SISTERS

FoStering gender & LGBTQIA+ equity In Sports through an inTERSectional approach

Output 3 - Sports Bag

Work package 3 – **Deliverable D3.2**
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SISTERS

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1. Introduction

The SISTERS project

The **SISTERS (FoStering Gender and LGBTQIA+ Equity in Sports through an Intersectional Approach)** project, funded under the Erasmus+ Sport 2024 program, is a 30-month initiative dedicated to promoting **gender equality and LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports** through education, capacity building, and practical tools. The project recognises sports as both a powerful space for social inclusion and a context where inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion continue to persist.

SISTERS addresses these challenges by equipping sports professionals and athletes with **knowledge, skills, and reflective practices** that foster safe, inclusive, and equitable sports environments. Grounded in human-rights-based, gender-sensitive, and intersectional approaches, the project bridges theory and practice to support long-term cultural and organisational change within sports systems.

Objectives

The project is designed to:
- Understand the challenges that women and LGBTQIA+ individuals face in sports through research and data collection.
- Train sports professionals, including coaches, managers, and young athletes, on gender-sensitive and intersectionality-informed methodologies to tackle discrimination and promote inclusion.
- Organize inclusive sports tournaments to foster teamwork, respect, and equity among participants.
- Engage policymakers and stakeholders to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project's outcomes in sports governance and policy frameworks.

Partners

The project is implemented by six European organizations from Italy, Portugal, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, and Cyprus, bringing together expertise in sports management, education, social inclusion, and policy development. The consortium brings together the following organisations:

- **CESIE ETS (Italy) -** strong expertise in European project coordination, gender equality, and inclusive non-formal education, supporting the development and implementation of rights-based training tools.
- **Porto Football Association (Portugal)** – Expertise in grassroots sports and regional sports development.
- **Sarajevo Meeting of Cultures (Bosnia & Herzegovina)**– Engagement with professional football clubs and development programs across Europe.
- **Champions Factory (Bulgaria)** – Specialized in sports training and social impact through sports.
- **Symplexis (Greece)** – Focus on human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion.
- **Center for Social Innovation (Cyprus)** – Research institute driving innovative approaches in social policies and inclusion.

Purpose of the Sports bag

The Sports Bag is a core educational and practical toolkit developed within the SISTERS project to support trainers and facilitators in delivering training activities both for sports coaches and athletes.

The Sports Bag supports learning by **combining theoretical grounding, non-formal education methods, experiential activities, and guided reflection**, enabling participants to critically engage with issues of gender inequality, LGBTQIA+ exclusion, discrimination, and gender-based violence in sport.

The toolkit promotes **gender- and LGBTQIA+-inclusive approaches** by addressing both structural and everyday dimensions of sports environments. It supports participants in recognising how norms, policies, leadership practices, team cultures, and communication styles can reproduce exclusion, while also providing concrete tools to foster safe, respectful, and inclusive sports spaces.

The Sports Bag bridges the gap between theory and practice, supporting participants in applying learning outcomes directly to their professional roles or sporting contexts.

The **Sports Bag training** aims to:
- strengthen participants' gender and LGBTQIA+ sensitivity;
- equip participants to recognise and effectively address gender-based discrimination;
- support the adoption and promotion of inclusive and equitable practices in sports;
- contribute to more equitable and inclusive sports governance

The expected impact of the Sports Bag is to **strengthen individual competencies and organisational capacity to promote equality, inclusion, and safeguarding in sport**, contributing to sustainable cultural change.

Learning outcomes

Upon the completion of the Sports Bag training programme, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of key concepts related to gender equality, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and intersectionality in sports.
- Identify structural inequalities, discriminatory practices, and gender-based violence within sports governance and practice.
- Apply inclusive communication, safeguarding principles, and ethical decision-making in sports settings.
- Critically reflect on personal attitudes, roles, and responsibilities as athletes, coaches, trainers, or sports practitioners.
- Develop and implement practical actions and strategies that promote inclusive, safe, and equitable sports environments.

The Sports Bag supports the delivery of two complementary learning paths, each tailored to the needs, roles, and responsibilities of different participant profiles.

Path 1: Gender- and LGBTQIA+-Sensitive Governance in Sport

Target group: Trainers, coaches, managers, and sports practitioners
Duration: 8 hours of learning

This training path focuses on governance, leadership, safeguarding, and organisational culture in sport. It equips participants with the competencies to analyse policies, structures, and decision-making processes through a gender- and LGBTQIA+ sensitive lens. Participants are supported in

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identifying institutional barriers, addressing power dynamics, and integrating inclusive strategies into sports organisations and governance frameworks.

Path 2: Gender- and LGBTQIA+-Sensitive Sports Practice

Target group: Athletes and players
Duration: 8 hours of learning

This training path focuses on everyday sports practice, team dynamics, peer relationships, and communication. It supports athletes and players in developing awareness, empathy, and practical skills to foster inclusive, respectful, and safe sports environments. Emphasis is placed on recognising discrimination, challenging harmful norms, and promoting solidarity and inclusion within teams and sports communities.

2. Methodology

The Sports Bag is grounded in a **participatory, learner-centred, and reflective methodology** that combines theory, experiential learning, and practical application. Its pedagogical approach is designed to address the complexity of gender inequality and LGBTQIA+ exclusion in sports by engaging participants cognitively, emotionally, and socially, while ensuring psychological safety and inclusivity throughout the learning process.

The methodology is consistent across all modules, while being flexibly adapted to different learners (sports managers, coaches, trainers, and athletes) and learning contexts.

Core principles

The Sports Bag methodology is guided by the following overarching principles:

- **Human-rights-based approach**
  All modules are rooted in the principles of dignity, equality, non-discrimination, and bodily autonomy. Gender and LGBTQIA+ inclusion are framed not as optional values, but as fundamental human rights within sports environments.

- **Intersectional perspective**
  Learning activities explicitly acknowledge that experiences in sports are shaped by the interaction of multiple identities (gender, sexuality, race, class, age, ability, migration background), ensuring that inclusion is addressed in a nuanced and realistic way.

- **Non-binary approach**
  Adopting an inclusive framework that recognises and respects gender as a spectrum rather than a binary limited to woman and man. It affirms that people may identify and express their gender in diverse ways, including non-binary, gender-fluid, agender, or other identities beyond binary categories.

- **Safe-space and psychological safety**
  Creating safe and inclusive learning environments is a methodological priority. Clear group agreements, confidentiality principles, voluntary participation, and respect for personal boundaries are established from Module 0 and reinforced throughout the Sports Bag.

- **Trainer as facilitator**
  Trainers act as facilitators rather than authority figures. Their role is to guide reflection, encourage dialogue, manage group dynamics, and support learning without imposing "correct" opinions or personal beliefs.

Modular learning structure

While sharing common principles, each module emphasises specific methodological elements:

- **Module 0 – Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments in Sport**
  Focuses on trust-building, emotional safety, and group agreements. Methods include ice-breakers, co-creation of safe-space charters, and reflective discussions on language, norms, and behaviour.

- **Module 1 – Gender Introduction & Key Concepts**
  Uses visual tools (e.g. Genderbread Person), myth-busting exercises, and stereotype-challenging activities. Emphasis is placed on dialogue, questioning assumptions, and normalising uncertainty and learning.

- **Module 2 – Inequality & Intersectionality**
  Applies critical reflection and systems thinking through activities such as the Wheel of Power and Privilege and intersectional case studies. Methods help participants understand structural and institutional dimensions of inequality.

- **Module 3 – Gender and LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Sport**
  Combines policy literacy with practice-oriented learning. Participants analyse European and international frameworks, explore real-life case studies (e.g. EuroGames, DonaSport), and practice inclusive responses through role-play and action design.

- **Module 4 – Reflection, Good Practices & Action Planning**
  Emphasises organisational learning and change management. Methods include self-assessment, identification of resistance to change, good practice analysis, and structured action planning for sustainable inclusion.

Model Content Overview

Each module in the Sports Bag follows a clear and **easy-to-use structure** that helps participants understand the topic, actively engage with it, and apply learning to real sports contexts:

- **What will you learn?**
  This section explains the main focus of the module and what participants can expect to gain, helping them understand why the topic is relevant to sports and to their own role.

- **Introduction**
  The introduction connects the topic to everyday experiences in sport, highlighting why it matters and how it relates to inclusion, fairness, and safety.

- **Theoretical background**
  This part provides a simple explanation of key ideas and concepts using accessible language, examples, and visuals, backed up by research and evidence-based approaches.

- **Activities**
  Practical and interactive activities help participants explore the topic through discussion, reflection, role-play, or group work, encouraging learning by doing and sharing experiences.

- **Adaptation tips**
  This section offers guidance on how activities can be adapted to different groups, sports settings, ages, abilities, or time constraints, ensuring flexibility and inclusivity.

- **Quick Quiz / Self-Reflection**
  Short questions or prompts allow participants to check their understanding, reflect on their attitudes, and connect learning to their own sports environment.

- **Watch / Read / Explore**
  Additional resources such as short videos, articles, or tools are suggested for those who wish to deepen their understanding or explore the topic further.

Experiential and Participatory Learning

Across all modules, the Sports Bag adopts **experiential learning methodologies**, recognising that attitudes, values, and behaviours related to gender and inclusion cannot be changed through theory alone.

Key methods include:

- **Interactive ice-breakers and warm-up activities** (e.g. "Find Someone Who…", pronoun introductions) to build trust and group cohesion.

- **Group discussions and guided reflection**, allowing participants to explore their own beliefs, experiences, and assumptions.

- **Values clarification exercises** (e.g. Values Line) that make attitudes visible and encourage perspective-taking.

- **Role-play and scenario-based learning** to practice inclusive communication, bystander intervention, and decision-making in real sports situations.

- **Case studies** drawn from sports contexts to analyse structural discrimination, policy impact, and lived experiences of athletes.

Reflection, Self-Assessment, and Evaluation

Reflection is embedded throughout the Sports Bag as a core methodological tool. Each module includes:

- **Self-reflection questions** to support personal learning journeys.

- **Quick quizzes and self-assessments** to reinforce understanding.

- **Group debriefings** to transform individual insights into shared learning.

These elements encourage continuous learning rather than one-off training outcomes.

Differentiated learning paths

The methodology is adapted to two learning paths:

- **Governance-focused learning (Path 1)** emphasises policy analysis, leadership reflection, safeguarding systems, and organisational decision-making.

- **Practice-focused learning (Path 2)** prioritises peer interaction, team culture, communication, empathy, and everyday inclusion on the field.

Activities are designed to be scalable and adaptable depending on the participants' roles and responsibilities.

Flexibility and Accessibility

The Sports Bag methodology is designed to be:

- **Flexible**, allowing trainers to adapt timing, depth, and activities.

- **Inclusive**, with adaptation tips for participants with different needs and abilities.

- **Context-sensitive**, recognising differences across sports, cultures, and organisational settings.

3. Glossary

In this section you can find all gender and LGBTQIA+ related terminology explained. You can get back to this part whenever reading the modules:

- **Aroase (A)**
  A specific spectrum that includes all those individuals who do not experience sexual and/or romantic attraction, or who experience it only partially or at certain stages of their lives and circumstances, including:
  - *Asexuality:* people who do not experience sexual attraction
  - *Aromanticism:* people who do not experience romantic attraction
  - *Demisexual:* people who only feel sexual attraction if there is a strong emotional connection

- **Gender Binary**
  The societal or cultural belief that there are only two categories of gender: men and women.

- **Cisgender (Cis)**
  A person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned to them at birth.

- **Cisnormativity**
  The idea that cisgender people are normal or right and all other people are not.

- **Coming Out**
  The process by which a person voluntarily shares their sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics with others.

- **Discrimination**
  An unfavourable treatment of a person or a group of people due to their supposed group affiliation, aimed at excluding them. It can occur on grounds of sex and gender, age, nationality, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, health, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

- **FLINTA**
  An acronym referring to Female, Lesbian, Intersex, Non-binary, Trans, and Agender people, often used in inclusive feminist and sports contexts.

- **Gender**
  Socially constructed attributes and opportunities associated with being woman, man, or any gender by which a person identifies themselves. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being any of these genders as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.

- **Gender variant or non-conforming gender identity**
  Gender variance encompasses all those subjectivities that do not fall within the dominant binary norm, i.e., male and female. We speak of "variance" precisely because it encompasses an infinite number of nuances that differ from being a man or a woman.

- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**
  Any type of harm perpetrated against a person or group of persons because of their actual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Gender-based violence is

based on an imbalance of power. It can be physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, emotional, and socio-economic, among others.

- **Gender Equality**
  A value that motivates a shared concern for human dignity; the participation by all (see definition of diversity) in economic, social and cultural life.

- **Gender Equity**
  The concept that women and men, girls and boys, and people of any gender, have different needs and power in society, and that these differences should be identified and addressed to rectify the inequality between the sexes. This may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities..

- **Gender Expression**
  The aspects of masculinity and femininity that people display with their clothing and the way they take care of themselves, the way they speak, their actions and demeanour, etc. For example, it might be considered more masculine to wear baggy and functional clothes, while it would be feminine to wear more form-fitting, frilly and colourful clothes.
  Related terms:
  - *Androgynous:* not distinctly masculine or feminine in appearance or in behaviour.

- **Gender Identity**
  An individual each persons' experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dressing, speech and mannerisms.
  It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. giving space to a myriad of different subjectivities.
  Related terms:
  - *Genderqueer*: The term genderqueer means someone who does not follow binary gender norms. They may be non-binary, agender, pangender, genderfluid, or another gender identity.
  - *Cisgender:* Of, relating to, or being a person, whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.
  - *Two-spirit*: a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity..

- **Gender Norms**
  The standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms - ie, how men and women should be and act - in a particular society, culture and community at a specific point in time.

- **Gender Roles**
  Social and behavioural norms that, within a specific society, culture and community, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific gender. These often determine the traditional responsibilities and tasks assigned to men and women, and boys and girls.

- **Gender Spectrum**
  Nuanced definition of gender beyond, in between, and outside the binary man-woman.

- **Heteronormativity**
  All what makes heterosexuality seem coherent, natural and privileged. It involves the assumption that everyone is 'naturally' heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is an ideal, superior to other types of sexuality such as homosexuality or bisexuality.

- **Homolesbobitransphobia**
  The term combines homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and therefore the hatred, fear, discomfort and mistrust against people with these gender identities or orientations.

- **Inclusive Communication**
  Language and interaction that respect diverse identities, avoid stereotypes, and promote dignity and belonging.

- **Intersectionality**
  The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
  As a mirror effect, it also refers to solidarity and resistance movements that work towards eradicating all overlapping forms of oppression.

- **Intersex (I) people**
  An umbrella term describing people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female.

- **LGBTQIA+**
  Acronym: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Queer and Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and Aromantic, plus (+) other labels defining the queer community. LGBTQIA+ people are people: who are attracted to others of their own gender (lesbian, gay) or of both their own and the opposite gender (bisexual); whose gender identity and/or expression does not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth (trans, non-binary); whose identity does not fit into a binary classification of sexuality and/or gender (queer); who haven't yet self-defined their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression (questioning); who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definition of male or female (intersex); who experience little to no sexual attraction (asexual) or little to no romantic attraction (aromantic).

- **Marginalisation**
  The process by which individuals or groups are pushed to the edges of society or institutions and denied full participation.

- **Non-binary**
  Someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman, but defines their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms: they may blend elements of being a man or a woman; they may identify as neither male nor female; they may not relate to any gender at all; and their gender may change over time..

- **Patriarchy**
  A social and cultural system in which men hold more power than women and people of other genders: they dominate decision-making and control in families, communities, and society as a whole. It therefore influences laws, traditions, family roles, and everyday behaviours.

- **Elected pronouns/names**
  Name and pronouns chosen by a trans* person to properly address them.

- **Queer (Q)**
  An umbrella term that is commonly used to refer to or describe people who are not heterosexual or cisgender.

- **Safe and Inclusive Environment**
  A setting where all participants can engage without fear of discrimination, harassment, or exclusion, and where dignity and respect are actively upheld.

- **Sex Assigned at Birth**
  The condition (male, female, intersex) assigned at one's birth. It includes genetic sex, gonadal sex and hormonal sex.
  Biological and physiological characteristics that define humans as female or male. While these sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both, they tend to differentiate humans as males and females.
  Related terms:
  - *Transexual:* a person who went through a long process of psychologic, hormonal and surgical procedures to change the sex assigned at birth.
  - *Intersex:* a person who is born with a combination of chromosomic, physical and biological characteristics that represent a combination of male and female sex..

- **Sex Characteristics**
  Biological attributes such as chromosomes, hormones, gonads, and reproductive anatomy.

- **Sexism**
  A system of beliefs, attitudes, actions and structures that discriminates against people based on the alleged superiority of men over women.

- **Sexual Orientation**
  Sexual orientation, (…)refers to a person's sexual attractions (or lack thereof) toward other people. It is not defined by sexual activity, which can be independent of a person's orientation. It also is not equivalent to a person's gender, but the most common terms use the language of the gender binary (male or female)."
  Related terms:
  - *Heterosexual:* Sexual, emotional and/or romantic attraction to a sex other than one's own.
  - *Homosexual:* Person who is attracted to someone of the same sex.
  - *Bisexual:* Women or men who are attracted to both sexes, female and male.
  - *Asexual:* Someone who does not experience sexual attraction or an intrinsic desire to have sexual relationships (or the adjective describing a person as such).
  - *Pansexual:* Bisexual, Pansexual, or Omnisexual are terms used by some to self-identify that they are attracted to and may form sexual and romantic relationships with someone regardless of that person's gender-identity or genitalia.

- **SOGIESC**
  Acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.
  As other new forms of identity are steadily emerging, the use of the LGBTQIA+ abbreviation can actually end up reinforcing the idea of otherness by setting up a proliferation of small, discrete groups perceived as separated from the general population. The alternative framing of SOGIESC offers an antidote to many of these dilemmas. The term SOGIESC is more expansive because

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everyone has a sexual orientation, a gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. So a straight person has a sexual orientation, a gay person has a sexual orientation, a cisgender person has a gender identity, a transgender person has a gender identity, and so on. SOGIESC shifts the focus away from specific populations and toward deeper shared traits. The LGBTQIA+ abbreviation reflects that laudable commitment to diversity and inclusion, and it still has a role to play. But for human rights advocacy, policy, and law, SOGIESC offers a valuable option that provides accuracy, inclusion, and a focus on universally shared traits..

- **Structural Discrimination**
  A form of institutional discrimination against individuals of a given protected characteristic, such as race, gender, caste, which has the effect of restricting their opportunities.

- **Transgender (Trans)**
  A person whose gender identity doesn't match with the sex assigned at birth.

4. Overview of the included modules

Module 0 – Introductory Section: Prepares participants for the training, introducing safe-space principles, team-building activities, and case studies from sports contexts.

Module 1 – Gender Introduction & Key Concepts: Introduces key terms and concepts related to gender, identity, equity, and stereotypes.

Module 2 – Inequality & Intersectionality: Explores how overlapping identities shape experiences in sport, promoting awareness of bias, privilege, and inclusion.

Module 3 – Gender and LGBTQIA+ in Sport: Focuses on LGBTQIA+ inclusion and gender equality in sport, drawing on real case studies and European policy frameworks.

Module 4 – Reflection, Good Practices & Action Planning: Encourages reflection, sharing of best practices, and development of personal and organisational action plans for inclusion.

5. Modules

Module 0 - Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments in Sport

0.1 What will you learn?

This introductory module is aimed at **helping participants create a safe environment** to open dialogue and gradually approach more complex discussions related to gender, intersectionality, inequalities and discrimination. Through **real cases, academic research, and practical examples**, the module clarifies how safety, inclusion, representation, organisational intelligence, and discriminatory practices are interconnected in sports environments.

Participants will gain an understanding of **what constitutes a safe and inclusive learning environment**, why inclusion requires more than symbolic statements, and **how women and LGBTQIA+ individuals often face additional layers of exclusion.** They will analyse the role of emotional labour and emotional intelligence in shaping (and sometimes distorting) coaching behaviour, alongside the ways athletes and coaches act as norm-setters in the wider community.

This module matters for sports professionals because **creating equitable, respectful, and safe sports spaces require intentional action, not assumptions.** Whether one is a coach, athlete or sports manager, understanding these dynamics is essential for reducing discrimination, improving team wellbeing, strengthening safeguarding practice, and fostering fair participation for all.

0.2 Introduction

Sports environments reflect broader social values, and therefore also reproduce many forms of inequality found in society. While international frameworks such as the IOC Olympic Charter define sports as a space free of discrimination, harassment, and violence, in practice, **many athletes continue to experience exclusion, stigma, gender policing, and organisational barriers**. LGBTQIA+ athletes face especially complex forms of discrimination, while women experience persistent inequities in leadership, recognition, and participation. These dynamics demonstrate why an **intersectional approach** is essential: no athlete's experience is shaped by gender alone, but by its interaction with identity, socio-economic background, culture, power relations, and norms within sports systems.

