game were discussed, presenting various systems for the players to implement, both beginners and advanced.

DAY 3

After the players had their breakfast, they headed to the court, and the training began with warm-up exercises and dynamic movements with the wheelchair. After completing the warm-up, the players were divided into the same groups as yesterday, and training continued with dribbling, technique, strength, and speed exercises on both individual and team levels. The players started to cooperate more with each other and showed significant improvement in their skills. The morning training concluded with static stretches and relaxation exercises for all players to facilitate better and faster recovery. After lunch and some rest, it was time for the afternoon training session. Divided into the same groups as before, the players started with a theoretical part, focusing on offensive tactics and presenting various offensive systems. Then, the players were called to execute the learned systems, starting without defense and then facing defense to make the game conditions even more demanding and competitive. The training ended with a competitive game where the players were divided into two teams to close the session on a more enjoyable note. Everyone seemed to enjoy it, and the players performed static stretches on the court under the coach's and trainer's guidance. As the last activity of the day, the players learned how to maintain and clean their wheelchairs themselves, which is essential over time because, as the program's coach mentioned, "The wheelchair is an extension of our body."



After their breakfast, the players headed to the court. An indoor tournament among the players was scheduled on the last day of the program's training. The teams were divided equally but also mixed to ensure fair play and for the players to learn how to cooperate regardless of origin and friendship. The morning session included games in groups, and the evening part consisted of the tournament finals. Finally, a medal and certificate ceremony was held for all our athletes, and commemorative photos were taken with all the players gathered together like a fist. An unforgettable experience for everyone.



DAY 5

The last day of the project included a free day for the participants to hang out at the association and explore the city and the local culture. In the afternoon, we had our culture night, where all the countries brought traditional delicacies and drinks from their home, music from all over Europe, and some amazing traditional outfits. It was an amazing ending to the project.





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

ENHANCING INCLUSIVITY

BACKGROUND



In this section, we present a comprehensive set of guidelines derived from insightful discussions with professionals deeply engaged in the field of disability sports and inclusion. Through collaborative efforts and firsthand experiences, these professionals have provided invaluable insights into the challenges, opportunities, and best practices for fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment in sports and physical activities. The recommendations outlined are designed to serve as a roadmap for authorities at all levels, from local municipalities to national governing bodies, seeking to enhance the participation and accessibility of people with disabilities in sport. Each recommendation is carefully crafted to address key areas of concern identified through research and consultation with experts in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The recommendation to prioritize accessible infrastructure in our society stems from the understanding that physical barriers often prevent individuals with disabilities from fully participating in sports and recreational activities. By implementing features such as ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms, the public facilities become inclusive, ensuring that everyone can navigate the space independently, regardless of their mobility impairments. This promotes inclusivity and demonstrates a commitment to accessibility, setting a precedent for other public spaces. The potential impact includes increased participation from individuals with disabilities, improved overall accessibility awareness, and the creation of a more welcoming and equitable environment. Also, organizations involved in disability issues need to have a good and close relationship with the local government so that together, they can strive for each city to be accessible.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATIONS

By supporting and facilitating awareness campaigns, authorities will create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone wanting to participate in various sports. These awareness campaigns can take numerous forms, from multimedia advertisements to community events and educational workshops. Furthermore, these campaigns will help people with disabilities to get informed about valuable information regarding adaptive sports programs, accessibility initiatives, and resources available for them. The campaigns can take various forms, from multimedia advertisements to community events and educational workshops. By disseminating and promoting the opportunities and the support systems that exist in the community, authorities will empower people to overcome their fears and pursue their passion in sports. Also, this will address common misconceptions surrounding disability and sports.

