

**Guidelines proposed by young people  
for improving the quality and effectiveness  
of good practices in outdoor education  
& inclusion of disadvantaged youth  
based on the good practices  
collected from Italy and Belgium**



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## 1. Information about the "OUT&IN" project

### 1. The "OUT&IN" Project

#### 1.1 Project partners

The implementation of the project was made possible thanks to the collaboration between the coordinator and the partner organizations at every stage, from the initial version to the implementation phase. Furthermore, the creation of this manual was supported by the staff of organizations that promote social inclusion through outdoor sports.

#### **Vedogiovane**

Vedogiovane is a social cooperative founded in 1986 to promote the active participation and inclusion of young people in the community.

We focus on non-formal and intercultural education, integrating outdoor education as a resource for inclusion. We organize European Exchanges, European Volunteering, and Training. We help young people engage in meetings and exchanges with peers from other countries, to learn about their

habits, traditions, and language, share a communal experience, develop or improve their skills, and experience life in another country with people from different backgrounds.

In times of widespread interculturalism, which touches all areas of daily life, it is more important than ever to navigate and coexist with other cultures, understand them, discuss integration, and, above all, experience it through international experiences.

[www.vedogiovane.it](http://www.vedogiovane.it)

### **Asb Loryn**

Loryhan is a place to meet, exchange ideas, and get inspired. It is also a place that has already hosted many international exchanges, during which our team members have been able to participate in discussions and sometimes even organize specific activities.

Our association is connected to the COALA association, which has been organizing its exchanges in Botassart since 2009, and participates in exchanges abroad. Many young people have passed through or still attend our center, which allows us to stay as close as possible to the issues that affect them.

Loryhan runs many programs to enhance transversal skills and collective resources to support the community in socio-economic changes and challenges. LINC experts work on inclusion. We adopt a participatory approach focused on the inclusion needs of young people from rural areas, developing community capacity-building opportunities to promote equitable social development.

<https://loryhan.be/new-si>

## **1.2 Project Objectives**

The project aims to enhance outdoor education and outdoor sports to promote the inclusion and participation of young people facing three main types of disadvantage (related to geographical isolation, socio-economic conditions, or disabilities).

It seeks to support the exchange of practices, the integration of skills, and strengthened networking among organizations experienced in youth work and youth education through outdoor sports, aiming to develop more effective educational practices that leverage outdoor sports as a resource for empowering three key competences essential for the socio-professional inclusion of disadvantaged youth: emotional/relational skills, digital skills, and green skills.

## **1.3 Objective of the Experiential Activities Supporting Youth Empowerment in the Field of Social Sport**

The experiential social sport activities carried out during the Think Tank mobility in Verbania, Italy, and Botassart, Belgium, aimed to support youth empowerment in the field of social sport, **leveraging their direct experience to develop guidelines and proposals for improving good practices between Italy and Belgium**. The project **involved young people facing disadvantage due to geographical isolation, socio-economic vulnerability, or disability—together with youth and social workers—creating spaces for co-design and shared reflection**.

The methodology combined experiential, reflective, and ideation moments: young people practiced inclusive social sport on the field, evaluated their experiences through self-assessment tools and online surveys, and developed improvement proposals based on a SWOT analysis of the activities.

**The objective of these activities supporting youth empowerment in social sport was to enable young people to transform their experience of disadvantage into added value**, strengthening socio-emotional, digital, and environmental skills, and developing capacities for analysis, self-assessment, and participatory planning. At the same time, **the activities contributed to the continuous training and capacity building of the staff of the associations and the network of local partners**, enhancing their ability to understand and interpret the needs of youth at risk of exclusion, by gaining deeper awareness of young people's perspectives, needs, reflections, and proposals. This ultimately aimed to improve the quality and effectiveness of education through outdoor sports as a resource for social inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged youth.

#### **1.4 Profile of Young People Involved in the Experiential Activities and in Developing Guidelines for the Advancement of Good Practices in Social Sport**

The young people involved in developing the guidelines and proposals to make social sports more inclusive and effective as empowerment tools are aged between 13 and 25 and come from rural areas of Belgium and Italy, particularly the Province of Verbano-Cusio-Ossola (VCO), a mountainous region characterized by geographical isolation, scattered settlements, and limited access to extracurricular educational opportunities. These young people face economic, geographical, social, and personal barriers that significantly impact their socio-professional inclusion prospects and their ability to participate in non-formal learning and mobility opportunities.