The module builds on the understanding that **safe and inclusive sports environments** are not merely the absence of exclusion but the presence of dignity, respect, fairness, and learning. It also introduces the concept of **organisational intelligence** as a key capability sports organisations need to create responsive and evidence-based systems: ensuring policies are implemented effectively, data flows across departments, risks are monitored, safeguarding is credible, and culture evolves rather than resists change.

Participants will examine **how emotional labour and emotional intelligence shape coaching practices, how athletes and coaches influence social norms, how media reinforces or dismantles discriminatory narratives, and how harmful language and micro-behaviours contribute to exclusion.** Through this, the module helps participants uncover the deeper structures behind inequality—from discriminatory eligibility rules to media misrepresentation and organisational failures in safeguarding.

0.2.1 Learning goals

This module aims to enable participants to:

- **Understand inclusion** as a core value in sport environments;
- **Recognise how discrimination operates** at interpersonal, cultural, organisational, and systemic levels;
- **Develop critical awareness** of language, norms, and practices that reproduce exclusion;
- **Foster responsibility** for contributing to safe, respectful, and inclusive spaces.

02.2 Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

	Athletes	Sports managers & Coaches
Knowledge	- Understand the concepts of inclusion, emotional intelligence, and safe learning environments in sports; - Recognise how discrimination and exclusion operate at interpersonal and cultural levels - Identify how harmful language, stereotypes, and media representations affect participation and wellbeing; - Understand the relevance of real-life discrimination cases in sports to everyday team dynamics.	- Understand the concepts of inclusion, emotional labour, emotional intelligence, and organisational intelligence in sports settings; - Recognise how discrimination operates at interpersonal, organisational, and systemic levels; - Understand how language, policies, and informal norms shape organisational culture; - Analyse real-life case studies of discrimination in sports from a governance and leadership perspective.
Skills	- Apply critical thinking to everyday sport situations; - Recognise exclusionary or discriminatory behaviours among peers; - Use respectful and inclusive communication within teams; - Challenge harmful language and behaviours or seek support when needed.	- Apply critical thinking to organisational and team-level practices; - Identify discriminatory structures, behaviours, and informal norms within clubs or federations; - Use inclusive and responsible communication in leadership and decision-making roles; - Contribute to safeguarding, policy development, and organisational practices that strengthen inclusive learning cultures.
Attitudes	- Increased empathy toward diverse identities and lived experiences in sport; - Commitment to respect, dignity, and fairness within teams; - Awareness of their responsibility in contributing to a safe and supportive team environment;	- A reflective and accountable leadership mindset; - Commitment to dignity, fairness, and safety for all participants; - Awareness of their role as norm-setters and gatekeepers within sport organisations;

	• Willingness to adapt behaviours in line with inclusive values.	• Openness to revising practices and policies based on evidence and inclusion principles.

0.3 Theoretical background

0.3.1 Safe and Inclusive Environments in Sport

A safe and inclusive environment in sports is a setting **where every participant, regardless of age, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnic background, language, disability, religion, national or social origin, or any other status** (IOC, 2021), can train, compete, learn, and grow without fear of discrimination, harassment, violence, or exclusion. In such an environment, athletes are treated with dignity; their identities are respected; and the culture of the sports encourages fairness, equity, and wellbeing.

However, simply invoking these principles does not automatically ensure that sports is actually safe or inclusive in practice. Examples of genuinely safe sports spaces do exist, but they often appear **outside mainstream sports structures**, in small community groups, alternative sports movements, or spaces intentionally created for women and LGBTQIA+ communities (Storr, Landi, and Flory, 2024). While valuable, these examples remain *isolated*. Their isolated nature means they fail to influence broader sports systems, and therefore fall short of the core goal of **inclusivity**, which requires structural, not just local change.

This is where the challenge becomes clear: **safety** and **inclusivity** are deeply connected, yet not easily achieved together within traditional sports systems. Many athletes still face cultural, institutional, and interpersonal barriers that undermine both.

For **women and LGBTQIA+ athletes**, this tension is even more pronounced. Their participation often involves negotiating:

- the right to express and live their identity,
- the right to access sports without discrimination, and
- the right to be treated fairly within systems still shaped by rigid gender norms.

Transgender and gender-diverse athletes face **dual discrimination**, both identity-based discrimination and gender discrimination in sports performance contexts. Importantly, women face *some of the same structural gender barriers*, particularly in leadership, recognition, and equity of access (Pang et al., 2024). This overlap shows how gendered power dynamics cut across different identities, highlighting the importance of an **intersectional approach**.

Therefore, a **safe and inclusive sports environment** is one in diverse gender identities, expressions, sexual orientations, and sex characteristics can participate in mainstream sports without fear of harassment, exclusion, or violence (Mountjoy et al., 2016), whether on the field, in the locker room, communication channels, digital spaces where sports communities interact and in general the wider sports community. To practice sports safely, athletes' **identities** must be recognised and respected by peers, coaches, staff, sports managers, administrators, and institutions. This includes acknowledging the diversity of affective–sexual orientations and rejecting harmful assumptions such as:

"women who play traditionally male sports are lesbians,"
"men who play female-dominated sports are gay,"
"LGBTQIA+ people are not interested in sport,"
or any narrative that delegitimises athletes based on identity.

A safe and inclusive environment is one **without labels, stigma, or policing of bodies and identities**. It is a space where fairness, dignity, respect, and equality replace stereotypes and discrimination. Safe and inclusive environments are those in which labelling, stereotyping, and stigma are actively rejected and structurally prevented.

For sports organisations, building a genuinely safe and inclusive environment is a demanding task, but entirely achievable when approached with commitment, vision, and responsibility (AFES Research Group, 2023). Such an environment requires more than symbolic gestures; it demands that inclusion becomes embedded in organisational governance, daily culture, and long-term strategic planning.

To create such environments, organisations must work to:

- **Eliminate discrimination and violence** across decision-making structures and athletic spaces;
- **Strengthen accountability mechanisms**, ensuring rules are enforced and violations addressed transparently;
- **Apply inclusive language and communication** consistently, both internally and publicly;
- **Provide targeted education and training** on gender and sex diversity for coaches, staff, and athletes;
- **Adopt robust policies** that explicitly protect all participants and are monitored regularly;
- **Identify and scale good practices**, ensuring they become replicable standards for the wider sports community.

To sustain these efforts, sports organisations increasingly require **organisational intelligence**, the collective ability of an organisation to learn, adapt, and make informed decisions. Organisational intelligence strengthens inclusion efforts by ensuring that policies, knowledge, and data flow effectively across the system.

Developing organisational intelligence **enables sports organisations to strengthen their learning culture,** where data is accessible, systems are responsive, and strategic decisions are evidence-based. In complex environments like sport, this fosters **better planning, problem-solving, and long-term competitive and ethical advantage**.

International frameworks increasingly recognise that **discrimination** in sports is not only the result of individual behaviour, but is **often embedded within rules, structures, and decision-making processes.** In practice, however, many sports systems still struggle to critically assess whether their policies truly protect athletes or merely exist on paper.

Safeguarding and equality policies are frequently presented as evidence of **commitment to inclusion,** yet they do **not always translate into meaningful protection** in everyday sporting environments. In some cases, these policies focus narrowly on individual incidents while overlooking organisational practices, power imbalances, and systemic barriers that continue to expose athletes to exclusion, discrimination, or harm.

This gap between formal commitments and lived experiences highlights the **need for sports organisations to move beyond symbolic measures** and to regularly review, question, and adapt their policies. Only by addressing structural and institutional factors can safeguarding frameworks genuinely contribute to safer, fairer, and more inclusive sports environments.

0.3.2 Tackling discrimination in Sport

A **safe learning environment in sports** is one in which athletes, particularly women and those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, feel **genuinely included, supported, and respected.** This goes far beyond simply avoiding exclusion. It means creating a climate in which athletes do not have to

question whether they belong, or whether their identity will become a barrier to participation, performance, or personal development. Even athletes who are not formally excluded may experience an "inert" environment, one where they are tolerated but not truly welcomed (Herrick et al., 2024). Likewise, alternative or parallel sports spaces created exclusively for LGBTQIA+ athletes cannot fully substitute the need for inclusion within **mainstream sport**, where equality must be ensured for all.

However, discrimination in sports is not only the result of individual attitudes or behaviours. It is often embedded in **institutional rules, eligibility criteria, and policy frameworks** that shape who is allowed to participate and under what conditions. These structural forms of discrimination are particularly difficult to challenge because they are frequently justified in the name of fairness, safety, or competitive integrity.

The following case studies illustrate how such institutional policies can produce exclusion and harm, even at the highest levels of international sport.

Case study | Structural Discrimination in Sport Policies Did you know…?	
Some sports regulations require athletes to medically alter their bodies in order to be eligible to compete.	That sport eligibility regulations have, in some cases, resulted in irreversible medical interventions for athletes?
One of the most well-known examples is the case of **Caster Semenya,** an elite intersex athlete whose natural physiology includes higher levels of testosterone. Under international athletics regulations, she was required to undergo hormone-lowering treatment in order to continue competing in women's events. This requirement has often been described as a form of "reverse doping", as the athlete was asked to suppress natural physical characteristics rather than gain an artificial advantage.	The experience of Ugandan 800-metre runner **Annet Negesa** illustrates the severe consequences that institutional policies can have when they prioritise regulatory compliance over athlete wellbeing. Ahead of the 2012 London Olympic Games, Negesa was informed by a World Athletics–appointed doctor that her naturally occurring testosterone levels made her ineligible to compete in women's events. She was advised to undergo medical intervention in order to remain eligible. According to later accounts, the procedure was presented to her as minor and reversible. In reality, Negesa underwent a **gonadectomy**, a life-altering surgery. She later reported waking up in significant pain, with long-term physical and psychological consequences that ultimately ended her athletic career.

Taken together, these case studies demonstrate how discrimination in sports is often produced not through individual actions, but through **institutional rules and governance frameworks** that fail to account for human diversity. When eligibility systems impose rigid biological standards, athletes are placed in coercive situations where participation becomes conditional on bodily conformity. Such approaches reflect a "one-size-fits-all" logic that has repeatedly resulted in exclusion, harm, and loss of dignity.

These examples reveal how sports organisations can unintentionally perpetuate **systemic discrimination and organisational harm**, particularly when policies prioritise regulation over athlete wellbeing. Rather than promoting fairness, such frameworks shift the burden onto athletes, forcing them to adapt to narrow norms at the expense of their health, autonomy, and rights. Addressing discrimination in sports therefore requires more than individual awareness, it demands critical reflection on how policies are designed, implemented, and justified, and whether they truly serve the principles of equity, inclusion, and respect that sports claims to uphold.

0.3.3 Addressing harmful language and cultural norms

A core aspect of the safe learning environment is the transformation of cultural norms, especially **language**. The way athletes, coaches, and staff speak to and about each other directly shapes how safe, valued, or stigmatised individuals feel.

Derogatory expressions targeted at women, such as calling them "man-like," "too emotional," "weak," or "not real athletes", reinforce **sexist beliefs and undermine their legitimacy** in sport. Similarly, gender and sex-diverse athletes are often mocked as "confused," "unnatural," "cheaters," or "outsiders," language that delegitimises their identity and perpetuates exclusion.

Changing these linguistic and cultural norms is a **critical** component of building a safe learning environment. This requires a conscious shift supported by awareness-raising programmes, team discussions, and continuous education within organisations. When harmful language is challenged, corrected, and replaced with respectful communication, sport becomes a space where learning and unlearning can occur for everyone.

The **media play a powerful role** in maintaining the hegemonic, gendered structure of sport. Coverage often prioritises sensationalism, scandals, or narratives that reinforce **binary gender norms.**

For men athletes, the media sometimes portrays those in "feminine-coded" sports (e.g., figure skating) as effeminate, while women in "masculine-coded" sports (e.g., football) are depicted as overly masculine.

0.3.4 Athletes and Coaches as Norm-Setters

Athletes, coaches, and referees are not only performers, but they are also **public figures and norm-setters**. Their behaviour during competitions, in locker rooms, in the media, and in daily life helps shape social values. Their gestures, statements, and conduct directly influence fans, young athletes, and wider public perceptions.

This influence means they must be aware that **their identity, cultural norms, and personal beliefs** intersect with their roles.

Particularly for women and LGBTQIA+ athletes, the consequences of discriminatory behaviour from teammates or coaches can be profound. If leaders within sports publicly or privately oppose inclusion, their attitudes ripple through teams and institutions, often leading to subtle or overt exclusion.

0.3.5 Representation, Behaviour, and Power Dynamics

Understanding safe and inclusive sports environments require recognising that athletes' and professionals' experiences are shaped by **multiple personal and social factors,** not by gender alone. Women and LGBTQIA+ athletes, as well as coaches, referees, and sports managers, encounter different expectations and opportunities depending on how aspects such as identity, community belonging, socio-economic background, and cultural norms interact within sports settings.

These dynamics are highly visible in the everyday realities of coaches, where gender, leadership norms, organisational culture, and personal identity intersect. Research shows that women coaches frequently navigate both *masculine-coded* and *feminine-coded* behavioural expectations in order to be accepted, respected, and effective within their roles. These expectations stem not from the coaching profession itself, but from **long-standing gendered assumptions about how leaders should behave.**

One essential component of this dynamic is **emotional labour**, the intentional regulation of one's emotions and the emotions of others to meet organisational expectations (Porter & Spence, 2022). While emotional labour is closely connected to **emotional intelligence**, which involves recognising, managing, and constructively influencing emotions, intersectional pressures often distort its purpose. Instead of supporting empathy and inclusion, emotional intelligence becomes instrumentalised: women coaches must constantly modify their emotional expression to *fit in* rather than to *support athletes*.

This dynamic is well illustrated by coaches' own testimonies. As one coach explained, **"I feel like I manipulate the performance of gender according to the situation to get the outcome I want"**—not referring to dishonesty, but to the need to strategically alternate between behaviours culturally coded as masculine (e.g., assertiveness, authoritative tone, even controlled use of swearing) and those coded as feminine (e.g., emotional warmth, nurturing gestures) (Porter & Spence, 2022).

Such constant emotional self-monitoring not only creates psychological strain but reveals how emotional intelligence, intended as a tool for inclusivity and healthy team culture, has been reshaped into a mechanism of survival within a gendered system. Rather than empowering coaches to create supportive environments, **the demand for emotional "shape-shifting" often reinforces inequality.**

This is amplified by what researchers describe as the **double bind**: women coaches are penalised regardless of how they behave. When they demonstrate assertiveness or authority, they are labelled as violating feminine norms. When they display empathy or collaborative leadership, they are criticised for not fitting masculine-coded expectations of coaching leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Burton & Newton, 2021). Studies show that women in coaching roles are often expected to show higher levels of empathy and emotional support, yet simultaneously judged as "too emotional" to lead. This contradiction shows how **gendered expectations shape professional norms** and make leadership disproportionately complex for women. For women who also belong to minority groups, racialised women, gender and sex diverse individuals, or women from lower socio-economic backgrounds, experience intensified scrutiny over their emotional expression, professionalism, and leadership ability.

0.3.6 Conclusion

A safe and inclusive environment in sports can only emerge **when institutions commit to recognising and addressing** the complex, **intersecting factors that shape athletes' experiences**. This requires moving beyond symbolic gestures toward practices that uphold dignity, equity, and human rights in all sporting spaces. As the examples throughout this text demonstrate, **exclusion** in sports is rarely the result of a single factor; it **is produced through the interaction of gender norms, organisational cultures, systemic biases, harmful language, and discriminatory policies.** Addressing these issues demands sustained organisational intelligence, transparent accountability, and a willingness to challenge long-standing assumptions that have normalised inequality. When sports organisations embed learning, responsiveness, and cultural awareness into their structures, they create environments where all participants, not only those who fit traditional norms, can thrive.

Creating such environments is both an ethical responsibility and a strategic investment in the future of sport. **Athletes, coaches, referees and sports managers** serve as **norm-setters** whose behaviours and identities influence public attitudes and the next generation of participants. Their ability to act

safely, authentically, and confidently depends on whether sports systems support diversity rather than regulate or suppress it. Moving forward, sports must adopt an approach that recognises the diverse needs and experiences of individuals and supports continuous reflection and learning within organisations. Policies, practices, and cultural norms should be shaped by the lived realities athletes face in their daily sports environments. Only then can sports fulfil its potential as a space of belonging, personal growth, and collective wellbeing, where inclusion is not an exception or a separate track, but the foundation of the entire system.

0.4 Activities Module 0
Activity 0.1 Find someone who…
Activity 0.2 Safe space charter
Activity 0.3 Values line

Activity 0.1	Find someone who…
Overview	A fast-paced mingling activity where participants move around the room to find peers who match short inclusion-related statements. The activity encourages conversation, introduces key inclusion ideas, and gives facilitators a rapid, non-intrusive snapshot of how familiar and comfortable participants are with inclusion practices. Main themes: inclusion, empathy, mixed-gender experience, anti-discrimination practice, supportive behaviour toward gender and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Methodology: active ice-breaker + short plenary reflection.
Time	20–30 minutes total (10–15 minutes mingle; 10–15 minutes plenary/debrief).
Number of participants	Ideal: 8–30 (min 6; max 40). If larger, run in smaller sub-groups.
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both trainers and athletes.
Materials needed	− Find Someone Who…" sheet (one per participant), grid or list of statements. − Pens / pencils. − Name badges (optional). − Timer. − Flipchart or whiteboard for facilitator notes.
Objectives	By the end of the activity participants will: • Have met several peers and started conversations about inclusion; • Recognise everyday examples of inclusive practice and barriers; • Reflect on their own exposure to or practice of inclusion; • Build empathy within the group.
How to make this activity more inclusive	• Offer an accessible space (wheelchair accessible, seating options). • Allow participants to indicate answers by initials instead of public statements if they prefer. • Provide a quiet corner for anyone who needs a break.

⭐	• For hearing-impaired participants use pen/paper exchanges or live captioning; for non-native speakers, offer translation cards or run in bilingual pairs. • Emphasise that participants should never "out" anyone or ask for private information about identity.
Instructions – Step by step	1. **Explain purpose and safe-space rules** (5 minutes): emphasise confidentiality, no outing, respectful language, voluntary sharing. Hand out the "Find Someone Who…" sheets and pens. Show example (1 minute). 2. **Mingle phase (10–15 minutes):** participants circulate asking peers to sign/initial a matching box when true. A person may sign multiple boxes, but should sign only if they consent. Encourage short follow-up questions (e.g., "How did that happen?") but remind participants not to pressure anyone for personal details. 3. **Return sheets** (1 minute). The facilitator quickly tallies trends or picks interesting anonymised examples to share. 4. **Plenary discussion & debrief** (10–15 minutes): use guided questions to reflect on what emerged. Capture key points on a flipchart. **Sample "Find Someone Who…" statements** (choose ~12–16 to fit time): • Find someone who can explain what "inclusion" means in sport. • Find someone who has coached mixed-gender teams. • Find someone who believes empathy strengthens a team. • Find someone who has participated in or organised a mixed-gender event. • Find someone who has led or helped implement a code of conduct in a club. • Find someone who has noticed (and challenged) derogatory language in training. • Find someone who uses inclusive language on team communications/social media. • Find someone who has collected or used gender-disaggregated data in their club. • Find someone who would volunteer to mentor a young coach from an underrepresented group. • Find someone who has taken training on safeguarding or inclusion. • Find someone who has seen a teammate excluded because of their identity. • Find someone who believes their club is a welcoming place for everyone. • Find someone who thinks media portrayal affects how their sport is perceived.
Tips and discussion	• Encourage participants to ask a brief follow-up question after someone signs (e.g., "What helped you to do that?"). This deepens connection while keeping it short. • If someone signs many boxes, ask them (in plenary) to briefly share one example, but only if comfortable.

	• Remind everyone: this activity aims to map exposure and attitudes, not to "test" people; there are no right/wrong answers.
How to make the activity online	Not applicable
Theory / Background	Based on *Intergroup Contact Theory* (Allport, 1954): positive, structured contact between diverse people reduces prejudice and builds empathy. Ice-breaker / social network activities are useful for building trust and lowering intergroup anxiety, prerequisites for deeper inclusion work. Serves as a light, participatory needs-assessment: identifies existing strengths (mentors, policies) and gaps (lack of training, prevalence of derogatory language).
Debriefing	• Which statements were easy to find signatures for? Which was hard? What does that tell us? • Did anything surprise you about the answers you collected? • Where did you notice strengths in our group/club? Where are the gaps? • What is one small action you could take this week to make your club more inclusive? • How comfortable are you speaking up when you hear derogatory or exclusionary language? What would help you be more comfortable?
Sources	Adapted from standard inclusion ice-breaker activities and intergroup contact principles (Allport, 1954).

