

İSTANBUL, TÜRKİYE

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Erasmus+

LET'S DISCOVER SUPPORTIVE WAY OF INTEGRATION!



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Part 1

Contents



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About Our Project



Our project focused on the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities through sport, aiming to create an accessible, empowering, and inclusive environment for everyone involved. Throughout the week, participants took part in a variety of sporting activities such as volleyball, basketball, archery, and especially canoeing, which was practiced almost every day as a core activity. The project brought together individuals with different types of disabilities and abilities, encouraging interaction, cooperation, and mutual understanding through shared physical experiences.

All activities were carefully adapted to suit different skill levels and specific needs, ensuring equal participation and safety for every participant. In line with European Union inclusion and diversity strategies, the project promoted equal opportunities, active participation, and respect for diversity. By using sport as a tool for social inclusion, the project not only strengthened physical well-being but also supported self-confidence, teamwork, and a sense of belonging among participants, reinforcing the idea that sport is for everyone.

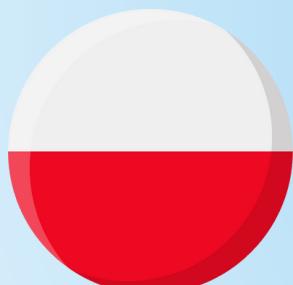
Our Partners



Beykoz Sports Volunteers



Asociatia Down Plus Bucuresti



**Specjalny Osrodek Szkolno
Wychowawczy Nr 1 dla Dzieci
Niepełnosprawnych Ruchowo w
Policach**



**Albatross Società Sportiva
Dilettantistica**



Para-fitt Sportegyesület



The project was implemented within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme, which aims to promote inclusion, diversity, and equal opportunities across Europe. By focusing on the active participation of individuals with disabilities, the project directly contributed to Erasmus+ priorities such as social inclusion, access to quality learning experiences, and participation in physical activities regardless of individual limitations. The programme provided an international and supportive learning environment where participants could share experiences, learn from one another, and develop key social and personal skills through sport.

Through Erasmus+, the project also strengthened cooperation between participants and organizations, encouraging the exchange of good practices in inclusive sports and non-formal education. The activities supported the Erasmus+ objectives of fostering solidarity, active citizenship, and European values, while empowering participants to overcome barriers and challenge stereotypes related to disability. Overall, the programme demonstrated how Erasmus+ can be an effective tool for creating inclusive spaces that promote participation, well-being, and mutual respect through sport.

European Week of Sport

The project was closely aligned with the European Week of Sport, an initiative of the European Union that promotes physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and participation in sport for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background. By actively involving individuals with disabilities in a wide range of adapted sports activities, the project supported the core message of the European Week of Sport: #BeActive. Throughout the week, sport was used as a powerful tool to break down barriers, encourage inclusion, and highlight the importance of equal access to physical activity.



In line with the values of the European Week of Sport, the project emphasized accessibility, diversity, and lifelong engagement in sport. Activities were designed to be inclusive and flexible, ensuring that participants of different abilities could take part safely and confidently. By promoting inclusive sport practices, the project contributed to raising awareness about the social value of sport and demonstrated how physical activity can strengthen social cohesion, well-being, and a sense of belonging within diverse communities.

EU Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The project was designed in line with the EU Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which aims to ensure equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and full participation for all individuals in society. By focusing on the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport, the project addressed key priorities of the strategy, such as accessibility, equality, and the removal of social and physical barriers. Bringing together participants with different types of disabilities created a safe and respectful environment where diversity was recognized as a strength rather than a limitation.

Through inclusive and adapted sports activities, the project promoted empowerment, mutual respect, and social cohesion. All activities were tailored to individual abilities, ensuring meaningful participation for everyone. In line with EU principles, the project encouraged active engagement, challenged stereotypes, and supported the right of every individual to access sport and physical activity. Overall, the project contributed to the EU's broader vision of an inclusive society where diversity is valued and inclusion is embedded in everyday practices.



Useful Links

Erasmus+ :

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu>

European Youth Portal :

https://youth.europa.eu/home_en

Salto-Youth :

<https://www.salto-youth.net>

Europass CV :

<https://europass.europa.eu/en>

Eurodesk :

<https://eurodesk.eu/>

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2030 :

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/2crnca2i/202412769_pdf_qc0124013enn_002.pdf

European Week of Sport :

<https://sport.ec.europa.eu/european-week-of-sport>



Part 2

Contents



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Understanding Special Needs

Understanding special needs is essential for building an inclusive and respectful society. A person with a special need may face certain challenges in daily life due to differences in their body, mind, or senses, which can affect how they communicate, move, learn, or interact with their environment. These challenges are not caused by the individual alone, but often by physical, social, or attitudinal barriers within society. When these barriers are removed, individuals with special needs can participate more fully and independently in everyday life.