The target group is heterogeneous but shares conditions of limited opportunities: approximately 10% are young people with disabilities or special educational needs, facing physical, sensory, or cognitive barriers to participating in sports and training activities; 35% are young people living in geographical isolation, in European mountainous and rural areas where the distance from urban centers limits access to services, associations, and youth networks; another 35% are young people with socio-economic or family disadvantages, living in economic precariousness or fragile domestic contexts; the remaining 20% includes young people with individual psycho-social difficulties, with needs related to self-esteem, emotion management, building positive relationships, and resilience. In many cases, access to mobility, non-formal training, and networking opportunities is hindered by economic, logistical, or disability-related barriers, making these experiences far from guaranteed.

In regions like the VCO, where youth centers and structured activities are limited, sport and outdoor education often represent one of the few accessible channels for active participation. For these young people, social sport is not just a recreational activity but can become a space for inclusion, belonging, and personal growth. The project addressed the need to remove barriers to learning opportunities in leisure time and through mobility, offering a safe context where young people could take responsibility, connect with peers from different backgrounds, and access personal and professional development opportunities.

In the process of developing the guidelines, young people were not merely beneficiaries but active participants and co-creators. Through experiential activities, structured reflection sessions, and international mobility, they reflected on how to make sport more inclusive for young people with

disabilities, those living in isolated rural and mountainous areas, and those with economic or family vulnerabilities. They identified sport as a powerful tool for empowering transversal skills, particularly socio-emotional skills (emotion management, self-confidence, resilience), social skills (collaboration, leadership, intercultural communication), digital skills (storytelling, online communication, responsible use of media), and environmental skills (care for the territory, sustainability, ecological responsibility). These skills were recognized as essential for improving socio-professional inclusion prospects, especially for young people starting from disadvantaged conditions.

Direct involvement in the design process strengthened young people's sense of self-efficacy, critical thinking skills, and awareness of the value of skills acquired in non-formal contexts. Social sport was thus reinterpreted as a laboratory of active citizenship, a space for network building, and a bridge to future opportunities. For these young people, often excluded or with limited access to growth paths, the project represented a significant opportunity for empowerment, networking, and capacity building, contributing to improving the quality and effectiveness of their social participation and expanding their prospects for entering the workforce.

### **1.5 Participatory Methodologies Used to Promote Youth Empowerment in Developing Guidelines and Proposals for the Quality of Good Practices in Social Sport in Italy and Belgium**

In the process of developing guidelines for improving the inclusiveness and effectiveness of good practices in social sport, **the profile and specific needs of the participating young people were placed at the center of the methodological approach.** The young people, coming from rural areas of Italy and Belgium and facing disadvantages related to geographical isolation, socio-economic difficulties, disabilities, or psycho-social vulnerabilities, were not considered passive recipients of the activities but active protagonists and added value in building the proposals. **Social sport** was used as a **concrete lever to value their life experiences, their inclusion needs, and the barriers they face daily**, transforming these elements into a resource for reflection and innovation.

The working method gave **ample space to self-reflective and self-analytical processes.** Through **non-formal education tools, structured debriefing sessions, and the use of online surveys**, young people were guided to critically review their personal situation, experiences of exclusion or difficulty in accessing opportunities, and expectations and aspirations for the future. **This awareness work allowed them to develop proposals that were not abstract, but rooted in their direct experience**, recognizing the barriers encountered—economic, logistical, cultural, or disability-related—while also identifying opportunities seized through participation in experiential social sport activities. Experiencing inclusive activities firsthand strengthened their critical analysis skills and made the proposals more closely aligned with the real needs of young people with fewer opportunities.

A central methodological element was intercultural exchange between the Italian and Belgian groups. Interaction between young people from different territorial and social contexts fostered a process of reflection and awareness: by comparing similarities and differences, participants could better understand their own condition, needs, and aspirations. The intercultural dialogue helped broaden perspectives on inclusion, showing how similar obstacles can take different forms depending on context and how social sport can represent a common response, with variations depending on the territory. This exchange strengthened socio-emotional skills such as empathy, active listening, and openness, as well as social and communication skills useful for socio-professional development.

**Another key element was interaction with young and adult sports role models**, including athletes from the Paralympic sector. Meeting concrete examples of overcoming barriers **had a strong motivational impact** and allowed participants to broaden their vision of the opportunities offered by sport. Young people were actively involved in preparing interview guides and conducting interviews with the guests, developing digital, communication, and organizational skills. The insights gathered were integrated into the guideline development process, enriching the proposals with professional perspectives and first-hand testimonies.

The entire process involved the project team, together with a group of young people, mapping and interviewing various local organizations in Italy and Belgium, collecting best practices on the topic of inclusion, with specific reference to the three categories mentioned above.