Activity 0.2	**Safe Space Charter: Building Principles for Respectful and Inclusive Communication**
Overview	This activity guides participants in co-creating a shared set of principles that ensure respectful communication, psychological safety, and inclusivity within the training environment. It encourages participants to reflect on what support, respect, and safety mean to them, both individually and collectively. The activity covers themes such as inclusion, discrimination prevention, active listening, empathy, trust-building, and respectful dialogue. Methodology includes brainstorming, facilitated group discussion, and collective decision-making.
Time	20–30 minutes total.
Number of participants	Ideal: 10–20 participants (Minimum 6, maximum 30)
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both trainers and athletes.

Materials needed	– Flipchart or large sheets of paper
	– Markers
	– Sticky notes (optional)
	– Tape or magnets for displaying the final charter
	– A printed or digital version of the IOC non-discrimination list (optional reference)
Objectives	By the end of the activity participants will:
	• Define what respectful and inclusive communication looks like.
	• Understand what behaviours contribute to a psychologically safe environment.
	• Identify shared expectations that support diversity and prevent discrimination.
	• Strengthen group cohesion and mutual trust.
	• Create a visible charter that can be used throughout the training as a behavioural guide.
How to make this activity more inclusive	• Mobility impairments: Provide seated access to materials; facilitators can collect input on behalf of participants.
	• Vision impairments: Read out each contribution aloud; provide digital or large-print versions of the charter.
	• Hearing impairments: Use written notes or a shared screen; ensure everyone speaks clearly and faces the group.
	• Cognitive impairments: Use simple language; summarise key points; check for understanding frequently.
	• Allow additional time when needed and give participants the option to contribute anonymously via sticky notes.
Instructions – Step by step	1. **Introduction (2 min)** Explain that the goal is to collectively define what makes a space safe, respectful, and inclusive.
	2. **Brainstorming (5–7 min)** Ask participants:
	• *"What makes you feel respected?"*
	• *"What helps you feel safe to speak openly?"*
	• *"What behaviours support inclusion and fairness?"* Participants share ideas aloud or write them on sticky notes.
	3. **Collect & cluster ideas (5 min)** Place similar contributions together (e.g., empathy, confidentiality, active listening, no judgement, respectful language).
	4. **Drafting the Charter (7–8 min)** As a group, agree on **5–7 guiding principles**, such as:
	• Listen actively without interrupting
	• Avoid assumptions and judgement
	• Respect confidentiality
	• Use inclusive language
	• Allow everyone equal speaking time
	• Challenge discriminatory behaviour respectfully
	• Be aware of how your words and actions affect others

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	5. **Commitment (3 min)** Invite participants to sign the charter as a symbolic commitment to uphold these principles. 6. **Display the Charter (1 min)** Place it visibly in the room so it can guide future discussions.
Tips and discussion	• Encourage quieter voices by inviting contributions in multiple formats (spoken, written, gestures). • If disagreements arise, model non-confrontational communication. • Return to the charter whenever the group discusses sensitive topics such as gender, discrimination, or inclusion. • Remind participants that the charter can be updated, and learning environments evolve.

How to make the activity online	To run the Safe Space Charter online, you can use real-time collaborative word-cloud platforms such as:
	• **Mentimeter** (www.mentimeter.com)
	• **Slido** (www.slido.com)
	• **AnswerGarden** (www.answergarden.ch)
	• **WordClouds.com** (with shared link)
	Steps for the online version:
	1. **Create a Word-Cloud Question** Set up a prompt such as: *"Write one word or short phrase that describes what makes you feel safe, respected, or included in a group."*
	2. **Share the Link in the Online Meeting** Paste the word-cloud link into the chat (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet).
	3. **Participants Submit Their Words** Each participant adds 1–3 words. The cloud updates live and visually highlights the most repeated concepts (e.g., "respect", "listening", "confidentiality").
	4. **Discuss the Word Cloud** Use the visual result as the starting point for agreeing on group rules. Identify the 5–7 strongest themes that emerged.
	5. **Co-create a Digital Charter** The trainer types the selected principles on a shared slide or collaborative board.
	6. **Symbolic Signing** Participants "sign" by:
	   o adding their name on the shared document,
	   o clicking a reaction emoji, or
	   o posting "I agree" in the chat.

Theory / Background	A "safe space" is grounded in psychological safety theory (Edmondson, 1999), which emphasises that individuals must feel respected, heard, and free from ridicule to participate fully. Inclusive communication frameworks in sport highlight the role of shared norms, empathy, and non-discrimination in preventing exclusion, identity-based harm, and power imbalances. Co-creating agreements increases ownership, accountability, and group cohesion.
Debriefing	• Which principle feels most important to you and why? • Did anything surprise you during the discussion? • How can these principles help us prevent discrimination? • Which behaviours might be hardest to practice consistently? • How will we remind ourselves to follow this charter?

Sources	Adapted from common safe-space and group agreement practices used in inclusion training, sport education, and human rights-based facilitation methodologies. Influenced by Edmondson's psychological safety framework and inclusive communication best practices.

Activity 0.3	Values Line: Exploring Beliefs and Perspectives in Sport
Overview	This activity helps participants explore their values, beliefs, and emotional responses related to inclusion, discrimination, leadership, and safety in sport. Participants physically position themselves on a line between "Agree" and "Disagree" in response to statements about gender, identity, discrimination, emotional intelligence, and team culture. The activity encourages reflection, dialogue, and awareness of diverse perspectives within the group. It uses experiential learning, visual expression of values, and guided group discussion.
Time	30 minutes total.
Number of participants	Minimum: 10 Maximum: 25
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both trainers and athletes.
Materials needed	– Long strip of tape on the floor (or rope) to mark the values line – Signs labelled AGREE and DISAGREE – Printed statements (5–7) – Optional: sticky notes and markers
Objectives	Participants will be able to: • Recognise and articulate their beliefs about inclusion, discrimination, gender norms, and safety in sport. • Develop empathy by listening to diverse perspectives within the group. • Reflect on how personal values influence decision-making, team culture, and leadership. • Strengthen emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness and social awareness.
How to make this activity more inclusive	• For participants with mobility impairments, allow them to point to or verbally indicate their position ("mostly agree," "neutral," "mostly disagree"). • For blind or low-vision participants, read statements clearly and describe the AGREE–DISAGREE scale verbally. • For hearing impairments, provide printed statements and visual cues.

	• For participants with cognitive or linguistic difficulties, simplify the statements or offer short clarifications. • Ensure that the space is physically safe and accessible to move along the line.

Instructions – Step by step	1. **Prepare the space** by placing tape on the floor to create a straight line. Mark one end as **AGREE** and the other as **DISAGREE**.
	2. **Explain the rules:**
	  • Participants stand anywhere on the line depending on the extent to which they agree or disagree with a statement.
	  • There are no right or wrong answers.
	  • Movement during the activity is encouraged after hearing others' perspectives.
	3. **Read the first statement aloud** and give participants 10 seconds to choose their position.
	4. **Invite several volunteers** from different points on the line to briefly explain why they chose that position.
	2. **Encourage movement:** Ask if anyone wishes to shift their position after hearing others and invite them to explain why.
	3. **Repeat** with the remaining statements.
	4. **Facilitate group reflection** after the final statement.
	
	Suggested statements:
	• "Everyone feels safe in sport."
	• "Gender should never limit leadership opportunities."
	• "Empathy is as important as physical strength."
	• "Speaking out against discrimination is a responsibility for everyone in sport."
	• "Language used in sport affects whether athletes feel included."
	• "Media coverage influences discrimination in sport."
	• "Sport organisations should adapt to athletes—not the other way around."
	• "Harmful language in sport is as damaging as physical violence."
	• "The media should be held accountable for how they portray athletes."
	• "Women and LGBTQIA+ athletes are treated fairly in mainstream sport."
	• "Coaches should receive mandatory training on diversity and inclusion."
	• "Emotional intelligence is as important as technical skills in coaching."
	• "Athletes should never be pressured to change their bodies to compete."
	• "A team cannot be inclusive without actively challenging stereotypes."
	• "Having diverse leaders makes sport organisations stronger."
	• "Intersectionality should be part of every safeguarding policy."
	• "Teammates influence inclusion more than organisational policies do."
	• "Language used in locker rooms affects the entire team climate."
	• "Creating safe environments in sport is everyone's responsibility."
	• "Coaches should model inclusive behaviour on and off the field."
	• "An athlete's identity has no impact on their athletic value."
	• "Sports media reinforce gender stereotypes."

	• "Women in coaching face more scrutiny than men." • "LGBTQIA+ athletes should not need separate sports spaces to feel safe." • "Diversity strengthens team performance." • "Respectful communication should be a core competency in sport."
Tips and discussion	• Encourage active listening, not debate. • If participants become defensive, redirect to values rather than personal justification ("What beliefs shape this view?"). • Normalise differences ("It's natural to stand in different places—this is why the activity matters"). • Ensure no participant dominates; invite quieter voices intentionally. • Use the exercise to link individual beliefs to organisational norms and intersectionality. • Avoid judgmental reactions; the goal is exploration, not persuasion.
How to make the activity online	Use an interactive tool such as: • **Mentimeter (Scale or Slider feature)** • **Slido** • **Poll Everywhere (Likert Scale)** **Online version steps:** 1. Share a link to the Mentimeter/Slido board showing a scale from **0 (Disagree)** to **10 (Agree)**. 2. Read the statements aloud; participants vote anonymously. 3. Display the results live as a visual scale distribution (bars, dots, word clouds if using short reasons). 4. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts via microphone or chat. 5. Repeat for all statements.
Theory / Background	Based on constructivist learning: people learn by reflecting on experiences. Uses social learning theory, where participants learn by observing others' reasoning. Supports emotional intelligence development, particularly self-awareness and empathy. Encourages awareness of how gender norms, identity, and power dynamics intersect with personal beliefs (intersectionality framework).
Debriefing	• Which statements were easiest or hardest to position yourself on? Why? • Did you change your position at any point? What influenced that shift? • How did it feel to hear perspectives that differed from your own? • What does this activity reveal about the diversity of experiences in sport? • How can emotional intelligence help us create safer and more inclusive sports environments? • What practical actions can we take after recognising these differences?
Sources	Adapted from common values-clarification and social learning activities used in equality, safeguarding, and diversity education. Informed by intersectionality theory (Crenshaw), emotional intelligence models (Goleman), and inclusive coaching literature.

0.5 Quick Quiz / Self-Reflection

Instructions:

For each statement, rate how strongly you agree or disagree on a scale from **1 to 5**, where:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

Section 1: Personal Attitudes and Awareness

1. I believe every athlete should be able to participate in sports regardless of gender, sex characteristics, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
2. I am aware of what discriminatory behaviour looks like in sports settings.
3. I understand how stereotypes can negatively affect athletes' participation and performance.
4. I feel confident addressing or challenging discriminatory comments when I hear them.
5. I actively reflect on how my own words and actions might affect others.

Section 2: Experiences With Inclusion or Exclusion

6. I feel safe expressing my identity (gender, sexuality, culture, religion) in the sports setting.
7. I am comfortable reporting discrimination or harassment if it occurs.

Section 3: Team Culture and Communication

8. My team uses inclusive and respectful language.
9. Harmful jokes or comments (sexist, homophobic, transphobic, racist) are not tolerated in my team.
10. My teammates support one another regardless of differences in identity.
11. Team leaders/coaches set an example in promoting fairness and inclusion.
12. Conflicts or incidents related to discrimination are handled appropriately.

Section 4: Institutional Support and Safeguarding

13. I am aware of the policies my organisation has in place to protect athletes from discrimination.
14. Reporting mechanisms are clear, accessible, and confidential.
15. I believe my organisation responds effectively when issues of discrimination are raised.
16. I have received training or information on inclusion, diversity, and safeguarding.
17. I feel the organisation actively works to create a safe and inclusive environment for all athletes.

Section 5: Intersectionality and Sensitivity to Diversity

18. I understand that athletes may face multiple forms of discrimination at the same time (e.g., gender + race + sexuality).
19. I try to be aware of how my teammates' different backgrounds may affect their experience in sport.
20. I understand how language and behaviour can have different impacts depending on someone's identity.
21. I believe coaches and staff should receive training on intersectionality and inclusive behaviour.
22. I feel my sports organisation recognises and respects diverse identities and experiences.

Scoring

100–110: Highly inclusive environment
80–99: Moderately inclusive, needs structured improvement
50–79: Exclusion risks present; targeted intervention required
≤49: High discrimination risk; immediate action needed

Module 1 Gender Introduction & Key Concepts

1.1 What will you learn?

To understand the scope of this module, it is first necessary to **recognise sexuality as part of our identity in a psychological, cultural, social, and political sense.** Within this framework, gender appears as a cultural construction that establishes shared roles and stereotypes. Understanding sexuality in its full meaning also involves recognising that belonging to a **gender** (man, woman, or another) is **not a category determined by biology, but by socially learned behaviours, beliefs, and roles.**

Gender roles influence how we perceive ourselves, how we live in society, and which practices are facilitated or hindered. While these multiple determinants may reflect the experiences of some people, they often do not reflect those of many others. **They become stereotypes** when fixed beliefs are established that aim to define an assumed "normality." This **process of naturalisation** has specific characteristics that exclude different identities and ways of being that do not fit within it.

In this module, **users will find basic concepts that will allow them to understand gender-related themes in a broad and critical way, starting from a theoretical framework that challenges this naturalisation,** that is, one that dismantles a binary, cis-heteronormative, and patriarchal understanding of subjectivities. The goal is to open new possibilities that promote accessibility, inclusion, and diversity, both in society at large and specifically within the sports sector.

1.2 Introduction

Use the "What is your pronoun" activity as an ice-breaker!

The sports arena has historically been closely linked to gender socialisation: sporting activities have long been classified according to socially established gender roles, which have been naturalised within a **cis-binary sex–gender system** (the belief that there are only 2 genders - male and female - each corresponding to a biological sex) and a **heteronormative framework** (the assumption that all people are, or should be, heterosexual).
Beliefs such as these shape everyday reality and generate inequality and discrimination. This stereotyped division **prevents equitable access to sports for all people.**

Consider some examples: while the first Modern Olympic Games took place in Athens in 1896, it was only in London 2012 that every delegation included at least one woman (IOC, 2025), and only in Tokyo 2020 did a trans athlete participate for the first time (IOC, 2021). These examples also highlight the **predominance of men in participation** alongside a dominant model of cis-heteronormative masculinity.

Therefore, promoting inclusion in sports requires starting by **denaturalising stereotyped gender roles and making sexual and gender diversity visible**, with the goal of eliminating barriers and privileges that hinder equitable access to sport.

> *"Women are more delicate and men are tougher"*
> *"A gay man is not masculine enough"*
> *"A trans woman is not a woman"*
> *"Football is not a sport for women"*

TRAINERS TIPS

Given that these topics are strongly internalised and learned throughout our lives, it is important that the trainer's work is not carried out in a vertical or hierarchical manner in which concepts are only transmitted theoretically.

Instead, it should involve working with the participants' own beliefs and representations, actively engaging them in the process. By fostering dialogue and uncovering the implicit assumptions behind each topic, participants can critically examine the stereotypes and behaviours that hinder a broad and sensitive perspective, one that supports the prevention and detection of discriminatory behaviours (their own and others') and the inclusion of diversity.

In this module, the trainer acts primarily as a facilitator, not as a lecturer or authority on "right" or "wrong" identities.

The trainers' role is to
- Create a safe and respectful learning environment where all participants feel able to speak or remain silent without pressure.
- Encourage reflection, dialogue, and critical thinking rather than providing definitive answers.
- Normalise uncertainty, mistakes, and learning as a natural and valuable part of the process.
- Support participants in questioning assumptions and stereotypes without judgement or shaming.

The aim of Module 1 is not to reach consensus or uniform opinions, but to foster awareness, empathy, and a shared understanding of key gender-related concepts that will be built upon in later modules

1.2.1 Learning goals

This module aims to enable participants to:
- **Develop a broad and inclusive understanding of gender and sexuality** beyond binary and heteronormative frameworks.
- **Appreciate the diversity of gender identities, expressions, and orientations** within and beyond sport.
- **Understand how social structures and cultural norms shape opportunities, participation and experiences** in sport.
- **Recognise the relevance of a human-rights-based and gender-inclusive perspective in sports environments.**
- **Cultivate a reflective approach** towards personal beliefs, assumptions, and behaviours related to gender and inclusion.

1.2.2 Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

	Athletes	Sports managers & Coaches
Knowledge	• Identify and explain key concepts such as gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, sex assigned at birth, LGBTQIA+ diversity, and SOGIESC. • Understand how gender stereotypes and hetero-cisnormative structures shape participation, visibility, and opportunities in sport.	
Skills	• Use respectful and inclusive language with teammates (e.g., correct pronouns, no gendered assumptions). • Recognise situations of exclusion or discrimination and know how to respond or seek support. • Reflect on their own biases and how these may affect interactions with teammates on the field or in the locker room.	• Apply inclusive communication strategies (e.g., asking for pronouns, avoiding assumptions). • Detect discriminatory behaviours or barriers in their teams, clubs or federations, and know how to intervene appropriately. • Implement participatory methods that encourage athletes to express concerns and needs. • Facilitate safe spaces where athletes can raise concerns and needs.
Attitudes	• Develop empathy towards teammates with diverse identities and experiences. • Strengthen a sense of belonging and solidarity within the team by valuing everyone's individuality. • Adopt behaviours that promote fairness, respect, and inclusion both on and off the field.	• Demonstrate an open, reflective attitude towards unlearning gender biases and rethinking traditional coaching practices. • Commit to fostering equitable conditions for all athletes, including women, trans, non-binary and LGBTQIA+ participants. • Value athlete autonomy and diversity, ensuring that every individual is treated with dignity and respect.

1.3 Theoretical background

1.3.1 Discovering our identity

Let's begin by taking a very popular sport as an example: football.

Why do many more men play football than women? Why is it only economically profitable in the men's category? Aren't all people equally capable of kicking and moving a ball? Where does the difference lie?

To answer these questions, we must first **understand gender as a social construction.** Historically, specific roles and norms have been attributed to each biological sex: men as economic providers, occupying public spaces for leisure (sports, games) and work; women as caretakers of the home, confined to the private and domestic sphere (children, cleaning, cooking), and denied economic and social independence for a long time. This division of social roles was not based on scientific evidence or biological instinct, but on arbitrary criteria shaped over time by a patriarchal society.

💡 Use the **"Gender bread person"** activity to start exploring the following concepts!

Understanding gender in this way blurs the distinction between two different aspects: **the <u>sex assigned at birth</u>** (biological and physiological characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, gonads and genitalia) and **gender identity** (a person's inner sense of belonging to a gender). This confusion creates several difficulties: on one hand, gender stereotypes emerge as fixed and exaggerated expectations about how each gender should behave; on the other hand, a rigid gender binary is reinforced, accepting only the categories "man" and "woman."

If gender is a social construction rather than a direct consequence of biological characteristics, then it is flexible and can change to represent all people and their differences. This is why we no longer speak of a gender binary, but rather of a **gender spectrum**, a continuum that allows each person to identify their own unique way of experiencing gender, **giving space to a myriad of different subjectivities.**

To summarise:
- **<u>Gender</u> refers to the socially constructed attributes and opportunities associated with being a woman, a man, or any other gender identity.** This includes norms, behaviours, and expected roles, as well as relationships between genders. As a social construct, gender varies across societies and changes over time.
- **<u>Gender identity</u>,** on the other hand, is each person's unique experience of gender—which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. Here we open the door to all the possibilities of personal identity, represented through the **Gender bread Person**.

Image 1: Genderbread person
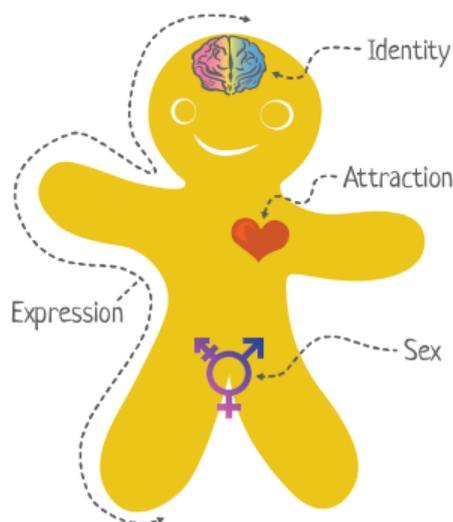Retrieved from https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2018/10/the-genderbread-person-v4/

Within this **gender spectrum,** there are 2 broad categories for describing gender identity:
- **Cisgender**: a person whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.
- **Transgender**: a person whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth.

Because of gender stereotypes, gender identity is often confused with sexual orientation. For example, when someone says "a man is very feminine because he likes men," they assume that only a cisgender heterosexual man can be considered a "real man," erasing other ways of being and confusing gender identity with sexual or romantic orientation.

Sexual/romantic orientation refers to the people one is attracted to (or not attracted to). Romantic orientation, originating from asexual communities, refers to romantic attraction, while sexual orientation refers to sexual attraction.
Thus, people may be:

- homosexual or homoromantic (attraction to the same gender),
- heterosexual or heteroromantic (attraction to another gender within a binary framework),
- bisexual or biromantic (attraction to both genders, in a binary sense),
- pansexual or panromantic (attraction to people regardless of gender identity), and more.