Moreover, establishing partnerships, participating in the Erasmus programme, socializing through media, and actively engaging with the local community are essential for the success and sustainability of the inclusion of disabled people. This recommendation recognizes that community involvement fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, leading to greater support and investment in the issue of disabled people. By collaborating with local businesses, schools, disability advocacy groups, and government agencies, disabled people can leverage resources, expertise, and networks to enhance their impact and reach. Community engagement initiatives such as volunteer programs, outreach events, and community forums facilitate meaningful interactions between people and the broader community. This strengthens relationships and promotes understanding, empathy, and solidarity, creating a more inclusive and supportive community system for individuals with disabilities.



FORMING A PANEL OF EXPERTS WORKING ON THE TOPICS

Forming an experts panel comprising individuals from diverse backgrounds, including disability advocates, sports professionals, community leaders, and policymakers can greatly enhance inclusion and equity in sports. This panel should be tasked with developing guidelines, advising on policy, and overseeing the implementation of initiatives aimed at promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in local sports programs. The panel can serve as a crucial resource for assessing current barriers in sports participation faced by people with disabilities, developing comprehensive strategies that address these barriers and fostering collaboration among local governments, sports clubs, educational institutions, and disability organizations to create a unified approach to inclusion. However, it is crucial to provide them with a consistent flow of project communications as well as clear opportunities for engagement and significant contributions.

With expert recommendations, sports facilities and programs can be adapted to meet a wide range of needs, ensuring that more individuals with disabilities can participate comfortably and safely. Consequently, as barriers are removed and inclusivity increases, more people with disabilities are likely to engage in sports, improving both community integration and individual health outcomes. Over time, the panel's influence can help shift cultural perceptions about disabilities in sports, highlighting the capabilities of all athletes and fostering a more inclusive sports culture.

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH AND FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Organizations dedicated to serving people with disabilities often operate in isolation, with limited resources and minimal interaction with similar entities. By supporting the development of a network among these organizations, local authorities can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and unified advocacy efforts. A network allows organizations to share best practices, innovative approaches, and strategies for overcoming common challenges in promoting inclusivity in sports. Furthermore, organizations can combine resources to fund and acquire adaptive sports equipment, train staff, and sponsor events, making such activities more feasible and sustainable.

The establishment of such a network can lead to several positive outcomes. First of all, as organizations share insights and resources, the quality and variety of sports programs available to people with disabilities are likely to improve, catering to a wider range of interests and needs. With better resources and more engaging programs, more individuals with disabilities might be motivated to participate in sports, leading to improved physical and mental health outcomes. Moreover, a network of organizations working effectively can help bridge gaps between disabled and non-disabled communities, fostering a more inclusive society.

EQUIPPING UMBRELLA SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE TOOLS, COMPETENCES, AND CAPACITIES TO TAKE ON COACHING ROLES

Umbrella organizations, which oversee various sports and recreation activities within communities, often lack specific resources and expertise needed to cater to individuals with disabilities. This initiative should include specialized training programs for coaching, adaptive sports equipment, and resources to enhance organizational capacities to manage and sustain inclusive sports programs. Utilizing existing organizations conserves resources and utilizes established networks to spread inclusivity more efficiently. Further, strengthening the capacity of these organizations promotes long-term sustainability of inclusive programs, as they are integrated into the community's regular sports offerings.