Subsequently, through two mobility experiences—one in Italy and one in Belgium—the young participants had the opportunity to test some of the collected practices and actively engage in social sport activities.

This allowed them to reflect on the practices they had experienced, exchange ideas with peers from the other country, and use these insights, along with the collected examples and the tools provided, to develop the guidelines.

Interaction with cross-sectoral professionals from youth policy, sport, and social inclusion further expanded the analytical horizon. The cross-sectoral dimension helped young people approach inclusion from different perspectives—educational, social, institutional, and professional—promoting social innovation and awareness of existing opportunities in terms of networking and territorial capacity building. This dialogue reinforced the perception of social sport as a strategic field capable of connecting different policies and generating systemic impact.

The methodology was consistently based on non-formal education and outdoor education, leveraging the specific skills brought by the partner organizations. The experiential dimension was central: during mobilities and project activities, each day was structured in three integrated moments. The first, experiential, allowed young people to directly practice inclusive social sports, also in collaboration with other disadvantaged youth engaged through social services and local associations. The second, reflective and evaluative, supported the analysis of social sport experiences through self-assessment tools and guided discussions. The third, ideation-focused, involved young people in developing improvement proposals through a SWOT analysis of the activities, identifying **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities**, and threats of the observed and experienced social sport practices.

This process enabled **the transformation of concrete experience into conscious learning** and the production of guidelines oriented toward innovation. The skills developed—digital, socio-emotional, and environmental—emerged not only as outcomes of sports activities but also as methodological tools to analyze and improve them. In this way, young people could transition from beneficiaries of inclusive interventions to co-authors of strategic proposals, valuing their experience of disadvantage as a source of knowledge and qualified contribution. The process strengthened their **critical context reading skills**, confidence in their own abilities, and awareness of the potential of social sport as a lever for **empowerment and socio-professional inclusion**.

## GUIDELINES

The analysis of the best practices collected highlighted the need to further **strengthen cross-sector collaboration** between social services, youth associations, schools, businesses, employment services, and private NGOs to better coordinate educational activities within a **personalized action plan** for the inclusion of disadvantaged youth through outdoor sport. Furthermore, it is necessary to promote additional actions that enable the **exchange of good practices and strategies** among partners to further enhance the **quality and effectiveness** of interventions in the field of social inclusion through sport.

### Recurring Elements Among the Practices

By analyzing the interviews conducted, several recurring elements emerge, identifiable in all (or almost all) of the testimonies. First of all, we can recognize **common objectives** among the interviewees and the organizations they represent: the social inclusion of disadvantaged youth, the promotion of psycho-physical well-being, the strengthening of autonomy, self-esteem, and relational skills, and **equitable access to sport and nature**. While on one hand the selected experiences explicitly focused on inclusion through outdoor sport, on the other hand it is evident that the actors working in this field share similar goals. Although communication and collaboration among these entities are not yet stable and well-established, their shared background can become a **strength for future collaborations**, especially among organizations operating within the same geographical area.

Another interesting aspect is the **similar target groups**. The research focused on organizations working with young people with physical, intellectual, or psychosocial disabilities and/or those living in rural or isolated areas. However, what stands out is that many of the interviewed organizations often work with **mixed target groups**, including intergenerational or intercultural participation. Rather than strict segmentation, there is a tendency toward inclusion, expansion, and socialization. Regarding methodologies, the **experiential and participatory approach** frequently emerges, adapting to participants' needs and specific contexts. The sports tools used are also adapted or created based on specific needs, such as the joëlette or accessible bicycles. In addition, **volunteers and staff play a crucial role**: beyond sports training, they require educational preparation as well as sensitivity and empathy.

The organizational structures of the entities analyzed are often based on **volunteering**, and they collaborate effectively with public institutions, schools, social services, health authorities, municipalities, and sports federations. A recurring aspect in many interviews is the use of **sports events with inclusive, educational, and public visibility functions**. These events become opportunities to spread values, showcase achievements, and create shared inclusive experiences where all participants can take part together, reducing the weight of individual limitations.

Finally, from the practices analyzed, several **common benefits** of outdoor activities can be identified: stress reduction, increased socialization, and connection with nature. Moreover, overcoming architectural and physical barriers often leads to overcoming **relational barriers**, encouraging

participation and personal growth. At the same time, some **common challenges** emerge across all interviews and remain open for future work: difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers put pressure on staff, who require both technical and transversal skills to operate effectively and responsibly. There are also **economic challenges** related to specialized personnel, equipment, logistics, and transportation—especially concerning disability and rural areas. Lastly, when discussing innovative practices, one of the biggest challenges is ensuring their **accessibility to as many people as possible** and their ability to achieve **long-term sustainability**.