Having a special need does not limit a person's value, dreams, or potential. Modern and inclusive approaches emphasize the importance of "people-first" language, such as saying "a person with a special need" rather than defining someone only by their condition. This approach highlights the individual before the disability and promotes dignity, respect, and equality. The overall goal is to create inclusive environments that offer equal opportunities, encourage participation, and recognize diversity as a strength. To better understand these needs and provide appropriate support, it is important to explore the different types of disabilities and how they may affect individuals in different ways.



Main Types of Special Needs

1. Physical Special Needs

Affect a person's movement or ability to use certain parts of their body.

Examples:

Spinal cord injuries
Cerebral palsy

Amputations or limited mobility

Tip: Accessibility tools like wheelchairs, ramps, and adaptive sports equipment make participation easier and more independent.

2. Sensory Special Needs

Involve differences in hearing, vision, or both.

Examples:

Blindness or low vision
Deafness or partial hearing loss

Tip: Sign language, Braille, captions, and assistive devices support full communication and learning.

3. Intellectual and Developmental Special Needs

Affect learning, problem-solving, or social understanding.

Examples:

Down syndrome
Autism spectrum condition

Learning differences such as dyslexia

Tip: Inclusive education, simple instructions, and patient guidance help young people thrive.

4. Psychosocial / Mental Health Special Needs

Relate to emotional well-being, mood, or behavior.

Examples:

Anxiety or depression
Stress-related challenges
Post-traumatic stress (PTSD)

Tip: Open conversations, understanding friends and families, and professional support help build confidence and resilience.



Challenges Faced by Individuals with Special Needs

1. Inequality and Limited Access to Education

- Many individuals with special needs face serious difficulties in accessing education.
- School buildings are not physically accessible (lack of ramps, elevators, visual-auditory aids),
- Insufficient specialist support in inclusive classrooms,
- Teachers have limited knowledge or experience in special education,
- Students face bullying or discrimination.
- According to UNESCO, school attendance rates for children with disabilities remain significantly lower than those of their peers.

2. Barriers to Participation in Sports and Physical Activity

- Barriers in sports environments are both physical and social:
- Sports facilities are not accessible,
- Coaches lack training in inclusive coaching,
- Equipment and spaces are not adapted to individual needs,
- Families are not fully informed about the benefits of sports,
- Negative stereotypes ("They can't do it") lead to exclusion or overprotection.
- As a result, participation rates in sports among individuals with disabilities remain low worldwide (Source: IPC – International Paralympic Committee).



3. Difficulties Accessing Health and Rehabilitation Services

- Individuals with special needs often struggle to access regular and adequate healthcare:
- Shortage of qualified specialists,
- Long waiting times for appointments,
- Limited physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and rehabilitation options,
- High costs and insufficient insurance coverage,
- Regional inequalities between urban and rural areas.
- WHO reports that those who need rehabilitation services the most are often those who access them the least.

Challenges Faced by Individuals with Special Needs

4. Social Exclusion and Discrimination

- Prejudices in society restrict the participation of individuals with special needs in social life.
- Invisible discrimination in employment,
- Exclusion in public spaces such as transport, cafés, or recreational areas,
- Pity-based attitudes,
- Lack of normalization of differences.
- These factors contribute to isolation, reduced self-esteem, and psychological difficulties.

5. Accessibility Issues in Transportation and the Built Environment

- Urban planning and buildings are still not fully inclusive:
- Inadequate ramps,
- Poorly designed sidewalks,
- Lack of auditory signals at crossings,
- Misuse of disabled parking spaces,
- Absence of wide doors, tactile surfaces, low steps, etc.
- These barriers directly affect independent living.

6. Digital Accessibility Gaps

- Many digital platforms remain inaccessible:
- Government, banking, and educational platforms incompatible with screen readers,
- Limited subtitles and sign-language support for the hearing impaired,
- Lack of simplified content for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- As digital transformation accelerates, this inequality becomes more visible.



Challenges Faced by Individuals with Special Needs

7. Family Burden and Lack of Support

Families of individuals with special needs often experience significant emotional, physical, and financial strain:

- Limited home-care services,
- Inadequate financial support,
- Caregiver burnout,
- Limited access to guidance and psychosocial services.