For the same reason that **gender is a spectrum** and not a fixed binary, we must also distinguish **gender expression**, the way a person expresses femininity, masculinity or neutrality through appearance, behaviour, clothes, etc. For example, wearing loose and functional clothes is often labelled "masculine," while wearing tight, frilly or colourful clothes is labelled "feminine."

All these terms - **gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression and gender roles -** refer to independent aspects of our sexuality and together form our **sexual identity**. We could say there are as many sexual identities in the world as there are people.

Use the **"Celebrities: what is the missing word?"** activity to ensure participants have fully integrated theoretical concepts!

1.3.2 We are different

The stereotyped construction of gender led to the naturalisation of **cisheteronormativity** (the idea that cisgender and heterosexual people are "normal" or "right," and all others are not). This denied the existence of other subjectivities that have been, and still are, systematically discriminated against. In the early 1990s, as part of the struggle for equal rights and social acceptance, an acronym was adopted to name and make visible the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations: **LGBTQIA+** (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, plus other identities). The acronym has evolved over time and will continue to do so.

Definitions:

- **L – Lesbian:** woman whose lasting physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to women.
- **G – Gay:** man who is attracted to other men.
- **B – Bisexual:** women or men attracted to both genders.
- **T – Trans:** umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity differs from cisnormativity expectations.
- **I – Intersex*:** people born with sex characteristics (chromosomes, hormones, genitalia or reproductive organs) that do not fit typical male or female definitions.
- **Q – Queer:** people who fall outside gender and sexuality "norms." It is an umbrella term for identities beyond traditional binaries.
- **A – Asexual:** people who do not experience sexual attraction or desire for sexual relationships.

- **+** represents all identities evolving over time to respect all gender identities.

*It is important to emphasise that **intersex variations are biological** and manifest differently in each individual. They are not linked to any predetermined gender identity or orientation. Gender stereotypes are so deeply ingrained that many intersex infants undergo unnecessary medical or surgical interventions without consent, long before their sexual identity can develop.

A more recent acronym (2014) is **SOGIESC,** referring to: **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics.** This term highlights that **everyone** has a gender identity, expression, orientation and sex characteristics, not only LGBTQIA+ people. While SOGIESC **shifts the focus toward universal human traits**, LGBTQIA+ specifically makes visible identities outside hetero-cisnormativity.

Let's return to a question: *Why is it so important to recognise diversity in society and in sports?*

Because every person has the right to exercise their sexuality and life project freely and autonomously, including living in their body without stereotypes, and accessing sports without barriers or privileges.

But are there other factors that affect accessibility? Is gender the only reason a person may face discrimination or privilege? Is social power determined only by hetero-cisnormativity?

To answer these questions, in 1989 African-American legal scholar **Kimberlé Crenshaw** coined the term **intersectionality** to describe how different social categories (ethnicity, class, skin colour, disability, etc.) intersect and reinforce one another, creating unique experiences of oppression for people who belong to multiple marginalised groups (Crenshaw, 1989). For example: a European heterosexual woman does not have the same social access as an Afro-descendant lesbian woman. Therefore, if we want to promote inclusive practices, we must understand how **gender intersects with other categories.** These concepts will be further explored in Module 2.

Use the **"Run Like a Girl"** and **"True or False"** activities to reflect about gender stereotyping through a participatory and engaging approach.

1.3.3 And we are also equal

An inclusive rights-based perspective recognises that every person, regardless of sexual identity, must have **equal conditions, treatment and opportunities** to realise their full potential, exercise their human rights and dignity, and contribute to - and benefit from - economic, social, cultural and political life.

In practical terms, this means that women, men, and queer or trans people should be able to participate in sports under equal conditions (space, quotas, pay, etc.). This principle is called **Gender Equality,** recognising what makes us equal: our shared humanity.

Yet there are many examples of unequal access. In European sports in 2019, only about **31% of all sports coaches** were women - despite an overall growth in participation of women over the decades (European Parliament, 2024). Similarly, as of 2023, only **22% of all top decision-making positions** in national federations of the 10 most popular sports in the EU were held by women (European Parliament, 2024). Why is it that, even though women constitute a substantial proportion of athletes and participants, they remain dramatically under-represented in leadership, coaching, and governance roles?

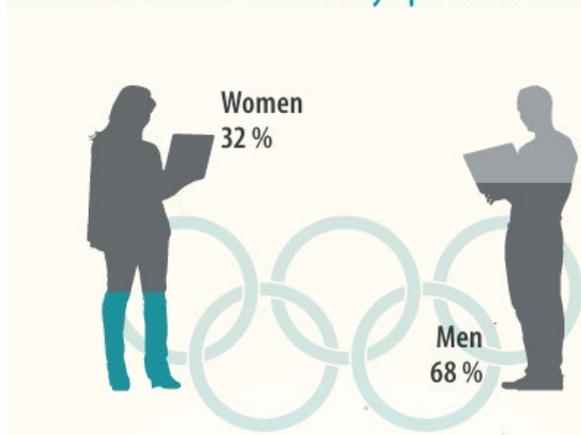**Image 2:** Women in IOC. Retrieved from
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/759597/EPRS_ATA%282024%29759597_EN.pdf

We previously mentioned that we live in a patriarchal society, but what does this mean? **Patriarchy is a social and cultural system in which men hold more power than women and people of other genders**, influencing laws, traditions, family roles, and everyday behaviours. This means that society still grants certain **privileges -** unearned advantages - to some groups simply because they belong to those groups.

If certain groups already start with advantages, would equal treatment lead to equal opportunities? Or would it reproduce existing inequalities?

To address this issue, the concept of **Gender Equity** was developed: **it means recognising that people of different genders have different needs and levels of power, and that these differences must be addressed to correct gender inequalities.**
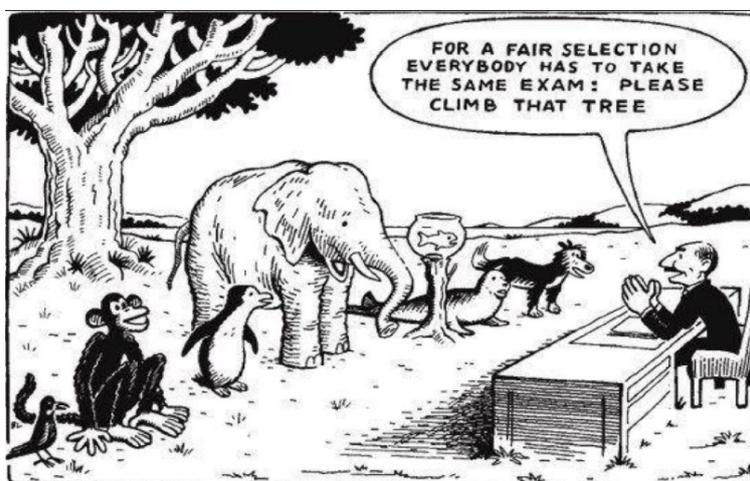

Image 3: Equality–equity
Retrieved from: https://whatthehill.home.blog/2019/07/07/equity-vs-equality-in-education-whats-the-difference/

In the fight for these rights, **feminist movements** have played a central role. Just as patriarchy is a social, political, economic and cultural system of men's domination - beyond individual men - the feminist movement **is not a struggle against men**, but against this **system of domination,** which also affects them in different ways. Feminism seeks to identify and dismantle the **causes of violence across**

genders embedded in patriarchal and heteronormative structures, supporting the rights of all gender identities, including non-binary and transgender people.

To conclude: Promoting inclusion in society and in sports requires policies and interventions that recognise existing inequalities and address the needs of each group. This is only possible with the active participation of the very people these policies are intended to serve.

1.4 Activities Module 1

Activity 1.1 What is your pronoun?
Activity 1.2 Genderbread person
Activity 1.3 Celebrities: what is the missing word?
Activity 1.4 True or false?
Activity 1.5 Run like a girl

Activity 1.1	What is your pronoun?
Overview	Each participant introduces themselves by saying their name and the pronoun(s) they use. The trainer briefly explains what pronouns are, gives examples (she/he/they), and explicitly mentions non-binary pronouns. The goal is to normalise sharing pronouns and avoid assumptions.
Time	15 minutes
Number of participants	Recommended: up to 20
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both (trainers and athletes)
Materials needed	None
Objectives	• To question automatic gender assumptions. • To introduce the idea that gender identity is not always visible, and that language can include or exclude people.
How to make this activity more inclusive	Provide the instructions in written form (slide, flipchart, handout). Allow participants to write their pronouns if they do not feel comfortable saying them out loud. Make it clear that participants can also say "I prefer not to share".
Instructions – Step by step	1. Explain that pronouns are the words we use instead of someone's name (she/he/they, etc.) and that we cannot always know someone's pronouns by looking at them. 2. Say that, in English, common options are: she/her, he/him, they/them (for non-binary or when we don't know).

	3. Invite participants, one by one, to answer: "My name is _____ and my pronouns are /." Emphasise that sharing is voluntary and other options (e.g. "I'm not sure yet" or "I'd rather not say") are valid. 4. After everyone has spoken (or passed), briefly highlight why not assuming gender is an inclusive practice, especially for trans and non-binary people.
Tips and discussion	Before your explanation, you may ask: "Why do you think we did the introduction like this? How did it feel to say (or not say) your pronouns?" Link this to sports contexts: team introductions, registration forms, media, etc.
How to make the activity online	Do the same in a virtual round or via chat, allowing people to write their pronouns.
Theory / Background	Understanding gender as a spectrum rather than a binary. Understanding trans identities and how they differ from cis identities.
Debriefing	• How did you feel when introducing yourselves in this way? • Why do you think everyone was asked to share their pronouns? • Is this something you usually do in everyday life? Why or why not?
Sources	N/A

Activity 1.2	**Genderbread person**
Overview	Using a Gender bread Person (Gender Star or similar) image with labels covered, participants explore 4 key concepts: gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression and sex assigned at birth. The trainer then introduces the LGBTQIA+ acronym.
Time	20-30 minutes
Number of participants	Up to 30
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both (trainers and athletes)
Materials needed	Gender bread Person image (projector or printed copy)

Objectives	• Recognise the different dimensions that make up sexual and gender identity. • Make sexual and gender diversity visible and understandable in simple, visual terms.
How to make this activity more inclusive	Verbally describe the image for participants with visual impairments. Provide printed images with good contrast and large font/labels for people with reduced vision.

Instructions – Step by step	1. Briefly introduce sexuality in a broad sense (identity, desires, relationships, expression).
	 2. Ask participants why they think sex assigned at birth is often assumed to match gender identity. Let a few answers emerge.
	 3. Show the Genderbread Person image with blank labels and invite participants to guess what each area represents (head, heart, body, etc.).
	 4. Reveal and explain, one by one:
	     a. Gender identity
	     b. Sexual/romantic orientation
	     c. Gender expression
	     d. Sex assigned at birth
	 5. Introduce the LGBTQIA+ acronym and connect it to the 4 dimensions above.
	 6. Clarify misunderstandings and summarise the main distinctions.

Tips and discussion	First ask: "What do you already think these concepts mean?" before giving definitions. Encourage examples from sports (e.g. "gender expression on the pitch", "assumptions in changing rooms").
How to make the activity online	Share the image on screen and/or in the chat; invite participants to annotate or write their guesses in the chat.
Theory / Background	Gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, sex assigned at birth. From gender binary to gender spectrum. LGBTQIA+ diversity.
Debriefing	• Why is gender identity not the same as sex assigned at birth? Why do people often mix them up? • Why is it important, for sports managers/athletes, to understand these distinctions? • Did this activity change the way you see anything?
Sources	Genderbread person https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/genderbread-person/?utm_source

Activity 1.3	Celebrities: What is the missing word?
Overview	Participants work with short profiles of well-known LGBTQIA+ celebrities. Each profile has a sentence with a missing word (e.g. "Elliot Page is a _____ man"). They must guess the correct term (e.g. "transgender") and then discuss their assumptions. This helps clarify concepts (sex assigned at birth, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression) and reveal how heteronormativity shapes our initial guesses.
Time	30 minutes
Number of participants	Up to 40
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both (trainers and athletes)
Materials needed	– Projector or printed images – Internet connection & audio (for the optional video)
Objectives	• To clarify concepts that may still feel confusing and explain the finer differences. • To make us more aware of our own assumptions, prejudices, or stereotypes. This helps us understand why it is important not to make assumptions about another person's sexuality or identity, and also to recognise the value of saying "I don't know." ○ For example: "I thought Elliot Page was a lesbian because…" • To explain what heteronormativity means and why it matters.
How to make this activity more inclusive	Use large, high-contrast images and read all sentences aloud. Provide subtitles and clear sound if you use video clips. Make it clear that "I don't know" is a valid and welcome answer.

Instructions – Step by step	1. Divide participants into small groups (or pairs).
	2. Each group receives 1–2 celebrity cards (some will be repeated). Example celebrities and key concepts:
	  - Elliot Page – transgender man
	  - Caster Semenya – intersex athlete
	  - Hanne Gaby Odiele – intersex model
	  - Jonathan Van Ness – non-binary / gender-fluid person
	  - Elton John – gay man
	  - Ellen DeGeneres – lesbian woman
	3. On each card, show a sentence with a missing word, e.g.:
	  - "Elliot Page is a _____ man."
	  - "Caster Semenya is an athlete with _____ traits."

- "Jonathan Van Ness identifies as _____."
  Ask each group to guess the missing word and write it in.
4. For each celebrity, ask groups to reflect (they don't need to know all answers):
   - Sex assigned at birth
   - Gender identity
   - Sexual and romantic orientation
   - Gender expression
   - Sexual identity (how all the above come together)
5. Bring everyone back to plenary. For each celebrity, reveal the correct information, clarify terms and invite groups to share:
   - What they guessed
   - Why they guessed it
   - Whether anything surprised them

Optional: Show a short clip of David Bowie or another artist with fluid gender expression to illustrate how expression can play with norms without changing identity or orientation.

Tips and discussion ✿	Normalise "I don't know" and "I was wrong" as part of learning. If someone mixes concepts (e.g. "intersex = trans" or "non-binary = a type of sexual orientation"), gently correct and re-link to the Gender bread Person model. Ask: "What made you assume this about this person? Their clothes? Hair? Roles they play? Media narrative?"
How to make the activity online 🖥	Share the celebrity images via slides or a shared document. Use breakout rooms for small-group discussion, then return to plenary to compare answers.
Theory / Background ⚙	Sex assigned at birth vs gender identity vs sexual orientation vs gender expression. Heteronormativity and cisnormativity. Media representation of LGBTQIA+ people in sports and popular culture.
Debriefing 💬	• Which guesses were most difficult for you? Why? • Did you notice any patterns in your assumptions (e.g. associating certain looks with certain identities)? • How might similar assumptions affect the way we treat athletes, teammates or colleagues in sports? • How can "I don't know, I'll ask respectfully" be a more inclusive response than assuming?
Sources 💡	David Bowie video: https://youtube.com/shorts/wpRg2FXiwaU?si=CM3qufQx3yV4lWWZ

Celebrity Cards

ELLEN DEGENERES

Ellen DeGeneres is an American comedian, actress, and talk show host. She came out as a ____ in the 1990s and has played a major role in increasing LGBTQ+ visibility in mainstream media.

ELTON JOHN

Elton John is a British singer, songwriter, and pianist, famous for hits like Rocket Man and Tiny Dancer. He is openly ____ and has been a long-time advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and HIV/AIDS awareness.

ELLIOT PAGE

Elliot Page is a Canadian actor known for roles in Juno and The Umbrella Academy. He publicly came out as ____ in 2020 and has become a leading voice for the visibility and rights of ____ people worldwide.

CASTER SEMENYA

Caster Semenya is a South African middle-distance runner and Olympic champion. She was born with ____ traits, which led to debates about fairness in women's sports. Semenya is an advocate for athletes' rights and the dignity of ____ individuals

HANNE GABY ODIELE

Hanne Gaby Odiele is a Belgian model who publicly revealed in 2017 that she is _____. She uses her platform to raise awareness about _____ rights and to fight against non-consensual medical interventions on _____ children.

JONATHAN VAN NESS

Jonathan Van Ness is an American television personality and grooming expert, best known from Queer Eye. They identify as _____ and gender fluid, using pronouns he/she/they, and are a prominent advocate for LGBTQ+ rights.

Activity 1.4	True or false?
Overview	Participants work with "true or false" statements about gender stereotypes. The goal is to challenge and correct harmful ideas affecting women and the LGBTQIA+ community in sports and society.
Time	30-45 minutes
Number of participants	Up to 30
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both (trainers and athletes)
Materials needed	Printed statements (slides/cards) – See resources section
Objectives	• Make visible and question common gender stereotypes. • Connect stereotypes to inequalities in sports participation, leadership, media coverage, etc.

How to make this activity more inclusive	Read the statements aloud for visually impaired participants Provide texts with appropriate font size and readability for people with reduced vision
Instructions – Step by step	1. After a basic introduction to gender (e.g. Activity 1.1 or 1.2), distribute or show several statements. 2. Ask participants (individually or in small groups) to decide whether each statement is true or false and justify their choice. 3. Go through the statements one by one in plenary. For each: o Ask: "Who said it was true? Who said it was false? Why?" 4. Clarify why it is actually true or false, linking to real examples in sports and daily life.
Tips and discussion	Do not shame or ridicule any answer. Encourage participants to talk to each other, not only to the trainer. When a stereotype appears, respond with open questions ("Where do you think this idea comes from?") rather than lecturing immediately. Acknowledge when someone rethinks their position - this models learning.
How to make the activity online	Use a tool like Mentimeter, polls, or the chat ("T/F + reason") and then discuss the results.
Theory / Background	Gender as a social construct Gender roles and stereotypes Equity vs inequity, equality vs inequality Discrimination mechanisms
Debriefing	• What patterns did you notice in the stereotypes? • Have you witnessed similar ideas in your team, club, media or family? • How could these stereotypes affect women and LGBTQIA+ people in sports (access, performance, leadership, safety)? • For each false statement: what would be a more accurate statement?
Sources	Gender health test: **https://www.emro.who.int/gender/infocus/gender-health-test.html?utm_source** **False:** • "Girls are naturally more suited to caring for others." • "Men are better suited for positions of power." • "Emotions are a sign of weakness, especially for boys." • "At work, women should earn less if they take more family-related breaks." • "If a boy is too sensitive, he is less of a man." • "It's normal for girls not to be good at sports." • "Only women should take care of children during their early years." **True:** • "Men can also be affected by gender stereotypes." • "Gender equity does not mean everyone must do the same things, but that everyone should have the same opportunities." • "Many jobs considered 'feminine' (such as teaching or caregiving) are among the lowest paid."

	• "Advertisements and social media contribute to the spread of gender stereotypes."

Activity 1.5	Run like a girl
Overview	Participants watch part of the "Run Like a Girl" commercial and discuss how language and media portray girls and women in sport, and how this affects self-esteem and participation.
Time	20-40 minutes
Number of participants	Up to 40
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both (trainers and athletes)
Materials needed	– Projector – Internet connection – Speakers
Objectives	• Highlight how gender stereotypes are reproduced through language and media. • Reflect on their impact on girls, women, and LGBTQIA+ people in sports environments.
How to make this activity more inclusive	Use subtitles and good-quality sound. Offer a short verbal description if someone cannot see the screen clearly.
Instructions – Step by step	1. Introduce the video: explain that it shows how people interpret the expression "like a girl." 2. Play the video but stop it around minute 1:03 (max 1:24), before the full advertising message and explicit conclusion. 3. Ask participants for first impressions: "What did you notice? What surprised you?" 4. Guide the discussion with questions about language, body image, performance, and confidence.
Tips and discussion	Keep the space respectful; remind everyone there are no "stupid questions". When a stereotyped or dismissive comment appears, use questions ("How might a 12-year-old girl feel hearing that?") to prompt reflection. Connect the discussion to real training and competition contexts (coaching language, locker room jokes, media coverage of women's sports).

How to make the activity online	Share your screen and audio to show the video; then use chat or open mic for discussion.
Theory / Background	Gender as a social construct. Gender roles and stereotypes in sports. Equality/equity and discrimination. Gender-based violence and symbolic violence against women.
Debriefing	• What does it mean to do something "like a girl" or "like a woman"? • And "like a boy" or "like a man"? • What similar expressions do you hear in your sport (e.g. "don't cry like a girl")? • What impact do these biases and inequalities have on women and the LGBTQIA+ community in sports? • How can coaches, managers and athletes actively avoid reinforcing these messages?
Sources	Run Like a Girl - Commercial

1.5 Adaptation tips

General tips for trainers and participants (coaches and athletes)

The below guidelines are not "rules" but reflections to keep in mind during the training sessions. They can be taken as reminders throughout the workshop.

Recognise that we are part of this culture
No matter how much knowledge we have, or how committed we are to processes of unlearning, it is essential to acknowledge that we live within a culture shaped by stereotypes and forms of violence. Because of this, we may reproduce certain ideas or behaviours without realising it.