## **GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING GOOD PRACTICES IN SOCIAL SPORT**

### [Introduction to the Charts – Evaluation of the Quality of Good Practices in Social Sport](#)

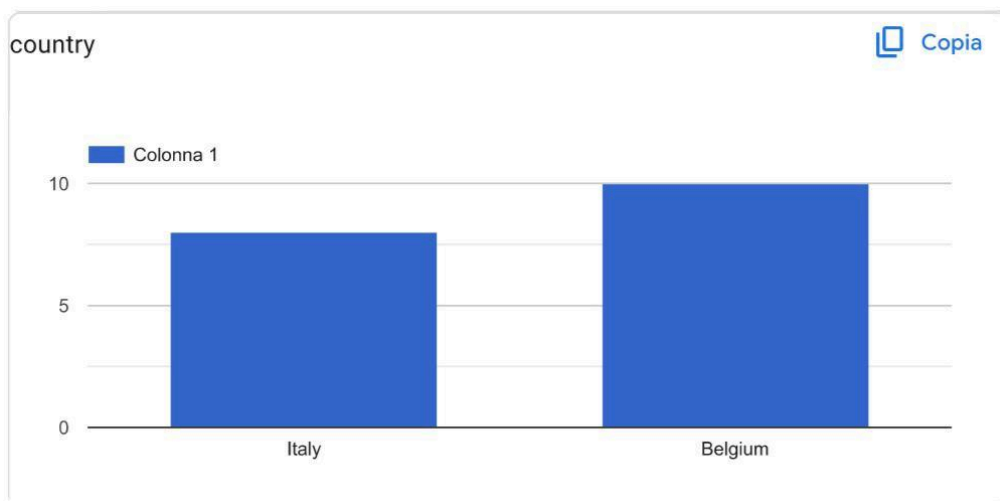
The charts presented below summarize the results of the evaluation tool proposed to the young participants of the two Think Tank mobilities between Italy and Belgium, titled “Evaluation of the Quality of the Best Practices of Social Sport for the Inclusion of Disadvantaged Young People.”

This feedback tool was designed to directly involve young people in evaluating the project deliverable “Collection of Best Practices on Social Sport”, asking them to provide a rating of the quality of the practices analyzed (on a scale from 1 – low quality – to 5 – high quality), as well as to share observations and suggestions to improve their effectiveness and transferability.

The objective of the evaluation was not only to measure the level of satisfaction of the young participants with the outdoor sport experiences but, above all, to understand how effective the social sport best practices are in promoting the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. In particular, the analysis focused on the ability of outdoor sport practices to contribute to strengthening key competences essential for social and professional inclusion in the current context: socio-emotional skills, digital skills, and green skills.

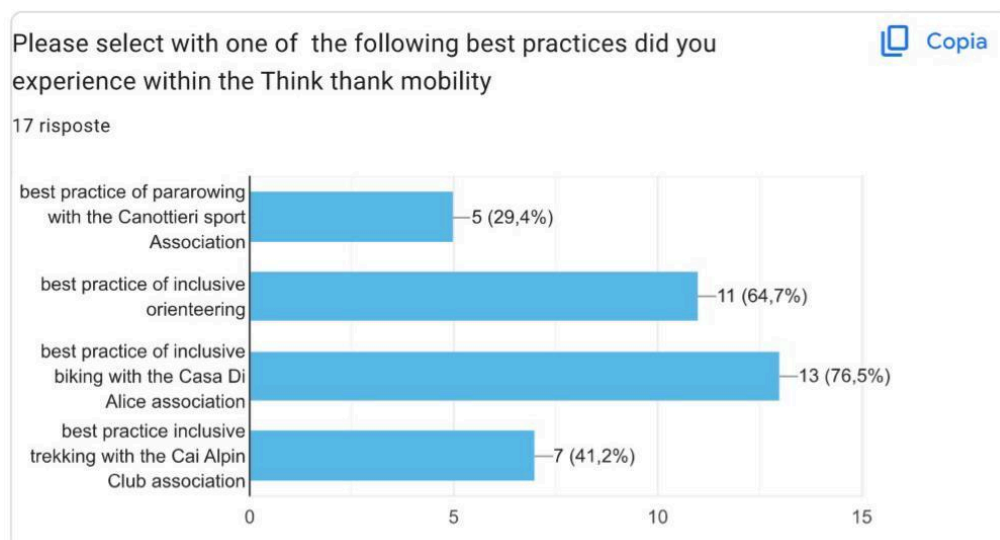
The charts therefore represent the direct voice of the young people involved: through their evaluations, it is possible to understand their opinions regarding the strengths of the practices, the innovative aspects perceived, and the areas for improvement, with the ultimate goal of increasing the overall quality of social sport as a tool for empowerment and inclusion.