This affects the well-being of both the individual and the family.

8. Weak Implementation of a Rights-Based Approach

Although many countries have signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), challenges in implementation persist:

- Lack of recognition of rights violations,
- Limited data-driven policymaking,
- Insufficient representation of disabled individuals in decision-making processes,
- Policies focusing more on “care” rather than “participation and independent living.”

This keeps many individuals in a disadvantaged position.

9. Low Public Awareness and Knowledge

Myths and misinformation remain widespread:

- “Disability is a personal tragedy.”
- “Individuals with intellectual disabilities cannot learn.”
- “Disability sports are dangerous.”
- “Productivity is low in workplaces.”

Such misconceptions prevent participation even before it begins.

10. Lack of Inclusion in Sports and Youth Work

In youth centers, clubs, and youth projects, inclusion is often missing:

- Staff lack training in inclusive practices,
- Programs are not adapted for young people with special needs,
- Activities do not consider communication adjustments, pacing, materials, or safety needs.

This limits opportunities for socialization and personal development.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion

1. What is Diversity?

Diversity refers to the wide range of human differences that naturally exist within any group or community. It acknowledges that each person has unique characteristics, experiences, and identities.

These differences include:

a. Personal Attributes

- Age
- Gender and gender identity
- Individuals with special needs or different support requirements
- Cultural and ethnic background
- Languages spoken
- Religion or belief

b. Social and Economic Backgrounds

- Socioeconomic status
- Education background
- Urban–rural differences
- Migration status (for example, refugees or newcomers)

c. Cognitive and Learning Differences

- Multiple learning styles
- Neurodiverse profiles (e.g., individuals who think or learn differently)
- Talents, interests, and strengths

d. Physical and Mental Differences

- People who require mobility support
- People with visual or hearing support needs
- People who require emotional or mental well-being support

Diversity is not just the existence of differences—it is the understanding that these differences enrich a group and contribute to creativity, innovation, and collective strength.



Understanding Diversity and Inclusion

2. What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is the intentional effort to ensure that every person—regardless of their background, ability, or support needs—can participate fully, safely, and meaningfully. It means designing environments, attitudes, and systems that remove barriers. The key elements:

a. Accessibility

Making physical, digital, and social environments usable for everyone:

- Ramps, tactile surfaces, accessible restrooms
- Subtitles, sign-language interpretation
- Adapted or alternative sports equipment

b. Equal Participation

Everyone should have the right to:

- Join activities without barriers
- Contribute ideas
- Receive fair treatment
- Feel psychologically safe and supported

c. Respectful Communication

- Using language that respects each person's dignity
- Clear, supportive, culturally sensitive language

d. Adapted Practices

- Adjusting the pace of activities
- Offering visual instructions
- Simplifying rules when needed
- Providing extra processing time
- Using equipment that supports participation

e. Representation

Ensuring diversity is reflected in:

- Leadership positions
- Coaching teams
- Decision-making bodies



Understanding Diversity and Inclusion

3. Why Are Diversity and Inclusion Important?

a. Strengthening Participation

When young people feel included, they:

- Show greater motivation
- Develop higher self-confidence
- Build stronger teamwork and communication skills

b. Increasing Performance and Innovation

Research shows that diverse and inclusive groups make better decisions, solve problems faster, and create more innovative solutions.

c. Reducing Barriers and Exclusion

An inclusive culture helps prevent:

- Social isolation
- Negative labeling
- Bullying
- Exclusion due to differences

d. Supporting Human Rights

Inclusion is not optional—it is a fundamental human right emphasized in international youth strategies and equality frameworks.

e. Creating Fair Opportunities

Diversity acknowledges differences;

Inclusion ensures these differences do not limit anyone's potential.