It is not necessary to know everything
You do not need to have every concept perfectly clear (they can always be checked, and many evolve over time). What matters is maintaining openness and a willingness to continually reflect on your own beliefs. This leads us to the next point…

It is more important to listen and ask, rather than make assumptions
Spaces for listening are crucial. They may seem simple, but they are often the most challenging to cultivate: avoiding assumptions, asking questions, listening. For any intervention - whether institutional or individual- we must begin with an understanding of the situation and the needs of the people or groups we are working with. Only then can we define objectives that genuinely respond to those needs.

Often, it is only necessary to expand the labels we use for women, men, etc.

Labels and categories help make visible what has historically been ignored or erased; they give language to experiences. But it is also important to recognise that sometimes the goal is not to create a new category, but to broaden the meaning of the ones we already have. *Example:* A woman may, at a certain moment, feel disconnected from the category "woman"- not because she identifies with another gender, but because the socially learned expectations of what it means to "be a woman" do not reflect her experience. Expanding categories allows room for more ways of being. The same applies to any gender category.

Recognise that gender is one category among others - not above them

This perspective helps clarify situations where people struggle to understand certain gender identities. For example, debates about the inclusion of trans athletes often rely on stereotypical simplifications such as "men are stronger than women."

An evidence-based approach requires assessing each case individually. Just as two athletes of the same gender can have vastly different levels of strength, endurance, or speed, so too can athletes of different genders. Understanding gender as one category among many, rather than a hierarchical or determining factor, allows us to evaluate each athlete's unique characteristics.

1.6 Quick Quiz / Self-Reflection

After reading this module, we invite you to complete 2 self-assessments:

1.6.1 To self-evaluate your personal experience:

- How do topics related to gender make me feel?
- Has my perspective on these issues changed over time?
- Am I open to changing my strategies or behaviours based on new information or feedback?
- Am I aware, in my role, of the mechanisms for preventing LGBTQIA+ discrimination in my work or sports environment?

1.6.2 To self-evaluate some of your knowledge:

What is it?...
1 – Gender identity
A – An inner sense of belonging to a gender.
B – The sex a person is born with.
C – The way a person expresses their gender.

2 – Sexual and romantic orientation
A – Refers to the set of sexual practices a person enjoys.
B – The way a person approaches another sexually.
C – Refers to whom a person feels physically and romantically attracted to.

3 – Sex assigned at birth
A – A personal choice regarding one's gender.
B – The result of a genetic test performed before birth.
C – The condition (male, female, intersex) assigned at birth.

4 – Transgender

A – A person whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.
B – A person who dresses differently from what is expected for their gender.
C – A person with a fluid sexuality.

5 – LGBTQIA+

A – A code used in medicine to classify different diseases.
B – An umbrella term used to recognise individuals who experience a gender identity different from cisnormativity.
C – Acronym: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and Aromantic, plus (+) other labels.

6 – Gender stereotypes

A – Rules established by the State to determine how men and women must behave.
B – Simplified and fixed ideas about what a person should be based on gender identity.
C – Immutable biological characteristics that explain why each person behaves in a certain way.

1.6.3 To self-evaluate your personal experience:

- How do topics related to gender make me feel?
- Has my perspective on these issues changed over time?
- Am I open to changing my strategies or behaviours based on new information or feedback?
- Am I aware, in my role, of the mechanisms for preventing LGBTQIA+ discrimination in my work or sports environment?

1.7 Watch / Read / Explore

Additional resources to deepen learning.
- Love Act digital guide https://thegendertalk.eu/love-act-digital-guide/
- Check the *Phall-O-Meter* diagram https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phall-O-Meter
- Fausto-Sterling (*Five Sexes*) http://www.portalenazionalelgbt.it/bancadeidati/schede/the-five-sexes-why-male-and-female-are-not-enough/file/Articolo%20ENG

Module 2 Inequality and Intersectionality

2.1 What will you learn?

This Module will focus on **intersectionality in sports** and will introduce how the different identities of a person such as gender, race and sexuality, can overlap. These overlapping impacts athletes' professional experiences especially in the career of women and LGBTQIA+ athletes. The Module examines the **structures and patterns that lead to inequality in sports** and highlights the ways in which women and LGBTQIA+ groups come across **systemic barriers** in accessing, participating and acquiring leadership positions in the world of sports. The representation of these groups is quite low compared to cis gender men who are dominating the world of sports both in administrative positions as well as in public visibility.

Participants will have the chance to learn through the Module's activities to **recognise and analyse the intersectional form of discrimination** such Gender-based violence (GBV) and SOGIESC- based discrimination that non-cis men are facing and to better understand how to tackle them. Module 2 will equip sports staff and young sports players with **tools that can foster more safe and inclusive environments** where or in which gender equity can be applied. Furthermore, it will include **approaches to promote equitable decision making and inclusive** and **non-discriminatory communication.**

Overall, the Module on Intersectionality and inequality in sports will strengthen the participants' perspective and understanding of how and **why intersectionality is important.** Additionally, it will enable them to provide support to diverse athletes, reduce the barriers that women and LGBTQIA+ face and promote equity in all levels of sports both in the field and out of it.

2.2 Introduction

Module 2 focuses on understanding the concepts of Intersectionality and Inequality in sports and how they are affecting athletes, coaches and general staff. **Intersectionality** refers to the **simultaneous forms of discrimination faced by people whose identities overlap across different categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, or ability** (K. Crenshaw, 1989). This framework shows how **different aspects of identity interact with each other to create unique experiences of privilege or discrimination,** emphasizing that systems of oppression (like sexism, racism, or classism) do not act independently but overlap, shaping complex patterns of inequality and marginalization. This overlapping of different identities creates in several cases barriers for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals that hinder their equal participation in sports.

Additionally, these barriers create inequality that women and LGBTQIA+ individuals face when they are engaging with sports. **Inequality may occur in different forms**; SOGIESC-based discrimination, GBV, access in sports or sports facilities, fewer opportunities for uprising or visibility, biased coaching practices and underrepresentation in key positions. These inequalities need to be tackled in order for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals to enjoy equal participation in sports. Understanding how multiple identities interact and how barriers are created is essential for modern sports organisations that want to provide a safe environment.

2.2.1 Learning Objectives

This module aims to:
- increase the knowledge and skills of participants in understanding how intersectionality interferes with their sports engagement.
- change the attitudes that participants have towards women and LGBTQIA+ people.
- acquire skills that will help them identify SOGIESC-based discrimination and GBV

- become aware of the values of diversity, equality and be respectful towards others.

2.2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

	Athletes	Sports Managers & Coaches
Knowledge	• Understand the key concepts such as SOGIESC-discrimination and GBV in sports. • Recognise how intersectionality influences access, participation, and experiences of athletes. • Understand how gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation can affect sport experiences.	
Skills	• Apply respectful communication • Recognise and call out unfair or harmful behaviour among peers.	• Apply intersectional thinking to evaluate organisational policies and team dynamics. • Create a safe environment for everyone.
Attitudes	• Become respectful, empathetic, and inclusive teammates who value equality and diversity as part of fair play	• Become aware, reflective, and open-minded leaders who value diversity and equality as drivers of team performance and wellbeing.

2.3 Theoretical background

Module 2 is focusing on understanding the inequality that women and LGBTQIA+ people are facing in their effort to engage in sports and how their intersectionality is related to these inequalities and barriers that are created. Specifically, M2 will focus on 4 thematic areas:

- Introduction to intersectionality, power, and privilege.
- Gender-based violence and structural discrimination.
- Barriers for women, LGBTQIA+, and minority athletes.
- Inclusive and non-discriminatory communication.

2.3.1 Introduction to intersectionality, power, and privilege.

Intersectionality, as mentioned, is the overlapping of different identities that create unique experiences of advantages and disadvantages for a person (K. Creshaw, 1989). **Individuals have various identities** based not only on gender, but other dimensions such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, culture and religion. Originally used as a legal principle, "**intersectionality**" has found its way in other aspects of our life including the sports society since its framework it is **used for understanding oppression and discrimination.**

The power structures of the sports environment, like institutions, policies and even cultural norms relate to the intersectionality of a person, since they define participation and opportunities. These opportunities are frequently less for people who have an intersectional identity since institutions and policies are shaped in such a way that favors who already fit expected profiles (e.g. cis gender men) leaving lesser space in participation, opportunities and visibility for people that do not fit in the expected profit in the expected profile, such as a LGBTQIA+ black woman or a transgender migrant (Canadian Women and Sport, 2025). Additionally, **cultural norms are based on masculinity ideals** and

stereotypes that **hinder participation of women and LGBTQIA+ people** with intersectional identities as the prevalence of these perceptions stems from participation in the field of sports.

Therefore, **access to sports** increasingly becomes **a privilege for a few certain groups** who align with the perceived identity of the "ideal athletes". The current situation often goes unnoticed by those "ideal athletes" making inequality harder to recognise. This is why **understanding intersectionality** is important for coaches and athletes because it will assist them in **identifying the different patterns of exclusion and how multiple identities that are overlapping may increase them.** Moreover, understanding intersectionality is a key to **improve fairness in the team and the staff**, while at the same time helps you to enhance the wellbeing of a person/group and create a safe environment in which the vulnerabilities are not barriers.

2.3.2 Gender-based violence and structural discrimination

Women and LGBTQIA+ individuals are confronted in many phases of their lives with gender-based violence (GBV) and structural discrimination, and unfortunately sports have not been able to be an exception since similar violations are observed in this sector as well. **GBV includes physical, emotional, sexual abuse and other forms of harassment that a person may receive** (E. Trichina, 2024). In sports the **harassment** takes place **from coaches, team staff and teammates** in training, locker rooms, the field or in institutional systems. Harassment such GBV is directly **related to the gender norms** that exist in sports and connect athletes to toughness and masculinity, and many times are trying to normalise abusive behaviours.

Structural discrimination on the other hand has more of a systemic way of creating barriers shaped around rules, norms and/or practices that create unequal situations for certain gender (and not only) identities (CoE, 2023). In sports this can be translated to **unequal access to facilities or funding, lack of women and LGBTQIA+ leadership roles** or even **institutional silence** when there are no actions in preventing discrimination. Structural discrimination is not always visible to the naked eye, it often hides in the ordinary structures of everyday life. According to research of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS,2024) **women in sports receive less visibility from the media** and their coverage tends to focus on no sports-related characteristics (EPRS, 2024). GBV in the form of sexual harassment is also very high, with research by the European Institute for Gender Equality, indicating that sexual harassment in sports ranges between 14% and 73% (EPRS, 2024).

GBV and structural discrimination have a greater impact on athletes who have intersectional identities. LGBTQIA+ athletes facing homophobic or transphobic harassment or migrant/refugee athletes lacking the proper support to report an abuse are few examples where harassment is overlapping with the intersectional identity. **Understanding intersectionality can help athletes and coaches to visualize why not all victims experience GBV in the same way.** The impact can be **physical, psychological effects**, something that can **lead to unsafe environments and normalization of the abusive behaviours**. Coaches, clubs and sports organisations need to have a duty to create a safe and **inclusive environment** through **training, reporting mechanisms and respect full communication** that prevents GBV and structural discrimination.

2.3.3 Barriers for women, LGBTQIA+, and minority athletes

Women, LGBTQIA+ and minority athletes due to their identity are subjected to various barriers when engaging with sports. The **barriers** can be related to **access to funding and facilities** or **representation** and **access to safe spaces**. The allocation of training facilities and training slots is often inequitable since men athletes are prioritized. Furthermore, the funding of programs is lower when it is not related to cis gender men athletes. Representation in the media and leadership roles are also limited for women and marginalised groups, working in a sector where they are in the minority can give

women the sense that they do not belong in the world of sport. According to EPRS "only 22 % of all top decision-making positions in the national EU federations of the 10 most popular sports were held by women" (EPRS, 2024).

The described reality is rounded from **cultural and social stereotypes** that impact the world of sports and shape "who matters" in it. Gender stereotypes that present men as natural athletes or race and **LGBTQIA+ stereotypes** that portray athletes belonging to this community as **less competitive** or **capable in sports** are few of the cases that hinder the involvement of women and LGBTQIA+ in sports (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2008). On top of that homophobia and transphobia which can occur from teammates, coaches and clubs can create physical and psychological fear that can in turn affect performance and participation.

These **barriers are intensifying for a person with an intersectional identity.** Women of colour for example may face both sexism and racism due to their identity, something that creates a double exclusion. In the same way LGBTQIA+ women face gendered discrimination combined with homophobia or transphobia. The combination of double/multiple exclusion in some cases "…creates a negative synergy, so that the discrimination cannot be fully understood as the addition of criteria alone" (CoE, 2019 : 205). Emphasising intersectionality can lead athletes and coaches to protect other athletes from these unique forms of vulnerability and marginalisation.

2.3.4. Inclusive and non-discriminatory communication.

Barriers and inequality can be easily created but they cannot be overcome easily. In order to do so, a primary step is the **adoption of inclusive and non-discriminatory communication**. Communication especially from coaches and staff needs to **respect diversity and avoid stereotypes**. Inclusive communication is free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory views of particular people or groups (EFDI, 2020). Discriminatory communication such as **sexist comments, homophobic slurs and unequal feedback based on identities is prohibited in a safe and inclusive environment.** On the other hand, components such as gender-neutral language, respect for pronouns and identity but most of all active listening can foster an inclusive environment where women and LGBTQIA+ people can flourish.

In achieving such inclusion coaches and managers play a significant role since they are the ones that are running the teams. Addressing harmful language by coaches and managers can set an example for the athletes to follow. Moreover, they need to try and **build a safe space** for the team based on inclusive culture. Overall, the sports clubs can operate better under a **clear communication code** of conduct that everyone will follow. **Addressing inappropriate behaviours and languages will increase understanding and break stereotypes that exist.**

2.4 Activities Module 2

Activity 2.1 Wheel of Power and Privilege
Activity 2.2 Case study: Intersectionality
Activity 2.3 Inclusive Language Workshop

Activity 2.1	Wheel of Power and Privilege
Overview	The wheel of power and privilege is a reflective activity to map and explore issues of power and privilege in an intersectional way. It can be done alone as a self-awareness tool or in a group to highlight how different people might benefit from or be marginalised by systems in our society.

	Participants will have the chance to reconsider where they stand and where other people of the society with different backgrounds stand. It is a powerful practice to boost awareness, compassion, and tolerance. This activity requires thorough facilitation and should not be conducted carelessly or lightly.
Time	45 minutes (according to the group)
Number of participants	This indicates the ideal number of people (minimum and maximum) needed to run the activity. Minimum: 3 people Maximum: 30-40
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both
Materials needed	– Equipment: Projector, Laptop, maybe smartphones – Materials: 3-4 discussion cards, paper and pens/markets – Picture of the Wheel:

Learning Outcomes:

- Visualise what is intersectionality
- Understand how different identities shape power and privilege.
- Recognize systemic factors that create inequality.
- Reflect on personal identities.
- Strengthen empathy, respect for diversity and commitment to inclusion.

How to make this activity more inclusive	In order to make the activity more inclusive the trainer can create an example based on a person that has an intersectional identity and is in a marginalised zone so participants can witness where that person stands in the wheel/society.
	In case of conducting the activity with participants with disabilities, the facilitator can adjust the activity accordingly by reading out loud the Wheel and or supporting the participants in completing their wheel.
Instructions – Step by step	**Before the activity:**
	The facilitator needs to be sure that the equipment is ready and that the room is shaped in a way that every participant will be able to see the Wheel of Power and Privilege. Moreover, they need to prepare the questions for the discussion, ensure that there are enough papers and pen/market.
	During the activity:
	Step 1: The facilitator needs to establish a safe space and explain what intersectionality is and that this is a reflective exercise that will support them to understand intersectionality better. Additionally, they need to clarify the purpose of the activity: to understand social dynamics, not to shame or rank people. (5min max)
	Step 2: Invite participants to go through the wheel and assess their proximity to power (closer to the centre of the circle) or to marginalisation (closer to the outer boundary of the circle) for each category. They can place a symbol or circle their position across the various dimensions. Remind them to be kind with themselves as they do this self-assessment and that they can step out of the activity if they feel that is too much. Provide them (10 minutes max).
	Step 3: After they complete their Wheel divide participants in smaller groups (3-5 people according to the groups size) and invite them to share their experience/where they stand in the wheel. Remind them that the intention is not to judge each other's power or marginalisation. Provide them with possible prompts to help them start the discussion like:
	Were you aware which areas you are privileged/marginalised?
	What areas are you uncomfortable with ?
	(max 15 min)
	Step 4: After that, invite the small groups to return to the large circle and devote at least 15 minutes to debrief on the experience. (max 15 min).
Tips and discussion	The facilitator can provide an example of a "created person" or themselves in order to show to the participants how to complete theirs.

	If participants feel uncomfortable in smaller groups you can combine steps 3 and 4 and do the discussion in the plenary room.
How to make the activity online	In case you are doing the activity online make sure that each participant can hear the facilitator well and that they can see the Wheel of Power and Privilege. The facilitator can also send the Wheel in the chat in the form of a photo. Make sure that you have an online platform that can support the activity regarding time and breaking rooms.
Theory / Background	The activity: • Shows how power and privilege operate in society • Highlights social identities that hold more or less advantage • Helps participants understand systemic inequality and intersectionality • Supports facilitators in guiding discussion with clear concepts
Debriefing	**Question for debriefing (there are also few in the steps):** • Which parts of the wheel were easiest or hardest for you to place yourself in? • How did it feel to see your identities represented in terms of privilege or marginalization? • How do multiple identities intersect to shape your experiences? • What can we learn from hearing others' experiences? • What patterns did you notice when looking at the group's positions on the wheel?
Sources	The Wheel of Power and Privilege is created by Sylvia Duckworth.

Activity 2.2	Case study: Intersectionality
Overview	The activity will provide a case study for intersectionality based on a selection process for joining a high-performance national youth team in a popular sport. The participants will have the chance to see how the different identities are affecting a person's life and how they overlap to increase inequality in sports. The activity will address the issues of barriers in the access procedure and the opportunities that exist for marginalised groups in high-performance sport. During the activity participants will understand how power dynamics are shaped in the selection processes and how overlapping identities can be a disadvantage. The used methodology will be a case study based exploration of a selection process and the application of the Wheel of power and privilege (previous activity) in real life scenarios.

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Time	50 minutes (according to the group)
Number of participants	This indicates the ideal number of people (minimum and maximum) needed to run the activity. Minimum: 5 people Maximum: 30-40
Who is this activity applicable for?	Both
Materials needed	— **Equipment:** Projector, Laptop, maybe smartphones — **Materials:** printed or online Participant profiles as followed -> **Sofia Dimitrova** Age: 17 Gender: Woman Sexual orientation: heterosexual Ethnic background: Eastern European Socioeconomic context: Lower–middle class **Notes**: Lives in a rural area with limited access to sports facilities; cares for a younger sibling due to parents' long working hours. **Jamal Peterson** Age: 16 Gender: Man Sexual orientation: gay Ethnic background: Black Socioeconomic context: Low income **Notes**: Recently moved from a neighbourhood affected by high crime rates; has high athletic potential but limited access to formal coaching. **Chiara De Luca** Age: 15 Gender: Woman Sexual identity: bisexual Ethnic background: European Socioeconomic context: Upper middle class **Notes**: Comes from a family deeply connected to sport institutions; benefits from private coaching and high-quality training facilities. **Omar Rahimi** Age: 18 Gender: Man Sexual orientation: heterosexual

	Ethnic background: Middle Eastern Socioeconomic context: Refugee background **Notes**: Experienced interrupted schooling and training due to displacement; coach says he shows strong discipline and motivation. **Valentina Cruz** Age: 16 Gender: Non-binary Sexual orientation: queer Ethnic background: Latin American Socioeconomic context: Middle class **Notes:** Has a chronic health condition requiring occasional rest periods; faces lack of recognition for their gender identity in local clubs.
Objectives	Learning Outcomes: • Understand how intersecting identities shape individual experiences in sport. • Understand how privilege and marginalisation influence access to opportunities • Develop awareness of personal biases and assumptions. • Propose strategies to promote equity and inclusion in sports environments.
How to make this activity more inclusive	In order to make the activity more inclusive the facilitator needs to avoid assumptions about participants identities and/or experiences. They have to have in mind that possible sensitive topics may take place and allow pauses and breaks if needed. The facilitator must provide the floor for everyone to express themselves if they want without forcing someone to speak up. In case of participants with disabilities the facilitator can ask them about possible ways that can help them to be more inclusive, simplify instructions and provide extra time when needed.
Instructions – Step by step	<u>**Before the activity:**</u> The facilitator needs to be sure that the equipment is ready and that the room is shaped in a way that every participant will be able to see the screen and the following Case study: A selection process is open to join a high-performance national youth team in a popular sport. **General requirements:** – Full availability (for travel and competitions) – Medical certificate of fitness – Parental/guardian authorisation **Application steps:** 1. Fill out an online form 2. Attend an in-person interview wearing the standardized uniform and complete a physical performance test.