## **TOOL: EVALUATION FORM BEST PRACTICES OUTDOOR SPORT 4 INCLUSION – THINK TANK ITALY – JUNE 2025, VERBANIA, ITALY**



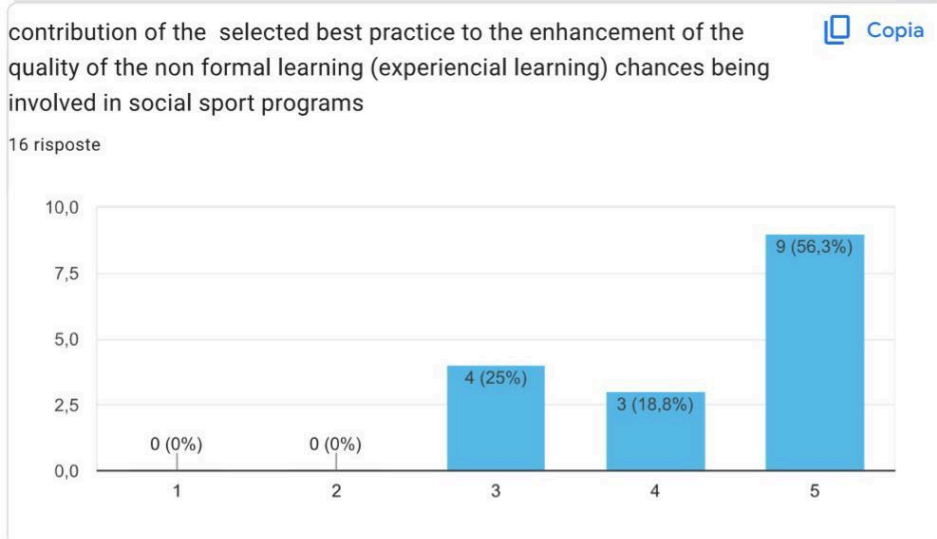
**Chart 1 – Participants’ Origin**

The group included young people from **Italy and Belgium**, which made the experience much more interesting. The sports activities helped **break down language barriers** while introducing **new perspectives**.



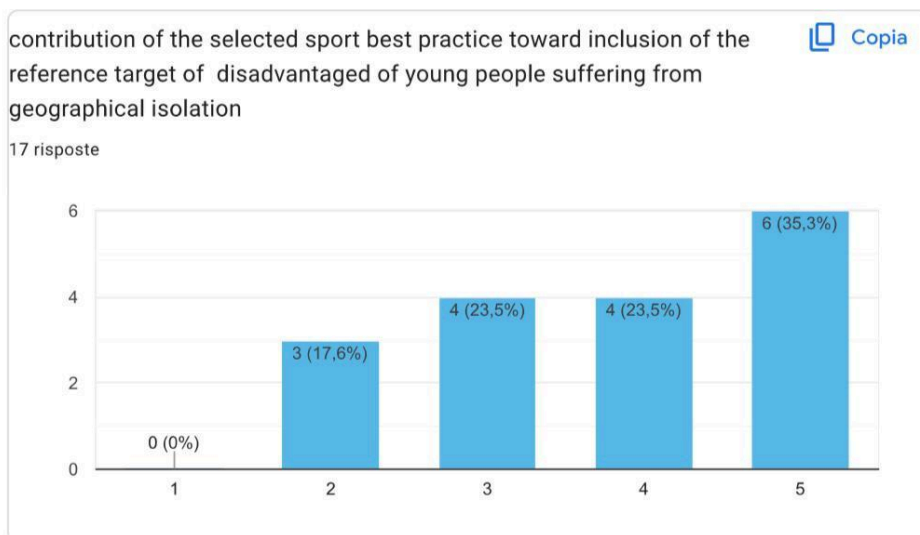
**Chart 2 – Inclusive Sports Activities Experienced During the Mobility**

Among all the sports activities experienced, the **inclusive cycling activity with Casa di Alice** was the most striking. It was well organized and allowed **everyone to participate without difficulty**. The other activities were also interesting, but this one truly helped me understand what **inclusive sport** really means.