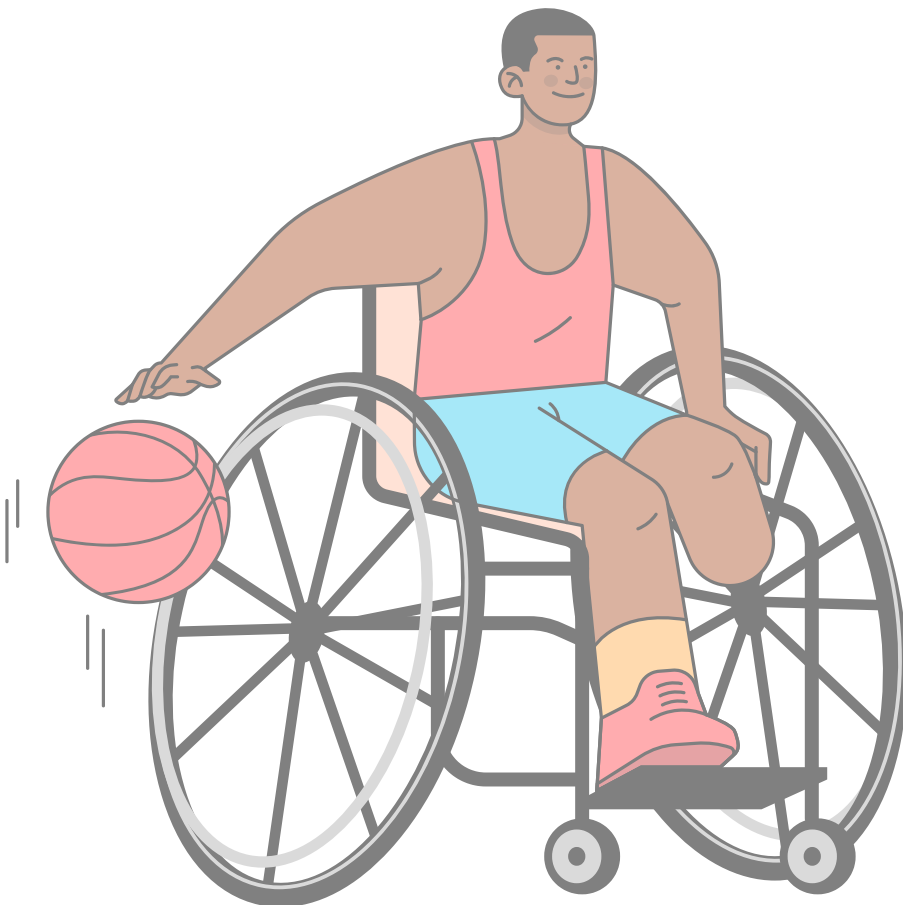
With proper training and resources, coaches from umbrella organizations can offer more inclusive programs, attracting a broader range of participants, including those with disabilities. By involving local organizations in promoting disability sports, the entire community becomes more aware of and sensitive to the needs and capabilities of people with disabilities, fostering a more inclusive society. Furthermore, accessible sports programs ensure that sports benefits, including physical fitness, mental health, and social connections are available to all members of the community.



ENCOURAGE NETWORKING BETWEEN ATHLETES WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

Another recommendation is for the authorities to provide networking opportunities for athletes both with and without disability to enhance inclusivity in the community. In order to achieve this, the authorities should organize inclusive sporting events, workshops, and training camps that bring athletes of all abilities together. These events provide opportunities for athletes to interact, share experiences, and learn from one another, fostering mutual respect and understanding. By facilitating networking opportunities in a supportive and inclusive environment, authorities can break down barriers and promote collaboration among athletes from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, studies show that people tend to enjoy interaction with people with similar backgrounds and experiences, and they will remain more engaged in the sport when they feel connected and belonging to the community.

To achieve this, authorities should organize inclusive sporting events, workshops, and training camps that bring athletes of all abilities together. Authorities can collaborate with local organizations or associations that actively work with people with disabilities and encourage them to play sports. Another type of collaboration can be with a sports club that can provide the space and equipment necessary for the events.



CONCLUSION

Throughout the booklet, we emphasized the significant role that wheelchair basketball can play in the social inclusion of people with disabilities. We tried to underscore the benefits of engaging in sports, extending beyond physical health to mental well-being, self-esteem, and community connection. Wheelchair basketball, as highlighted throughout the booklet, not only offers a competitive and rehabilitative platform but also acts as a stimulus for societal change by enhancing visibility for athletes with disabilities and challenging prevailing stereotypes. The findings from various studies and projects within the project demonstrate a clear need for continued advocacy, better infrastructure, and more inclusive policies to fully harness the potential of sports like wheelchair basketball in fostering a more inclusive society. Therefore, we call for collaborative efforts among governments, organizations, and communities to ensure that sports remain a powerful tool for social inclusion and equality.