Moreover, they need to prepare and print profiles that will be distributed to the participants for the activity.

During the activity:
Step 1: The facilitator needs to establish a safe space and explain that we will do a case study activity based on fictional characters and that this is an exercise that will support them to understand how barriers affect someone in sports. Additionally, they need to clarify the purpose of the activity: to understand social dynamics, not to judge. (5min max)

Step 2: Explain to the participants the case study: read out loud the context and the participants profiles that they will use. Clarify possible questions and then divide the participants in small groups of 5 or 10. After dividing them, distribute the profiles individually or in groups of two based on how you divided them and ask them to read and understand the profile that they have. (max 10 minutes)
Step 3: After that provide them the General requirements and the application form that the profiles have to meet in order to be part of the selection procedure. Ask participants to see and share in their group if the profile of the person that they have can proceed or not and why. Remind them that every information in the profile matters and that they should move according to that profile identity and not theirs. (max 20 min)

Step 4: After that, invite the small groups to return to the large circle and devote at least 15 minutes to debrief on the experience. (max 15 min).

Tips and discussion 🌸	The facilitator can visit the groups and check if there is a need for clarity. They can explain to the participants that not all of the profiles are native population. If participants feel uncomfortable in smaller groups you can combine steps 3 and 4 and do the discussion in the plenary room.
How to make the activity online 🖥️	In case you are doing the activity online make sure that each participant can hear the facilitator well and that they can see the case study on their screens. The facilitator can also send the case study and info in the chat. Make sure that you have an online platform that can support the activity regarding time and breaking rooms.
Theory / Background ⚙️	**The activity:** • Shows multiple social identities overlap to create privileges or marginalisation. • Highlights how societal structures advantage some groups and disadvantage others. • Helps participants to understand perspectives different from their own. • Encourages questioning of norms, assumptions, and institutional biases.

Debriefing	Question for the Step 3 and Step 4:
	Step 3:
	• What advantages and disadvantages would each person have for being selected?
	• What structural or social barriers might they face?
	• Which aspects of their identity intersect and influence their opportunity to participate?
	Step 4:
	• How was the procedure of evaluating someone else's profile based on the information given? Were there any challenges?
	• What patterns of privilege or disadvantage did you notice across the profiles?
	• How did different identities interact to affect opportunities?
	• How might this exercise change the way you think?
Sources	The case study was created by CESIE and modified by Symplexis.

Activity 2.3	Inclusive language workshop
Overview	A practical workshop designed to facilitate a discussion about the use of inclusive gender language in sport. This activity will help coaching education providers and coaching staff to develop a greater awareness and understanding, through specific examples, of how our choice of language does not always have the impact we intend and what we can do to change this.
	This is a face-to-face or online workshop, ideal for coaching education professionals but also other sports practitioners to help them use gender inclusive language in order to ensure that everyone on their team, regardless of their identity, feels welcome, included, safe and empowered.
Time	60 minutes (according to the group)
Number of participants	This indicates the ideal number of people (minimum and maximum) needed to run the activity. Minimum: 10 people Maximum: 30-40 people
Who is this activity applicable for?	Coaches - (Athletes optional)
Materials needed	− Classroom/paper board and markers for the facilitator(s) − Paper and pens for participants

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	− Printed or electronic handout of the "Inclusive Language Worksheet"
Objectives	Learning Outcomes: • Understand in practice what discriminatory language is and why inclusive language is important. • Raise awareness of the impact that language can have on athletes and coaches, especially women. • Discourage discriminatory or gendered comments and promote gender inclusive language to help all team members feel welcome, seen, and respected.
How to make this activity more inclusive	In case of conducting the activity with participants with disabilities, the facilitator can adjust the activity accordingly by reading out loud the "Inclusive Language Worksheet" and/or supporting the participants in completing their worksheet in order to make it more inclusive.
Instructions – Step by step	**Before the activity:** The facilitator needs to be sure that the equipment is ready. Moreover, they need to prepare the given materials for the discussion, ensure that there are enough papers and pen/market. **During the activity:** **Step 1:** Open the workshop by explaining to participants that the language we use, not only in sports environments but also in our everyday lives, can often discriminate against certain people and make them feel uncomfortable, even if we are not conscious of it. The aim of this workshop is to help us become aware of all the "traps" of non-inclusive and sexist language and to help us create a respectful environment for all by identifying examples of discriminatory and gendered language and changing them to be more inclusive. (5min) **Step 2:** Tell the participants that they will work individually and then in small groups of 4-5 people. Give each person the "Inclusive Language Worksheet" which includes some examples of discriminatory language and ask them to think and write a short explanation of why this example is not inclusive and an alternative to make it inclusive. Allow 2-3 minutes for each participant. (10-15 min) **Step 3:** Once all participants have completed the worksheet, divide them into small groups of 4-5 and allow 15-20 minutes to discuss their responses and agree on collective answers for each example. Explain that each team should also choose a spokesperson to present their team's results to the class. (15-20) **Step 4:** Give each team about 2-3 minutes to present their answers to the class. As the facilitator, you can take notes or write the answers on the whiteboard. (10 min)

Step 5: Debriefing and evaluation. (5 min)

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Handout for the Activity 3 (do not provide the answers to explanation and alternatives to the participants)

Examples of Sexist/Gendered language	Explanation	Alternatives
1. All athletes are welcome to bring their girlfriends to the dinner.	_The sentence assumes all athletes are men and heterosexual, excluding women athletes and non-heterosexual relationships._	_All athletes are welcome to bring their partners to the dinner._
2. Every coach must have a whistle, and he should always bring it to training.	_The sentence assumes that all coaches are men._	_Coaches need to bring their whistle. Or their whistle._
3. Even a girl would know which decision to make.	_Sexist implication that a girl's judgement is somehow inferior._	_Anyone would know which decision to make._
4. The coach should call a timeout when he wants to break the momentum of the other team.	_The sentence assumes the coach is male by using the pronoun "he". It reinforces a gender stereotype by stating that men are the "default choice" for leadership roles such as coaching._	_The coach should call a timeout when they want to break the momentum of the other team._
5. I went to watch the women's basketball game!	_This sentence presumes that sports are assigned based on gender and that the men's version is the "true" or "original one._	_I went to watch a basketball game!_
6. Sofia is a female basketball player.	_The word female implies that basketball players are usually male and now we need to underline the difference._	_Sofia is a basketball player_
7. The coach called one of the girls to collect the balls.	_No need to state explicitly the gender of the players when not relevant. This sentence makes girls/women look inferior._	_The coach called one of the players to collect the balls._

8. You coach very well for a woman!	*Here the person is judged on their gender identity rather than on their personality or other skills. The "compliment" is more of an insult to women because it implies that women aren't usually as good coaches.*	*You coach very well!*
9. The boys will carry the balls, the girls will wait here.	*Physical tasks are assigned based on gender and it is implied that men are stronger than women.*	*Who would like to help carry the balls?*
10. Hello guys! Ready to start?	*The masculine plural form is normative, ignoring women's presence.*	*Hello team! Or Hello everyone! Let's start!*
11. You should smile more! You are a woman!	*This sentence reinforces gender stereotypes and places an expectation on women regarding their appearance and behaviour that is not equally applied to men. Women must always appear pleasant and approachable, rather than focusing on their skills, performance, or personal comfort.*	*Sometimes it is good to have a positive attitude. But you can do what you feel!*
12. Boys and girls, hurry up, the game is about to begin!	*This sentence reinforces gender hierarchies or biases by placing boys first. It also limits the language to binary gender categories (boys and girls) and doesn't account for non-binary or gender-diverse individuals.*	*Team, hurry up, the game is about to begin!*
13. A journalist and a cameraman will come after the match to interview the coach.	*The sentence assumes a gendered role for the cameraman, implying that only men can occupy that position. In reality, journalists, camera operators and coaches can be of any gender!*	*A journalist and a camera operator will come after the match to interview the coach. Or "a TV crew".*

	14. The ideal candidates should have the ability not to become emotional or bossy when under pressure **15. The ideal candidates should have the ability not to be angry and aggressive when under pressure**	*We often use certain adjectives to describe women (e.g. emotional, hysterical, bossy) and others to describe men (e.g. angry, aggressive, strong etc.) leading to adjective-sexism. Avoid this by asking yourself "would I use this adjective when describing all genders?"*	*The ideal candidates should have the ability to remain calm and maintain professionalism under pressure.*

❋ **Tips and discussion**	Consider starting your workshop with some basic guidelines to promote a respectful and inclusive learning environment. For example, ask participants for things like: Respect for all, even when opinions differ – active participation and constructive feedback - confidentiality and trust to create a safe space - no judgement and no interruptions - time awareness, etc. - and of course, a positive attitude to support the learning process! Feel free to adapt the worksheet by selecting only certain examples, depending on the size of your class and the time available. As the examples were originally written in English, be careful when adapting them to your language to ensure clarity and accuracy. You can always create your own examples that better suit the purpose of the activity!
💻 **How to make the activity online**	In case you are doing the activity online make sure that each participant can hear the facilitator well and that they can see the sharing screen. Make sure that you have an online platform that can support the activity regarding time and breaking rooms.
⚙️ **Theory / Background**	The activity: • Shows how noninclusive language can create barriers • Highlights social identities • Helps participants understand that proper communication is necessary for tackling inequalities. • Supports the guiding of discussions in an inclusive language.
💬 **Debriefing**	Suggested questions to encourage discussion: • How did this activity make you feel? • Why is it important for educators and/or coaches to be aware of the power of language to promote gender equality? • Do you plan to change anything in your verbal communication from now on to make it more gender inclusive? The closing remark could be something like this: • An educator or coach needs to be aware of the power of words and use language to make people feel welcome and valued. • Gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive language is based on principles such as;

	a) recognising and challenging gender stereotypes, b) avoiding false assumptions about people, avoiding discomfort and avoiding patronising, minimising or making anyone feel inferior, c) including everyone, promoting respectful relationships and encouraging learning and participation.
Sources	The activity has been adapted from University of Minnesota (n.d.). Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Language and Inclusion. https://reachfamilies.umn.edu/sites/default/files/ext/inclusion/pdf/Workshop_Language.pdf Examples have been drawn from or adapted from the Adidas Breaking Barriers Academy course "Shifting Towards Gender-Sensitive Communications", https://www.breakingbarriersacademy.com/course/shifting-towards-gender-sensitive-communications

2.5 Adaptation tips

For coaches/managers:

- Acknowledge **diverse identities**: athletes may experience different barriers based on their identity.
- **Adjust training and communication**: use an inclusive language and make the training schedule to meet the athletes' needs.
- Foster an **inclusive culture**: encourage respect and create a discrimination-free environment
- Provide **mentorship**: athletes that are from underrepresented groups may need your help.

For athletes:

- **Reflect on privilege and barriers:** Understand how you or your teammates may be affected.
- **Peer to peer support:** be aware of your teammates' experiences and treat them fair.
- **Inclusive communication**: respect your teammates' pronunciation and do not use discriminatory language.
- **Practice empathy and awareness**: be aware that others may face challenges you do not experience.

2.6 Quick Quiz / Self-Reflection

Please take a moment to reflect on your learning. Choose the answer that best describes your experience.

- How well do you understand the concept of intersectionality after completing this module?
  - *Very well   Well   Somewhat   Not well   Not at all*

- You can identify examples of SOGIESC-based discrimination and gender-based violence in sports environments.
  - *Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree*

- How confident do you feel in recognising how overlapping identities can create barriers for athletes?
  - *Very confident   Confident   Somewhat confident   Not confident*

- In your current role (athlete, coach, staff), how likely are you to apply inclusive and non-discriminatory communication practices?

○ *Very likely   Likely   Unsure   Unlikely*

- The module helped me reflect on my own privileges, biases, and assumptions.
  ○ *Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree*

- What is one action you plan to take to foster a more inclusive sporting environment?

- Which topic from this module would you like to explore further?

2.7 Watch / Read / Explore

− The SHECoach project promotes gender equality in sports coaching, through education and advocacy. There are several courses that both athletes and coaches can explore. Available at: https://shecoach.eu/

− Kimberlé Crenshaw discusses the urgency of intersectionality and structural racism. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o

− A course from Breaking Barriers Academy focuses on inclusive and gender-sensitive communication strategies for sports environments. Available at: https://www.breakingbarriersacademy.com/course/shifting-towards-gender-sensitive-communications

Module 3 Gender and LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Sports

3.1 What will you learn?

This module provides a **comprehensive exploration of inclusion in sport,** with a particular focus on gender and LGBTQIA+ equity. Participants will examine key European and international policy frameworks, such as the EU LGBTQIA+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030, IOC framework on gender identity and sex variations, and UEFA's Football Sustainability Strategy 2030, which aim to **tackle discrimination and foster equitable participation.** Through empirical research and case studies, the module highlights **persistent challenges in sport, including homophobia, transphobia, gender-based biases, and structural barriers,** while also showcasing positive developments and successful interventions.

Real-world examples, including the EuroGames and DonaSport initiatives, demonstrate how inclusive practices can be implemented in diverse sporting contexts, **creating safe, supportive, and empowering spaces for underrepresented groups**. Participants will also explore practical strategies to promote inclusion, covering communication, policy application, anti-discrimination measures, challenging stereotypes, and celebrating diversity.

Interactive activities within the module **encourage experiential learning, reflection, and skill development**, allowing participants to apply theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios. By the end of the module, both sports managers/coaches and athletes/players will be able to critically assess barriers to inclusion, implement inclusive practices within their teams or organisations, and actively contribute to creating equitable, welcoming, and safe sporting environments for all participants.

3.2 Introduction

Sports have the power to unite, inspire, and empower individuals, yet it remains a context where discrimination, exclusion, and inequality persist. Gender-based biases, homophobia, transphobia, and rigid societal norms can limit opportunities, negatively impact wellbeing, and reduce participation for women, LGBTQIA+, and other underrepresented groups. Understanding these challenges and implementing inclusive practices is essential for creating sporting environments that are safe, equitable, and welcoming to all.

This module is designed to **equip participants with the knowledge, attitudes, and practical skills needed to foster inclusion in sport.** It explores key European and international policies and frameworks that aim to promote gender and LGBTQIA+ inclusion, assesses ongoing challenges and positive developments, and illustrates real-world examples of inclusive practices in sport, such as EuroGames and DonaSport. The module concludes with a **practical overview of strategies and approaches** that sports organisations and participants can adopt to create safe, welcoming, and equitable sporting environments.

3.2.1 Learning Goals

This module aims to:
- To provide a comprehensive understanding of inclusion in sport, with a focus on gender and LGBTQIA+ equity.
- To familiarise participants with key European and international policy frameworks addressing discrimination and promoting equal participation in sport.
- To critically examine persistent barriers such as homophobia, transphobia, gender bias, and structural inequalities, alongside positive developments.

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- To present real-world case studies and good practices that demonstrate how inclusive sporting environments can be successfully implemented.
- To equip athletes, coaches, and sports managers with practical strategies and skills to create safe, welcoming, and equitable sporting environments for all.

3.2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

	Athletes	Sports managers & Coaches
Knowledge	- Learn about key European and international policies, frameworks, and initiatives promoting gender equality and LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport - LEarn about common forms of discrimination, exclusion, and inequality in sporting contexts, including gender bias, homophobia, transphobia, and rigid gender norm - The impact of exclusionary practices on participation, performance, wellbeing, and team cohesion - Inclusive terminology, correct use of pronouns, and respectful communication practices - Practical strategies, policies, and organisational approaches that support safe, equitable, and welcoming sporting environments	
Skills	- Communicate respectfully and inclusively with teammates, including using appropriate language and pronouns - Demonstrate teamwork and cooperation in diverse and inclusive team environments - Recognise and challenge exclusionary behaviour, discriminatory language, or bullying in sport settings - Support teammates from underrepresented groups through empathy, allyship, and inclusive actions - Contribute actively to creating safe, welcoming, and respectful sporting spaces - Adapt their behaviour to ensure fair participation and mutual respect among all participants	- Apply inclusive leadership and decision-making in coaching, management, and governance - Implement inclusive policies, codes of conduct, and anti-bullying procedures within sports organisations - Use inclusive communication practices in training, competition, and organisational settings - Identify and address structural barriers and discriminatory practices in sport environments - Adapt training methods, participation rules, and support systems to meet diverse athletes' needs - Influence team and organisational culture by modelling inclusive behaviour - Design and deliver training and awareness activities that promote gender and LGBTQIA+ inclusion
Attitudes	- Empathy and understanding towards the experiences of women, LGBTQIA+, and underrepresented athletes - Respect for diversity in gender identity, sexual orientation, and expression	- A strong commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion as core sporting values - Awareness of their role as leaders, role models, and change agents in sport - Responsibility for safeguarding athletes' wellbeing and dignity

	• Openness to learning from different perspectives within a team • Willingness to challenge stereotypes and unfair norms in sport • A sense of shared responsibility for maintaining inclusive and safe sporting environments • Confidence to speak up against discrimination and exclusion	• Openness to organisational change and reflective practice • Readiness to challenge discriminatory traditions, policies, or power structures • Long-term commitment to fostering inclusive, respectful, and empowering sports cultures

3.3 Theoretical background

3.3.1 Policies Supporting Gender & LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Sport

A range of European and international policy frameworks promote safer, more equitable participation for women and LGBTQIA+ people in sport. The policies summarised below are not exhaustive, but they illustrate key current approaches shaping inclusive sports practice.

European Union (EU) Policy Frameworks

In 2025, the European Commission (EC) adopted the **'LGBTQIA+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030'**, which builds on the earlier 2020-2025 strategy. Its aim is to create an EU where everyone can live openly without discrimination, exclusion, or violence, by strengthening protection from harmful practices and hate-motivated offences, empowering LGBTQIA+ communities, supporting equality bodies, and funding civil society organisations (European Commission, 2025). Sports is explicitly included: '…the Commission commits to tackling barriers linked to discrimination in education, training, youth, and sport, and to using programmes such as Erasmus+ to provide inclusive opportunities for young LGBTQIA+ people' (European Union, 2025: 10).

On gender equality, the **'High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport'** guides institutions and grassroots organisations on achieving a more equitable gender balance in sport. Its approach emphasises gender mainstreaming, intersectionality, gender-responsive budgeting, and strong monitoring (European Commission, 2022). It also highlights persistent inequalities in participation, coaching, leadership, media visibility, economic conditions, and gender-based violence (European Commission, 2022).

International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Framework on Gender Identity and Sex Variations

IOC's **'Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations'** provides non-binding guidance to help sports bodies support the inclusion of transgender athletes and athletes with sex variations while ensuring fair competition (IOC, 2025). Developed after extensive consultation, it promotes a human-rights-based approach built on ten principles - including inclusion, non-discrimination, no presumption of advantage, bodily autonomy, and evidence-based decision-making (IOC, 2025). The Framework emphasises that eligibility criteria must be sport-specific, proportionate, and regularly reviewed, recognising the diversity of athletes and the need to balance athlete welfare with meaningful competitive fairness (IOC, 2025).

Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) Football Sustainability Strategy 2030

UEFA's **'Football Sustainability Strategy 2030'** places equality and inclusion at the centre of football's human-rights commitments. The Strategy's **'Equality and Inclusion Policy'** promotes an environment where everyone can participate as their 'authentic self' and have equal access to opportunities across all levels of the game (UEFA, 2021). UEFA sets governance standards, provides training for coaches,

players, officials, and administrators, and encourages diversity across the football community (UEFA, 2021). Additional initiatives include '…advocacy for equal opportunities for women within football and measures against discrimination based on gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, or ability' (UEFA, 2021: 34).

3.3.2 Challenges and Positive Developments

While the policies outlined in 3.1 set important frameworks for LGBTQIA+ and gender inclusion in sport, most are still in the early stages of implementation, making it too soon to fully assess their practical impact. Nevertheless, a substantial body of research highlights that, despite broader societal progress, sports remain a context where homophobia, transphobia, and gender-based biases persist. This section draws on empirical evidence to **examine the current challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ athletes**, before highlighting emerging positive developments and signs of progress.

Research indicates that, despite broader societal shifts toward LGBTQIA+ acceptance, sports remain a context where **discrimination and exclusion persist**. A review of studies across multiple countries found that men athletes - particularly in 'traditionally' masculine team sports - are more likely than the general population to express homophobic attitudes, with many reporting discomfort having teammates who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community and, in some cases, engaging in harassment (Denison et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2023). **Homophobic language, including slurs and derogatory jokes, is widespread in sport**, with over half of men athletes reporting recent use (Denison et al., 2021; Storr et al., 2024). These behaviours create environments where **LGBTQIA+ athletes may feel unsafe, hide their identities, or avoid participation altogether.**

Evidence from the Erasmus+ Outsport project confirms these findings at a European level. In a survey of 5,524 LGBTQIA+ participants across 28 countries, 90% perceived homophobia and/or transphobia as a dominant problem in sports (Hartmann-Tews, 2022). Approximately half reported witnessing 'homophobic or trans-negative language' in their main sport, and 11.7% had experienced direct discrimination or harassment in the past year (Hartmann-Tews, 2022). Non-cisgender athletes were particularly vulnerable, with nearly 46% experiencing negative incidents, often linked to competitive and high-performance environments, team sports, or social norms around gender expression (Hartmann-Tews, 2022). Many respondents also **reported self-exclusion from sports or certain activities due to anticipated hostility or structural barriers, such as rigid binary sex segregation** (Hartmann-Tews, 2022).