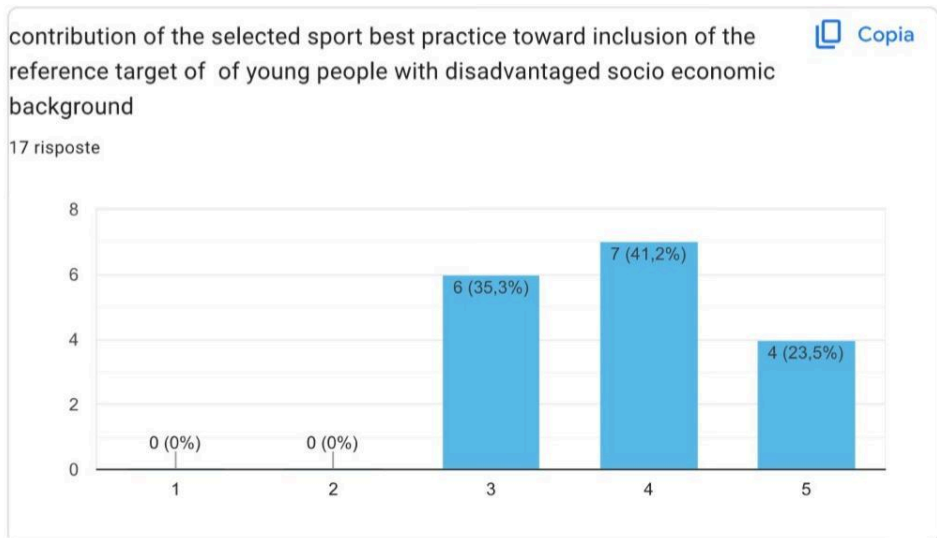
**Chart 3 – Contribution of Sports Activities to Non-Formal Learning**

“By participating in these activities, I **learned many things without even realizing it**. Sport helped me **improve my teamwork, communication, and respect for others**. It was a **different and more engaging way of learning** compared to more formal learning paths.”



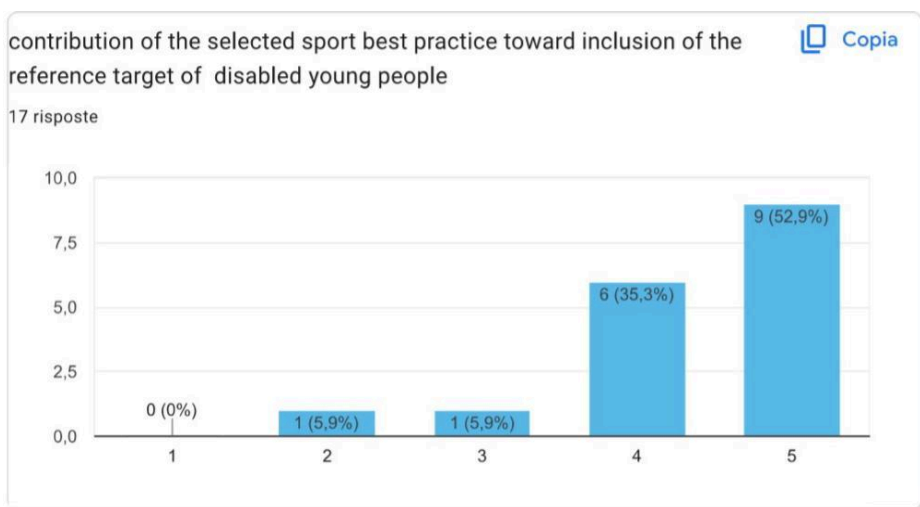
**Chart 4 – Contribution of Inclusive Sports Activities to the Inclusion of Young People in Geographical Isolation**

“These sports activities greatly helped **everyone feel part of the group**. Even those from more isolated areas or with fewer opportunities to practice certain sports were able to experience how, during sport, **people help each other and no one is excluded**. This made the experience **easier, more natural**, and fostered **new friendships**.”



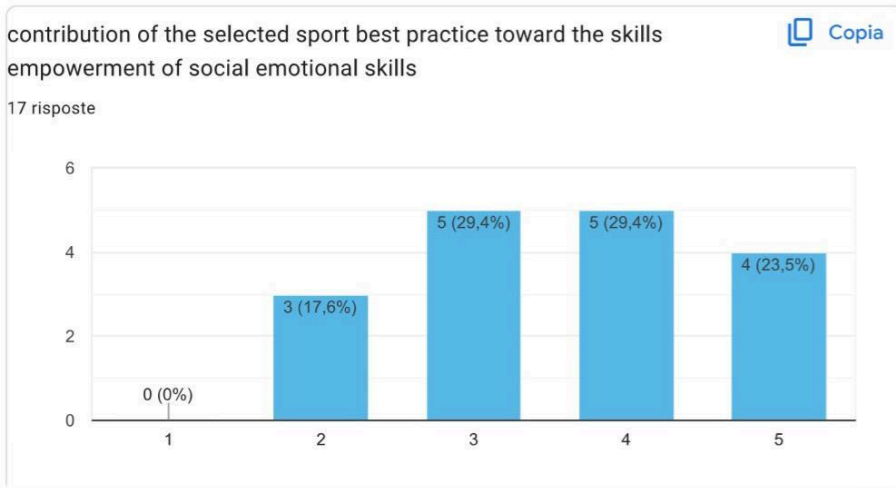
**Chart 5 – Contribution of Inclusive Sports Activities to the Inclusion of Young People with Socio-Economic Disadvantages**