Understanding Diversity and Inclusion



4. Diversity and Inclusion in Sports

Sports are one of the strongest tools to promote inclusion. When done correctly, they create:

a. Social Integration

Young people from different backgrounds train, learn, and play together.

b. Breaking Stereotypes

Seeing individuals with different abilities actively participate challenges societal prejudices.

c. Shared Values

Teamwork, effort, respect, and fair play provide a common foundation for everyone.

d. Adapted Sport Approaches

- Unified sports
- Inclusive fitness models
- Mixed-ability sport activities

These approaches allow individuals who need additional support and those who do not to participate together.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion

5. Putting Inclusion Into Practice: What Practitioners Do

a. Identify Barriers

- Is the venue physically accessible?
- Is information available in multiple formats?
-

b. Plan Adjustments

- Modify rules if necessary
- Use adapted equipment
- Provide resting periods
- Offer choices in activities

c. Encourage Peer Support

Pairing participants promotes cooperation, empathy, and mutual learning.

d. Build a Safe and Respectful Culture

Zero tolerance toward mockery, exclusion, or negative labeling.

e. Adopt an Inclusive Mindset

Ask:

“How can we adapt the activity to include this person?”

instead of

“Can this person fit our activity as it is?”



Is Sport Only a Physical Activity?

The question “Is sport only a physical activity?” invites deeper reflection on the true role of sport in the lives of young people, communities, and societies. Although sport is often associated with physical movement and competition, it is in fact a multi-dimensional experience that includes psychological, social, emotional, educational, and cultural aspects. This workshop encourages participants to explore these dimensions and to recognize sport as a powerful tool for inclusion, personal development, and community building.



At the physical level, sport improves strength, endurance, coordination, and overall health, while supporting lifelong well-being. Beyond fitness, sport plays a key role in psychological development by helping young people build self-discipline, resilience, confidence, and emotional regulation. Through training, teamwork, success, and failure, participants develop a growth mindset and learn how to manage stress and challenges in a supportive environment.



Sport also has strong social, educational, and cultural value. It fosters communication, cooperation, empathy, and leadership, while inclusive sport settings help break down stereotypes and strengthen social cohesion. As an educational tool, sport promotes critical thinking, responsibility, and experiential learning. At the societal level, it supports social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, gender equality, and shared values such as fair play, respect, and solidarity.

Rowing: A Sport of Strength, Rhythm and Teamwork

Rowing is a water sport where athletes move a boat using oars in a coordinated rhythm. It is known for combining physical power, mental focus, and strong teamwork. Rowing can be practiced individually or in teams and is considered one of the most effective full-body sports.



1. What Is Rowing?

Rowing involves moving a boat forward by pulling oars through the water in a repeated, synchronized motion. The goal is to maximize speed and efficiency while maintaining balance and rhythm. There are two main rowing disciplines:

- **Sculling:** Each athlete uses two oars, one in each hand. Common boat classes include single sculls (1x), double sculls (2x), and quadruple sculls (4x).
- **Sweep rowing:** Each athlete uses one oar, held with both hands. Boats in this discipline include pairs (2-), fours (4-), and eights (8+), with the eight often including a coxswain who steers the boat and motivates the crew.

Both disciplines require strong cooperation, technical skill, and trust among athletes, making rowing a sport that strongly emphasizes unity, communication, and shared responsibility.

Rowing: A Sport of Strength, Rhythm and Teamwork

2. Physical Benefits

Rowing is a full-body workout that engages nearly all major muscle groups, including the legs, core, back, shoulders, and arms. The repetitive and controlled movements help athletes build balanced strength while reducing excessive strain on the joints. Regular rowing training offers many physical benefits, such as:

- Increased muscular strength and endurance
- Improved posture, balance, and overall coordination
- Strong cardiovascular and respiratory health
- Effective calorie burning and weight management
- Enhanced flexibility and body awareness

Because rowing is low-impact, it is suitable for people of different fitness levels and can be adapted to individual needs.

3. Mental Benefits

Beyond its physical advantages, rowing strongly supports mental and emotional well-being. The need to maintain rhythm and timing enhances focus and concentration, while the repetitive motion can have a meditative effect. Mental benefits of rowing include:

- Improved focus, attention, and mental clarity
- Emotional regulation and effective stress relief
- Development of self-discipline, patience, and resilience
- A calming and grounding effect from being on the water and in nature

These mental benefits make rowing not only a sport, but also a powerful tool for improving overall well-being and inner balance.

Rowing: A Sport of Strength, Rhythm and Teamwork



4. Social and Educational Value

Rowing builds strong teamwork and communication skills. Every movement depends on trust and cooperation, making it a powerful tool for social connection and youth development.

5. Inclusion and Adapted Rowing

Rowing can be adapted for individuals with additional support needs:

- Special seating for balance support
- Visual or verbal guidance systems
- Simplified instructions
- Adjusted pace or roles within a team

Many countries offer inclusive rowing programmes to ensure everyone can participate.

6. Where Is It Practiced?

Rowing usually takes place on lakes, rivers, or calm coastal areas. Indoor training is also common using rowing machines (ergometers).