Taken together, these studies illustrate that, even in countries with strong legal protections, **sports can remain a socially conservative space where homophobic, transphobic, and gender-based biases persist.** This underlines the importance of combining policy measures with concrete actions in sports organisations, coaching practices, and inclusive team cultures.

Despite the challenges discussed, there are **encouraging signs of progress** in LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' (FRA) latest survey on LGBTQIA+ equality found that '…the majority of respondents (59%) reported never encountering problems using bathrooms or changing rooms, while 19% experienced such issues only rarely. Nearly half (49%) stated they were never prevented from joining a sports team matching their gender' (FRA, 2024: 42).

On a similar note, Ms. Alexandra Xanthaki - from the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights - has highlighted these advances, particularly regarding transgender athletes, noting that while gender discrimination persists, **the rights of transgender athletes are increasingly recognized** (ILGA, 2024). She added that '…sports' governing bodies must act and adopt policies that are informed by human rights principles, scientific evidence, and the lived experiences of transgender athletes; measures where the individual is put first and proportionality and inclusivity are given their rightful place. The

IOC's Framework on Fairness, Inclusion, and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations is a commendable step in this direction, yet further efforts are required to implement these guidelines effectively across all sports and levels of competition' (ILGA, 2024).

Even though challenges remain, these developments illustrate that **meaningful progress is possible.** Examples of successful inclusive practices and LGBTQIA+ athletes navigating sports environments will be further explored in the following sub-section through case studies.

3.3.3 Case Studies on Inclusive Sport

This section highlights **real-world examples of inclusive sports initiatives that have successfully created safe, welcoming, and empowering environments** for under-represented groups. By examining programs that focus on LGBTQIA+ athletes as well as women, we can see how inclusive practices are implemented in practice, beyond policy frameworks. These case studies **demonstrate how sports can be a powerful tool for social integration**, personal empowerment, and community-building, illustrating tangible progress toward equality and inclusion.

EuroGames - LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

The European Gay & Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF) licenses and oversees **EuroGames**, a four-day multisport event hosted annually in a different European city by one of its member clubs. Since its first edition in The Hague in 1992, with 300 athletes competing in four sports, EuroGames has grown into one of Europe's largest and most inclusive multi-sport tournaments (EGLSF, 2023), .

EuroGames aims to:

- **Fight against discrimination** in sports on grounds of sexual orientation or identity.
- Promote **integration and emancipation** of LGBTQIA+ athletes.
- Enable and **support** the coming out of LGBTQIA+ athletes.
- Support the creation and development of **local LGBTQIA+ sporting communities.**

Image 4: EUROGAMES 2025/July 23-26, Lyon, France.
Retrieved from: EuroGames Lyon, 2025

The event is **open to all participants** regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or sex characteristics (EGLSF, 2018). Beyond competition, EuroGames **encourages volunteering, fostering active engagement and community participation** (EGLSF, 2018). Participants often carry the experiences and inclusive practices back to their home cities, **promoting long-term cultural change** in local sporting communities (EGLSF, 2018).

DonaSport - Women and FLINTA* Inclusion

In Barcelona, Spain, the Panteres Grogues Sports Club organizes **DonaSport**, an amateur sports tournament designed to **foster inclusion, visibility, and participation of women and LGBTQIA+**

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individuals (Panteres Grogues, 2025). The 14th edition of DonaSport, held between March and May 2025, included 23 activities - 19 sports and 4 socio-cultural events - attracting over 1,000 participants, surpassing previous years and solidifying its reputation as a benchmark event for inclusive sports in the city (Panteres Grogues, 2025).

DonaSport's goals are to:

- **Promote gender equality and empower women** and FLINTA* (read **F**emale, **L**esbian, **I**ntersex, **N**on-Binary, **T**rans, and **A**gender) participants as active athletes and leaders.
- **Provide safe, inclusive facilities and equipment** for sports at all levels.
- **Facilitate access** for everyone wishing to participate, regardless of experience or identity.
- **Increase opportunities** for LGBTQIA+ participants, particularly those identifying as lesbian, non-binary, transgender, or intersex.
- Create a platform to report and address inequalities in sport.

Image 5: Group Photo of DonaSport.
Retrieved from DonaSport.

3.3.4 Strategies for Inclusive Practices

Fostering inclusive sports environments is crucial to ensure that all participants - regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression - can **participate safely, confidently, and fully.** LGBTQIA+ individuals are not inherently at risk; rather, **the challenges they face often arise from the attitudes, behaviours, or misconceptions of others.** Sports organisations and activity providers therefore have a key responsibility to cultivate welcoming, supportive, and safe spaces where everyone can thrive.

Awareness, understanding, and communication are central to inclusion. Sports organisations should **engage in open discussions** with participants about their needs, preferences, and concerns regarding facilities, training, or competition. **Respecting privacy, using inclusive terminology, and ensuring documentation and communications** reflect diversity, help all participants feel valued and heard. Promoting knowledge of LGBTQIA+ terminology, pronouns, and resources supports both participants and staff in developing a culture of respect (AFES Research Group, 2023).

Inclusive policies should be embedded in **safeguarding procedures, codes of conduct, anti-bullying policies, and equality frameworks.** Staff and volunteers should receive training on inclusion, discrimination, and harassment, ensuring the organisation can respond effectively to homophobic, transphobic, sexist, racist, or other harmful behaviours (AFES Research Group, 2023). Banter should

never be used to excuse discriminatory or offensive language; all communication and behaviour must reflect respect for diversity.

Sports organisations should also **challenge gender stereotypes**, such as assumptions about which sports are 'for men' or 'for women', and provide opportunities for all participants to engage freely. **Practical inclusivity** includes offering flexible options for kits and equipment that accommodate comfort and safety for all participants, regardless of gender identity (AFES Research Group, 2023).

Celebrating differences through **visible role models, inclusive campaigns, and participation initiatives** can empower individuals, promote confidence, and strengthen community (NSPCC, 2022). By combining policy, awareness, and everyday practices, sports organisations can create an environment where every participant feels respected, included, and supported to develop their skills and enjoy their chosen sport.

3.4 Activities Module 3

Activity 3.1 'Walking in their Shoes': Understanding Inclusion through Role-Play
Activity 3.2 'Design your Inclusive Sport Environment' - from Barriers to Solutions

Activity 3.1	'Walking in their Shoes': Understanding Inclusion through role-play
Overview	A role-play activity where participants explore real-life scenarios involving gender and LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport. Participants act out situations based on common challenges athletes face (e.g. discriminatory language, team selection issues, locker room concerns) and practice responding in respectful and inclusive ways.
Time	45-60 minutes
Number of participants	3-5 participants
Who is this activity applicable for?	For both target groups
Materials needed	− Printed scenario cards − Pens or markers
Objectives	• Build empathy by understanding the experiences of women and LGBTQIA+ athletes. • Practice inclusive communication and behavioural responses. • Strengthen participants' ability to identify and challenge discriminatory behaviour. • Translate policy principles into practical actions.

How to make this activity more inclusive	• Ensure scenarios avoid stereotypes and reflect diverse identities. • Allow participants to choose roles - never assign someone a gender identity they are uncomfortable portraying. • Provide the option to observe rather than act. • Offer content warnings and allow participants to step out if needed

Instructions – Step by step	1. **Introduction (5 min):** Briefly explain that the purpose is to practice real-life inclusive behaviours, not to judge or embarrass anyone.
	2. **Scenario Selection (5 min):** Divide participants into small groups. Hand each group one scenario card - for example:
	   o A transgender athlete being questioned about their eligibility.
	   o A lesbian player experiencing exclusionary behaviour at training.
	   o A woman athlete being told she is 'too emotional' to lead.
	   o Homophobic 'banter' in the changing room.
	   o A non-binary athlete unsure which team or competition category fits them.
	3. **Role Assignment (2 min):** Each group assigns:
	   o The athlete
	   o The coach/manager
	   o A bystander
	   o Optional: a 'policy observer' who notes good/bad practice
	4. **Role-Play (10 min):** Groups act out the scenario, focusing on:
	   o realistic behaviour
	   o emotional responses
	   o possible harms or risks
	   o inclusive actions the staff/coach/bystander could take
	5. **Group Reflection (10 min):** Each group discusses:
	   o What went well?
	   o What felt uncomfortable?
	   o What could have been done differently?
	6. **Whole-Group Sharing (10-15 min):** Groups summarise their learnings. Trainer connects these reflections to organisational policies, safeguarding expectations, and inclusive communication practices.

Tips and discussion	• Encourage participants to question assumptions (e.g. 'Which team should you be on?' vs. 'How can we support you to participate safely?'). • Emphasise person-centred approaches, aligning with the IOC Framework and EU strategies. • Highlight that bystander intervention is a powerful tool. • Remind participants that inclusion is a shared responsibility, not only the job of minority groups.
How to make the activity online	• Use breakout rooms for small groups. • Share scenario cards via screen or chat. • Use collaborative tools (Mural, Google Docs) for reflections. • Participants can role-play with cameras on or via written chat if preferred.
Theory / Background	• EU LGBTQIA+ Equality Strategy 2026–2030 (barriers in sport). • IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination. • UEFA Equality and Inclusion Policy. • Research showing prevalence of discriminatory language (Denison et al., Hartmann-Tews, Storr et al.).

	• Positive developments noted by FRA and Special Rapporteur Alexandra Xanthaki.
	• Inclusive practice principles: communication, safeguarding, bystander action, challenging stereotypes.
Debriefing	Ask participants:
	• How did it feel to play different roles?
	• What assumptions did you notice surfacing?
	• Which organisational changes could prevent similar incidents?
	• How can we support athletes before issues escalate?
	• What specific actions can you take immediately in your role?
Sources	Földi, L. (2019) *OUTSPORT Toolkit: Supporting Sport Educators in Creating and Maintaining an Inclusive Sport Community Based on Diversity of Gender Identities and Sexual Orientations*. Available at: https://www.out-sport.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/OUTSPORT-TOOLKIT-EDUCATION-THROUGH-SPORT.pdf

Activity 3.2	"Design your Inclusive Sport Environment" - from Barriers to Solutions
Overview	Participants work in groups to identify barriers faced by women and LGBTQIA+ athletes and design concrete, practical, and achievable actions that a sports organisation could implement. The activity fosters problem-solving and applies the policies and case studies discussed in the module.
Time	60 minutes
Number of participants	8-30 participants
Who is this activity applicable for?	For both target groups
Materials needed	− Printed barrier cards − Action-planning template − Flipchart paper or whiteboard − Markers, pens − Sticky notes
Objectives	• Identify structural, cultural, and behavioural barriers in sport participation.
	• Apply international and EU policy principles to real situations.
	• Develop concrete, measurable actions to improve inclusion.
	• Strengthen participants' capacity to design safe, welcoming sport environments.

How to make this activity more inclusive	• Provide barrier cards in plain, accessible language. • Allow participants to choose a focus (women, LGBTQIA+, or intersectional perspectives). • Ensure examples avoid gender or cultural stereotypes.

Instructions – Step by step	1. **Warm-Up (5 min):** Ask: 'What does an inclusive sports environment look like to you?' Gather 5-6 quick ideas on a flipchart.
	2. **Barrier Identification (10 min):** Groups receive a set of 'barrier cards' e.g.:
	   • Gender stereotypes in certain sports
	   • Rigid binary categories
	   • Limited facilities (changing rooms, equipment)
	   • Use of discriminatory language
	   • Lack of visibility for women/LGBTQIA+ athletes
	   • Inadequate safeguarding policies
	   • Exclusionary team selection criteria
	Alternatively, groups identify their own barriers.
	3. **Selecting a Barrier (5 min):** Each group chooses one barrier to work on - preferably one relevant to their real environment.
	4. **Designing Solutions (20 min):** Using a template, groups address:
	   • What policy framework supports inclusive action?
	   • Who is affected?
	   • What action will address the barrier?
	   • Who is responsible?
	   • What resources are needed?
	   • What would success look like?
	   • Encourage reference to case studies (EuroGames, DonaSport) for inspiration.
	5. **Group Presentations (10-15 min):** Each group presents its action plan. Others provide constructive feedback.
	6. **Consolidation (5 min):** Trainer highlights common themes, feasibility, and immediate next steps for participants' organisations.

Tips and discussion	• Encourage realistic, small-scale actions rather than abstract ideals. • Link ideas to existing EU/IOC/UEFA frameworks to increase credibility. • Reinforce that inclusion is ongoing - plans must be adaptable and reviewed regularly. • Use examples from EuroGames or DonaSport to spark creativity.
How to make the activity online	• Use breakout rooms. • Provide barrier cards via digital slides. • Use shared templates in Google Docs or Mural. • Present action plans through screen-sharing.
Theory / Background	• EU LGBTQIA+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030 (removing participation barriers). • High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport (gender mainstreaming). • IOC principles: inclusion, proportionality, non-discrimination, athlete-centred. • Findings from Outsport, FRA, and academic studies on discrimination.

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	• Case studies demonstrating successful inclusive practice (EuroGames, DonaSport).
Debriefing 💬	Questions: • What barrier did your group work on and why? • How realistic is your proposed action within your organisation? • What resistance might you face, and how can you navigate it? • What quick wins can be implemented immediately? • Which policy framework or safeguarding rule supports your action?
Sources 💡	Földi, L. (2019) *OUTSPORT Toolkit: Supporting Sport Educators in Creating and Maintaining an Inclusive Sport Community Based on Diversity of Gender Identities and Sexual Orientations*. Available at: https://www.out-sport.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/OUTSPORT-TOOLKIT-EDUCATION-THROUGH-SPORT.pdf

3.5 Quick Quiz / Self-Reflection

1. Knowledge & Understanding (Rating scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much)
a. I can identify how EU and IOC policies support gender and LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport.
b. I understand the persistent challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ and women athletes, including homophobia, transphobia, and gender-based bias.
c. I can describe real-world examples of inclusive sports initiatives (e.g. EuroGames, DonaSport) and their key strategies.

2. Skills & Confidence (Rating scale: 1 = Not confident, 5 = Very confident)
a. I feel confident applying inclusive practices in sports settings, such as respectful communication, pronoun use, and accommodating diverse needs.
b. I feel prepared to challenge exclusionary behaviours, stereotypes, or discrimination in my team or organisation.

3. Behaviour & Application (Multiple choice)
When I encounter non-inclusive behaviours (e.g., homophobic language, gendered assumptions, exclusion), I am most likely to:
- Intervene immediately to correct it
- Discuss it privately with the individual(s) involved
- Seek guidance from policies or equality leads
- Avoid taking action because I feel unsure
- Other (please specify)

4. Reflection (Open-ended)
Which element of this module had the most impact on your understanding of inclusion in sport? (e.g. policies, research findings, case studies, strategies for inclusive practice)

5. Future Action (Open-ended)
Based on what you have learned, what concrete steps will you take to foster inclusive environments in your sports context? (e.g. reviewing policies, promoting events, inclusive team culture, role modelling, training staff or players)

3.6 Watch / Read / Explore

- European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO) (2022) Index of Top LGBTQI+ Policies and Practices in Sport.
- Moving to Inclusion (2025) Moving to Inclusion Diagnostic Toolkit.
- AFES Research Group (2023) Theoretical and Practical Guide on Sport, Inclusion and LGBTI Diversity.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and United Nations (UN) Women (2023) Handbook on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport.

Module 4 Reflection, Good Practices & Action Planning

4.1 What will you learn?

Module 4 addresses the **fundamental concepts of diversity, gender equality, and inclusion** in the context of **modern sports organizations.** Despite growing recognition that diverse environments promote greater creativity, innovation, and performance, the sports sector continues to be marked by structural inequalities, internal resistance, and organizational practices that are not very inclusive.

Image 6 – From the official University of Manitoba students' newspaper

The module explores how **individual characteristics** such as gender, sexual orientation, among others, **influence opportunities, experiences, and outcomes within sports structures.** It also analyzes the **impact of stereotypes**, inequalities in access, underrepresentation in leadership positions, unequal distribution of resources, and limited media visibility of women's sports and LGBTQIA+ athletes.

Through the study of theoretical concepts, contrasted with the current reality, the module highlights the gap between discourse and practice in sports organizations. Although there is a theoretical consensus on the benefits of diversity, many sports clubs, federations, and entities still lack effective and sustained strategies to promote truly inclusive environments.

This module also presents **examples of good practices at the European level**, such as initiatives by UEFA, the Cyprus Basketball Federation, Sports England, and the Portuguese association All Together 4 Sports, which demonstrate that change is possible when there are strategic policies, structured training, and organizational commitment.

Image 7 – Retrieved from: idrottsforum.org

The main objective of Module 4 is to **provide coaches, sports managers and athletes a critical reflection** on the challenges and opportunities related to gender equality and inclusion in sport, highlighting the essential role of organizations in building fairer, more representative sports ecosystems that can empower all people.

The module also contains **two practical activities** in the areas of diversity and resistance to change, as well as a short quiz to assess participants' knowledge and in the end, some reading recommendations.

4.2 Introduction

Diversity and inclusion have become **fundamental pillars** for the sustainable development of modern sports organizations. In a sector historically marked by gender inequalities, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices, it is essential to understand how individual differences in gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic background, among others can influence experiences, opportunities, and outcomes within sports structures. Although theory widely recognizes that diverse environments promote greater creativity, innovation, and performance, the **reality shows** that many clubs, federations, and sports entities continue to face **significant challenges in implementing effective diversity strategies.**

Inequalities persist in areas such as **access to practice, representation in leadership positions, funding, media coverage, and the inclusion of trans and non-binary athletes**. Resistance to change, still present in many organizations, is one of the main obstacles to the implementation of truly inclusive policies. However, examples of good practice at the European level demonstrate that it is possible to create fairer, more balanced, and more representative sporting environments.

The module 4 aims to explore these concepts, analyse and make a reflection on the **gap between theory and practice**, and highlight the importance of a strategic approach to promoting gender equality and inclusion in sport. In doing so, it underscores the crucial role of organizations in building a sporting ecosystem that can welcome, value, and empower all people.

The **role of sports managers, coaches and athletes is crucial for the development of organizational cultures** that value innovation, quality and diversity. In this module sports management, coaches and

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athletes can **learn that gender equality** and **inclusion** in sports isn't just a moral imperative, it brings **tangible benefits to team performance, culture, and overall inclusiveness.** By promoting gender equality, sports organizations and their staff can create a healthier, more collaborative and forward-thinking environment that enables everyone to thrive.

4.2.1 Learning Goals

This module aims to enable participants to:
- Develop a critical understanding of diversity, gender equality, and inclusion in the context of modern sports organizations.
- Examine how structural inequalities, stereotypes, and resistance to change affect opportunities, representation, and participation in sport.
- Bridge the gap between theoretical commitments to inclusion and everyday practices within sports structures.
- Empower athletes, coaches, and sports managers to contribute actively to building fairer, more inclusive, and representative sporting environments.

4.2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

	Athletes	Sports Managers & Coaches
Knowledge	• **Recognise Fundamental concepts** of diversity, gender equality, and inclusion in sport • How gender, sexual orientation, and other individual characteristics influence experiences and opportunities in sports environments • **Inequalities** in access to participation, resources, leadership roles, and media representation • The **impact of exclusion** on athlete wellbeing, performance, and team dynamics	• **Recognise Structural and organisational inequalities** affecting gender and LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport • **European and international policies,** frameworks, and strategies supporting equality and inclusion • The **gap between theoretical commitments and practical implementation** of diversity strategies, including barriers and stereotypes • The **role of leadership, governance, and organisational culture** in fostering inclusion
Skills	• **Communicate** respectfully and inclusively with teammates and staff • **Recognise and challenge discriminatory language**, stereotypes, and behaviours • Demonstrate allyship, and supportive teamwork in diverse groups • **Reflect** on their own attitudes and behaviours in relation to inclusion	• Apply **inclusive leadership** and decision-making in coaching, management, and governance • **Design and implement inclusive policies**, codes of conduct, and anti-discrimination measures • **Address resistance to change** within teams and organisations • **Adapt training**, participation rules, and organisational practices to ensure equitable access • **Promote inclusive organisational cultures** through role modelling and communication

			● **Integrate diversity** and inclusion into strategic planning and staff training
Attitudes	● **Respect** for diversity in gender identity, sexual orientation, and expression ● **Empathy** towards the experiences of women, LGBTQIA+, and underrepresented athletes ● **Openness** to learning and self-reflection regarding inclusion and equality ● **Willingness** to challenge stereotypes and exclusionary norms in sport ● A sense of **shared responsibility** for inclusion and team wellbeing		● A **strong commitment** to gender equality and inclusion as core organisational values ● **Awareness** of their responsibility as leaders and role models ● **Openness** to organisational change and innovation ● **Readiness** to challenge traditional power structures and discriminatory practices ● **Long-term dedication** to building fair, inclusive, and representative sports ecosystems

4.3 Theoretical background

4.3.1 Diversity

When we talk about sports organizations, we need to understand a key concept called **diversity**, which means characteristics of individuals that shape their identities and experiences inside of these organizations. Diversity refers to the **degree of differences among the members of a team or organization.** People are diverse in many ways, and we are commonly classified by gender, race, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, etc. Effective organizational cultures value innovation, quality and diversity. **Diversity is a good strategy in gaining competitive advantage.** People with diverse backgrounds bring diverse experiences and viewpoints to bear on problems, and more creative solutions are often the result. Diversity helps the individual, the group and the organization[1].