During the sports activities, I **never felt any differences related to people’s economic situation**. Everyone had the **same opportunities to participate and have fun**. This created a **peaceful atmosphere**, where the focus was only on **being together and helping each other**.



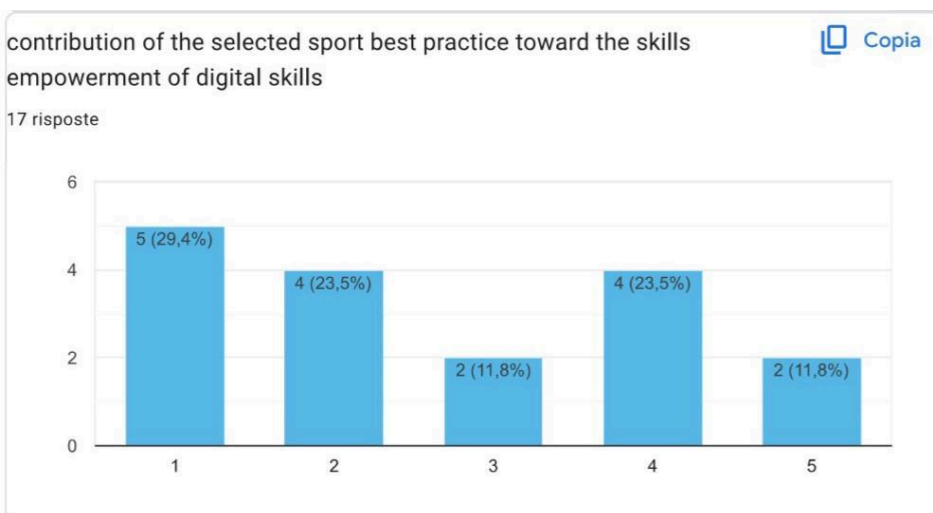
**Chart 6 – Contribution of Inclusive Sports Activities to the Inclusion of Young People with Disabilities**

“The activities were designed so that **even young people with disabilities could participate without problems**. No one was excluded, and we **helped each other a lot**. This made me realize how **sport can be an important tool for true inclusion**.”



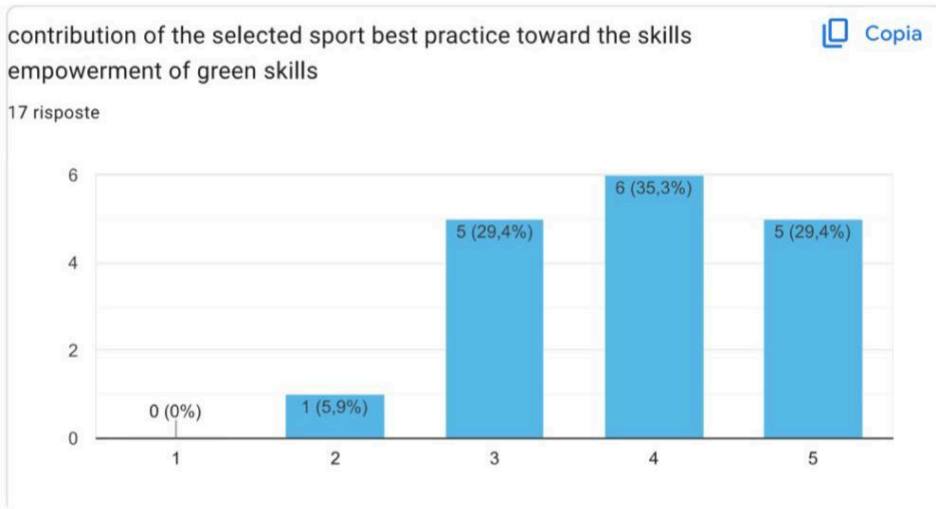
**Chart 7 – Development of Social Skills Through Inclusive Sports Activities**

“By participating in the sports activities, I **greatly improved the way I relate to others**. I learned to **collaborate, listen, and respect everyone’s opinions**. Working together during sport helped us become a **more united group**.”