Making Popular Sports Inclusive: Adapting Rules, Roles and Materials for Participants With Special Needs

Sport holds an extraordinary potential to unite people, strengthen communities, and provide meaningful learning experiences.

However, many popular sports are designed with standard rules, fixed roles, and uniform equipment that may unintentionally exclude individuals who require additional support. The true power of sport emerges when activities are adapted so that every participant—regardless of physical, cognitive, or emotional support needs—can join, contribute, and succeed. This article explores how well-known sports can become more inclusive through thoughtful adjustments to rules, materials, and player roles.



One of the most effective ways to increase inclusion is by modifying the rules. In football, for example, reducing field size, shortening match duration, or allowing more frequent breaks helps participants who benefit from lower intensity or structured pacing. In basketball, lowering the hoop height, limiting physical contact, or simplifying scoring criteria allows players with different abilities to participate confidently. Volleyball can become more accessible by allowing the ball to bounce once before returning, using “catch-and-throw” instead of continuous volleys, or reducing team sizes to limit positional complexity. These rule adaptations do not change the essence of the sport—rather, they create pathways for success for a wider range of participants.

Making Popular Sports Inclusive: Adapting Rules, Roles and Materials for Participants With Special Needs

Another key approach is adjusting materials and equipment. Softer balls, lighter rackets, visually high-contrast markers, tactile court boundaries and auditory cues can support individuals with sensory, motor, or coordination needs. In athletics-based activities such as running or throwing, equipment can be resized or substituted: foam javelins, rolled balls, color-coded cones, or visual starting systems help participants feel safe and capable. In swimming, flotation devices, lane markers with tactile signals, and simplified stroke requirements enable more young people to enjoy the water with confidence. Adapted rowing seats, wider paddles in canoeing, or modified bicycles in cycling are further examples of how small changes in equipment open the door to meaningful participation.



Inclusive sport also requires reimagining roles. Traditional sports often assign fixed positions—goalkeeper, setter, defender, striker—which may be challenging for participants with different support needs. By creating flexible or “shared” roles, coaches can ensure that every participant is actively engaged. For instance, a football team may include rotation players who support passing rather than high-speed running, or a basketball team might designate a communication leader responsible for guiding play visually or verbally. In team sports, introducing peer-support partners—where one experienced player assists a teammate who needs guidance—builds cooperation, empathy, and confidence for both individuals. Coaches can also introduce non-physical leadership roles, such as strategy captain, warm-up leader, or equipment coordinator, ensuring meaningful involvement for participants who prefer supportive or low-intensity positions.

Making Popular Sports Inclusive: Adapting Rules, Roles and Materials for Participants With Special Needs

A crucial element of inclusive sport is variety and choice. Providing multiple ways to perform the same skill—rolling instead of throwing, bouncing instead of kicking, or passing with two hands instead of one—allows young people to participate at their own comfort level. Offering smaller game formats (2v2 or 3v3), reducing pressure, or letting participants select their preferred difficulty encourages autonomy and joy. When participants feel in control, they are more willing to challenge themselves and learn new skills.

Ultimately, making sports inclusive does not mean reducing challenge or fun—it means broadening access and redefining success. By adapting rules, equipment, and roles, popular sports become powerful tools for inclusion, personal growth, and social connection. Whether on a football field, basketball court, swimming pool, or rowing boat, every young person deserves the chance to participate fully and meaningfully. Thoughtful adaptation ensures that sport becomes what it is meant to be: a space where everyone can belong.



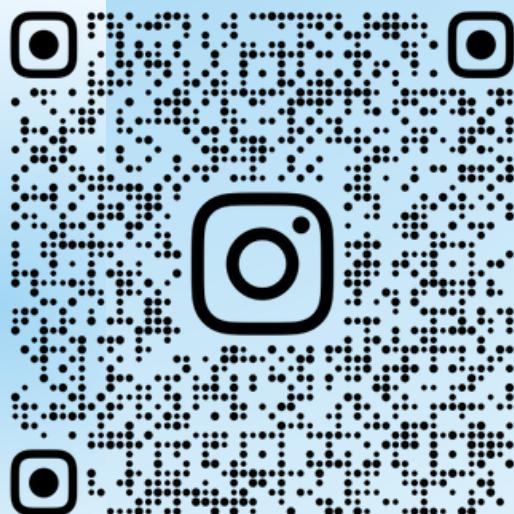
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