Use the **"Diversity Training"** activity to ensure participants have fully integrated theoretical concepts!

4.3.2 Gender and sexual orientation biases

Gender and sexual orientation biases in sports refer to **preconceived notions, stereotypes, and unequal treatment**, which can manifest in various aspects of sports culture, management, and practice[2]. These biases can **limit opportunities**, reinforce **inequalities**, and prevent the full participation and recognition of individuals of all genders and orientations. Some of the main areas where these biases manifest themselves in sports are:

Gender identity and inclusion: athletes who are non-binary, transgender, or intersex often face exclusion or restrictions based on rigid binary systems in sport.

Opportunities for participation: sports historically considered "masculine" (e.g., football, rugby) may have fewer opportunities for women, while "feminine" sports (e.g., gymnastics) are subject to scrutiny for reinforcing gender stereotypes.

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[1] Lussier & Kimball, Applied Sport Management Skills (2009)
[2] Toolkit for Promoting Inclusiveness and Gender Equality in Sports Organizations - Erasmus+ Project № 101133364

Media representation: women's sports receive much less media coverage than men's sports. When women's sports are featured, the focus is often on their appearance rather than their performance.

Funding and resources: men's sports programs typically receive more funding, sponsorship, and access to facilities than women's or mixed programs.

Stereotypes about athletic ability: there is a persistent belief that men are naturally better athletes than women. This is evident in comments about women being "less strong" or "less competitive."

4.3.3 Gender equality and inclusion

Gender equality and inclusion in sports isn't just a moral imperative, it brings tangible benefits to team performance, culture, and overall inclusiveness. By promoting **gender equality**, sports organizations can create a **healthier**, more **collaborative** and **forward-thinking environment** that enables everyone to thrive[3]. Below you can find the the justified benefits and concrete changes when promoting gender equality:

Promotes fairness and social justice: gender equality in sports is a matter of fairness, ensuring that all individuals have the right to participate and succeed. Historically, women have been underrepresented and undervalued, leading to disparities in pay, opportunities, and resources. Addressing these imbalances promotes social justice and aligns sports organizations with core values of equality, respect and inclusiveness.

Enhances performance and success: a commitment to gender equality fosters a more **inclusive and supportive environment**, which positively **impacts performance**. When both men and women have access to high-quality training, resources, and support, they can achieve their full potential. Research published in the Journal of Sports Sciences (2020) specifically examined sports organizations, finding that teams with diverse coaching staff and gender-balanced leadership excelled at strategic decision-making and problem-solving. Gender-diverse teams also reported higher satisfaction levels and improved conflict resolution, all of which contributed to greater team success.

Expands economic opportunities: equal representation and support for women athletes open up new markets and fan bases. Women's sports have shown significant growth in viewership and sponsorship when given the same level of investment and media coverage as men's sports.

Builds a positive organizational culture: a commitment to gender equality helps create a respectful and inclusive culture within sports organizations. By fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and motivated, **organizations can reduce instances of discrimination, harassment, and bias.** This positive culture strengthens relationships among teammates, coaches, and staff, enhancing cohesion and mutual respect.

Inspires future generations: when young girls and boys see gender equality in sports, it reinforces the message that they can aspire to any role, regardless of gender. Seeing role models in coaching, officiating, and leadership positions provides young athletes with diverse examples of success, inspiring them to pursue their passions and break down stereotypes.

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[3] Guide for Athletes, Coaches, Referees and Sport Professionals – Erasmus+ Project Nº 101133364

Image 8 - Retrieved from: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

4.3.4 Inclusive sports environment

Creating an **inclusive sports environment ensures that everyone**, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, background, or ability, can **participate and excel**. Inclusiveness goes beyond simply opening doors, it involves fostering a culture of respect, representation, and equal opportunity for all. By actively promoting inclusiveness, sports organizations can support diverse talents, broaden participation, and create stronger, more unified teams.

4.3.5 Theory vs. reality

These theoretical concepts are very interesting, and most of the sports organizations will agree on this "perfect vision" on how the things should work but we know that the big majority of the sports organizations, federations, clubs, and companies still lack structured diversity strategies.
Diversity is often treated as a peripheral issue, associated with "political correctness," rather than as a central part of organizational development. Leadership in sports remains highly homogeneous: mostly men, white, from middle/upper socioeconomic classes.

We also saw that **theoretically diverse teams produce more innovation, creativity**, and better organizational results but despite academic evidence, sports organizations are among the least diverse sectors. We can see it in leadership positions (directors, presidents, head coaches):

- The presence of women is very low.
- LGBTQIA+ people have little visibility due to cultural stigma.
- Ethnic minorities are underrepresented.
- The benefits of diversity are generally recognized only in theory and are not reflected in the organizational structure.

We check that we continue to have various forms of gender inequality: access, funding, media, stereotypes, and inclusion of trans or non-binary athletes.

We already grow a lot in participation and opportunities, today **women have more access to sports than they did 20 years ago, but:**

- Some sports continue to be associated with gender ("man" or "woman").
- There is a lack of investment in women's competitions, especially at the grassroots level.
- Women sports continue to have less funding and resources in general.
- Women continue to have less access to facilities, salaries, prizes, sponsorships, and equipment.
- In some clubs, women's teams are often the last to have training schedules or access to physical therapy, nutritionists, etc.
- Media coverage remains highly unequal.
- Even high-level women's events rarely receive the same coverage as their men counterparts.
- The inclusion of trans and non-binary athletes continues to be one of the most complex and polarizing issues. Many federations still do not have policies in place or apply restrictive criteria. Debates are highly politicized, often straying from scientific knowledge.

4.3.6 Why does this happen?

The main reason it's connected with the "resistance to change" at organizational level. Today, an **organization's long-term success stands** directly on the shoulders of **its ability to manage change**. In the USA the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 gave women equal rights to participate in sports, people resisted and for many years continued to resist[4]. Overcoming resistance to change can be a very difficult task.

Use the **"Identifying Resistance to Change"** activity to ensure participants have fully integrated theoretical concepts

Besides this we can identify some good practices at European level:

UEFA
The UEFA Women's Football Coaches Development Program provides a pathway to obtaining UEFA-certified coaching licenses, whether for those taking their first steps as coaches or for experienced leaders already in football.
By providing **financial support and scholarships to applicants** across Europe, the program opens doors for ambitious coaches who want to make their mark in women's football and help us continue to develop the game.

Cyprus Basketball Federation
The SHEcoach initiative implemented a comprehensive, multi-level approach to **integrate gender equality into sports coaching.** The practice combined theoretical knowledge, practical tools, and capacity-building methods to empower coaches and coach educators. Key elements included:

- **Structured Training & Workshops:** A series of in-person and online workshops aimed at enhancing knowledge on gender equality, inclusive coaching methods, and practical strategies to implement these in everyday coaching.
- **Mentoring & Support:** Experienced coaches and educators acted as mentors, providing ongoing guidance, feedback, and practical advice to participants, fostering skill development and confidence.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Coach education programs were revised to include gender-sensitive content, ensuring long-term incorporation of equality principles in coaching practice.

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[4] Lussier & Kimball, Applied Sport Management Skills (2009)

- **Communication & Awareness:** Dissemination campaigns, recommendations, and practical guidelines were shared with clubs, federations, and sports authorities to raise awareness and promote women's participation in coaching.
- **Participant Engagement:** The program involved a wide range of stakeholders, coaches, coach educators, federations, universities, and clubs, ensuring collaborative learning, networking, and local relevance.

This approach combined knowledge transfer, hands-on experience, mentoring, and systemic change to create a supportive environment for women in coaching and to promote sustainable gender equality in sports.

Sport England

Sport England's "This Girl Can" campaign is a nationwide initiative designed to **inspire women and girls** of all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, and abilities **to be active without fear of judgment**. Through real stories, inclusive imagery, and empowering messaging, the campaign **challenges stereotypes and tackles barriers**—such as body image concerns, lack of confidence, and social pressures—that often prevent women from participating in sport. Its goal is to create a **supportive environment** in which every woman feels confident to move in her own way, celebrating effort over perfection and promoting physical activity as something accessible, enjoyable, and empowering for all.

All Together 4 Sports

The Association All Together 4 Sports is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting **inclusive sports** and **creating a safe and accessible environment for all** participants, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, color, ethnicity, religion, among other characteristics.

Since its founding, **All Together 4 Sports** has been a **pillar in fostering inclusive LGBTQIA+ sports** communities, using sports as a platform to promote camaraderie, friendship and sportsmanship among athletes from different backgrounds.

There has been a marked growth in the number of members and sports of the Association. They had around 250 athletes registered in the 2024/25 season, and they developed the following sports and activities: Running, Football, Swimming, Rugby, Tango and Volleyball.

All Together 4 Sports (AT4S) was founded in February 2010, initially under the name "Boys Just Wanna Have Fun Sports Club" (BJWHF). This is currently one of the most representative LGBTQIA+ sports associations in Portugal.

4.4 Activities Module 4

Activity 4.1 Diversity Training
Activity 4.2 Identifying Resistance to Change

Activity 4.1	Diversity training
Overview	This is a practical skill builder activity with the objective of increasing the participants' appreciation for the value of diversity and the understanding of what it feels like to be different. The participants will have a short questionnaire on Race, Religion, Gender, Age, Ability, Prejudice, Stereotypes and Discrimination. They will be divided in groups of 3 to 5 members, and they will share their answers if they feel comfortable to do it and discuss stereotyping particularly. One spokesperson per group will present some of the main ideas discussed. In the end the instructor will conduct an informal general discussion on the findings.

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Time	30 to 45 minutes.
Number of participants	3 to 30 participants.
Who is this activity applicable for?	All kinds of participants (Sport Managers, Coaches and Athletes).
Materials needed	– Pen or pencil. Questionnaires for each participant in paper: – Activity 1 - Diversity Training Questionnaire
Objectives	The objective is to increase the participants' appreciation for the value of diversity and the understanding for what it feels like to be different.
How to make this activity more inclusive	If you have some participant with a visual disability, vision, hearing, and cognitive impairments they will need support from the other participants.
Instructions – Step by step	The instructor distributes the questionnaire on the participants and organises the groups from 3 to 5 members maximum, they will share their answers if they feel comfortable to do it and discuss stereotyping for 20 minutes. One spoke person per group will present some of the main ideas discussed. In the end the instructor will conduct an informal general discussion on the findings of each group. Fill the blanks (you can choose not to share your responses in your group). **Race and Ethnicity** My race: _____. My ethnicity: _____. My name is_____ It is significant because it means_____ or I was named after _____. On Positive thing about being a _____ is_____. One difficult or challenging thing about being a _____ is _____. **Religion** My religion is _____. One positive thing about being a_____ is_____. One difficult or challenging thing about being a _____is _____

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Gender

My gender is _____

One positive thing about being a _____ is_____

One difficult or challenging thing about being a_____is _____.

Men and Women are primary different in _____ because _____.

Age

My age is _____

One positive thing about being my age is _____.

One difficult thing about being my age is _____.

Ability

I am of _____(high, medium, low) ability in college and on the job. I _____(do, don't) have a disability.

One positive thing about being of _____ability is_____.

One difficult or challenging thing about being of _____ is _____.

Other

One major way in which I'm different from other people is _____.

One positive thing about being different in this way is _____.

One difficult or challenging thing about being different in this way is _____.

Prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination

Describe ways in which you have been prejudged, stereotyped, or discriminated against.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Tips and discussion ✿	The groups need to be the most diverse as possible. The instructor will conduct an informal general discussion on the findings of each group. One spokesperson per group will present some of the main ideas discussed and the instructor will encourage participation; the instructor needs to be very polite because it can generate some conflict.
How to make the activity online 🖥	To make this activity online, you need to have the questionnaire in PDF and have the possibility for the participant to make groups online via zoom or other kind of meeting platforms.
Theory / Background 🧠	The theoretical foundation behind the activity it's related to a concept called diversity, which means characteristics of individuals that shape their identities and experiences inside of these organizations. Diversity refers to the degree of differences among the members of a team or organization. People are diverse in many ways, and we are commonly classified by gender, race, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, etc.

Debriefing	• Were there any questions that made you feel uncomfortable or that made you think more deeply?
	• What examples of stereotypes were identified in the groups?
	• What simple changes could you implement to promote a more inclusive environment?
Sources	Book: Applied Sport Management Skills (2009)

Activity 4.2	Identifying Resistance to Change
Overview	Today, an organization's long-term success stands directly on the shoulders of its ability to manage change.
	This is a practical activity to help the participants to develop the ability to identify resistance to change. Based on the "resistance matrix" the participants will give answers to 10 statements scoring them according to the matrix, from 1-9. In the end they will discuss the answers inside the group and later with all groups.
Time	10 to 30 minutes.
Number of participants	3 to 30 participants.
Who is this activity applicable for?	All kinds of participants (Sport Managers, Coaches and Athletes).
Materials needed	− Pen or pencil.
	− Paper with the sentences for each participant:
	Resistance Matrix Box

1 – Facts about self	4 – Beliefs about self	7 – Values pertaining to self
I have never done the task before. I failed the last time I tried.	I'm too busy to learn it I'll do it but don't blame me if it's wrong.	I like the way I do my job now. Why change? I like working in a group
2 – Facts about others	5 – Beliefs about others	8 – Values pertaining to others
She has the best performance record in the department.	He just pretends to be busy to avoid extra work.	Let someone else do it; I don't want to work with her.

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Other employees told me it's hard to do it.	She's better at it than I am, let her do it.	I like to work with him. Don't cut him from our department.
3 – Facts about the work environment	**6 – Beliefs about the work environment**	**9 – Values pertaining to the work environment**
We are paid only 8 Euro an hour. It's over 37ºC	This is a lousy job The pay here is too low.	I don't care if we meet the goal or not. The new task will make me work inside. I'd rather be outside.

Preparation

Following are 10 statements made by people who were asked to make a change. Identify the source and focus of their resistance using the matrix provided on the top. Select the numbers 1 to 9 of the Resistance Matrix Box that best describe the responses.

(____) 1. "But we're never done the butterfly stroke that way before – can't we just do it the way we've been doing it."

(____) 2. Star tennis player Jill was asked by her coach to try Louise as her partner in doubles. Jill's response: "Come on coach, Louise is a lousy player. Betty, it's much better; please don't break us up."

(____) 3. Team manager Winny tells Mike to stop letting everyone on the team take advantage of him by sticking him with extra work. Mike's response: "But I want the team to like me – if I don't help people they might not like me."

(____) 4. "I can't learn to use the new computer – I'm just a jock, and I'm not smart enough".

(____) 5. Star defensive back Chris is asked to help develop a rookie player: "Do I have to? I broke in with our last rookie, Wayne. He and I are getting along really well."

(____) 6. Rookie Tina has an idea for a new Basketball play. Coach Chuck quickly dismisses it – "Learning this play would be a waste of time, our current plays are fine."

(____) 7. Diane organizes ticket sales- Her manager, Sue, directs her to take on a new responsibility – arranging the softball team's travel itinerary. Diane's response: "The job I'm doing now is more important."

(____) 8. "I don't want to play with that team. It has the lowest performance record in the league."

(____) 9. "Keep me in the kitchen part of the sports bar. I can't work at the bar because drinking it's against my religion."

	(____) 10. "But I don't see why I have to stop showing pictures of racing car accidents to help sell tickets to our racing events. I don't think it's unethical. Our competition does it."
Objectives	• To develop your ability to identify the resistance to change.
How to make this activity more inclusive	If you have some participant with a visual disability, vision, hearing, and cognitive impairments they will need support from the other participants.
Instructions – Step by step	The instructor distributes the document with the sentences to the participants and organises the groups from 3 to 5 members maximum, they will share their answers between the group and discuss what could be the correct one for each sentence. One spoke person per group will present the decisions of each one of the groups. In the end the instructor will conduct an informal general discussion on the answers of each group.
Tips and discussion	The groups need to be the most diverse as possible. The instructor will conduct an informal general discussion on the findings of each group. One spokesperson per group will present some of the main ideas discussed and the instructor will encourage participation.
How to make the activity online	To make this activity online, you need to have the document with the sentences in PDF and have the possibility for the participant to make groups online via zoom or other kind of meeting platforms.
Theory / Background	Today, an organization's long-term success stands directly on the shoulders of its ability to manage change. Organizational change began to be studied systematically and academically in the 1940s.
Debriefing	• Did you find it difficult to evaluate some of the items? Why? • Were there significant differences within your group? What does this reveal about resistance to change? • How can leaders best support change processes?
Sources	Book: Applied Sport Management Skills (2009)

4.5 Quick Quiz / Self-Reflection

Select the correct answer for each sentence: True/False.

1) **Diversity refers to the degree of differences among the members of a team or organization**.
   • True/False

2) **By promoting gender inequality, sports organizations can create a healthier, more collaborative and forward-thinking environment.**
   • True/False

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3) **Gender and sexual orientation biases in sports refer to preconceived notions, stereotypes, and unequal treatment, which can manifest in various aspects of sports culture, management, and practice.**
   - True/False

4) **Inclusiveness goes beyond simply opening doors, it involves fostering a culture of respect, representation, and equal opportunity for all**.
   - True/False

5) **The inclusion of trans and non-binary athletes continues to be one of the most complex and polarizing issues in sports.**
   - True/False

Answers on the quiz:

Select the correct answer for each sentence: True/False.

1) **Diversity refers to the degree of differences among the members of a team or organization**.
   a) True. Additional info: Diversity refers to the degree of differences among the members of a team or organization. People are diverse in many ways, and we are commonly classified by gender, race, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, etc.

2) **By promoting gender inequality, sports organizations can create a healthier, more collaborative and forward-thinking environment.**
   b) False. Additional info: It's the opposite, it's by promoting gender equality.

3) **Gender and sexual orientation biases in sports refer to preconceived notions, stereotypes, and unequal treatment, which can manifest in various aspects of sports culture, management, and practice.**
   a) True. Additional info: Gender and sexual orientation biases in sports refer to preconceived notions, stereotypes, and unequal treatment, which can manifest in various aspects of sports culture, management, and practice. These biases can limit opportunities, reinforce inequalities, and prevent the full participation and recognition of individuals of all genders and orientations.

4) **Inclusiveness goes beyond simply opening doors, it involves fostering a culture of respect, representation, and equal opportunity for all**.
   a) True. Additional info: Inclusiveness goes beyond simply opening doors, it involves fostering a culture of respect, representation, and equal opportunity for all. By actively promoting inclusiveness, sports organizations can support diverse talents, broaden participation, and create stronger, more unified teams.

5) **The inclusion of trans and non-binary athletes continues to be one of the most complex and polarizing issues in sports.**
   a) True. Additional info: The inclusion of trans and non-binary athletes continues to be one of the most complex and polarizing issues. Many federations still do not have policies in place or apply restrictive criteria. Debates are highly politicized, often straying from scientific knowledge.

Link: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/684ab3af-9f57-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1

— GESP - Re-imagining the playing field - a gender equality in sports project.
Link: https://www.sdgyou.com/project/gesp
— Sports and gender equality game plan: guidelines for gender-transformative sports policies and programmes by UNESCO. Link: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390527
— UN Women on Gender Equality in Sports. Link:https://www.unwomen.org/en/paris2024-olympics-new-era-for-women-in-sport/facts-and-figures-women-in-sport
— Towards More Gender Equality in Sport

6. Conclusion

The Sports Bag is a practical tool created within the SISTERS project to **help make sports fairer, safer, and more inclusive for everyone.** It brings together ideas, activities, and real-life examples that support trainers, coaches, managers, and athletes in understanding how gender inequality and LGBTQIA+ exclusion can appear in sport, and what can be done to address them.

Rather than focusing only on theory, the **Sports Bag encourages people to reflect on their own experiences, talk openly with others, and try out inclusive approaches in their everyday sports environments.**

The Sports Bag also recognises that **creating inclusive sports environments is an ongoing process.** Change does not happen overnight, but through small, consistent actions taken by individuals and organisations. By connecting values like equality, respect, and diversity with everyday sports practice, the toolkit helps turn good intentions into real change.

Designed as a **flexible and adaptable resource**, the Sports Bag can be used in different sports, countries, and contexts. Its long-term value lies in supporting sports communities where everyone feels welcome, respected, and able to participate with confidence and dignity.

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