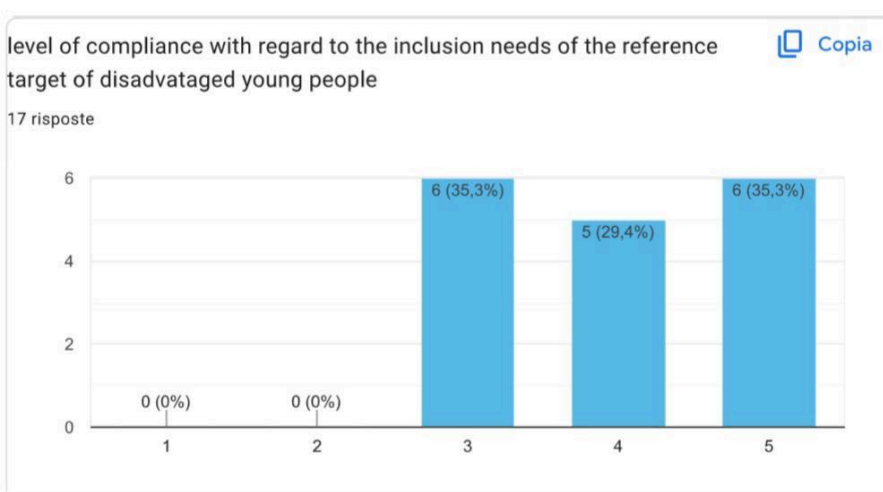
**Chart 9 – Development of Digital Skills Through Inclusive Sports Activities**

“Even though the project was mainly focused on sport, I still **improved some digital skills**. Thanks to the **virtual challenges using the rowing ergometer**, I learned to better use technology to **track my results, compare myself online with others, and understand my performance data**, improving both in sport and in **digital skills**.”



**Chart 10 – Development of Green and Environmental Skills Through Inclusive Sports Activities**

“Being in contact with nature, especially during the **inclusive trekking with CAI**, where we experienced the **Joëlette**, made me realize **how important it is to respect the environment**. I learned to **pay attention to the places where we carry out sports activities and to leave no trace**. This experience also made me **more environmentally aware in everyday life**.”



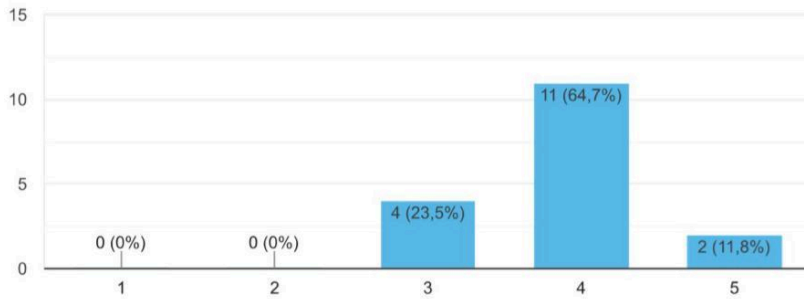
**Chart 11 – Suitability of Inclusive Sports Activities in Relation to the Project’s Objectives**

In my opinion, the activities proposed were **well suited to the project’s objectives**, as they successfully combined **sport, inclusion, and cultural exchange**. Everything was designed to **allow everyone to participate without difficulty**, making the experience **coherent and well organized**.

level of compliance with regard to the needs of the organizations in social sport field when applying the selected best practice for the management of social sport programs



17 risposte



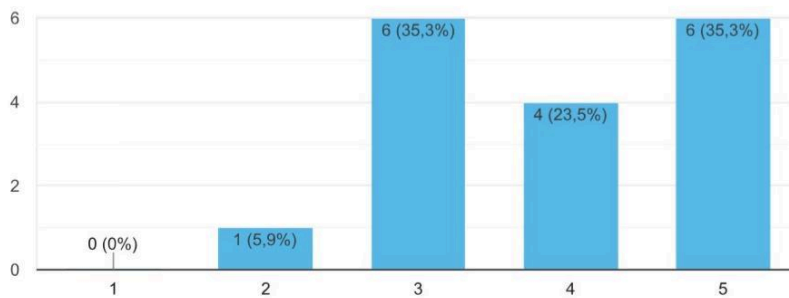
**Chart 12 – Good Practices for Managing Social and Inclusive Sport**

“These activities made me realize **how important good organization is in social sport**. It wasn’t just about playing sport, but also about **how the group was managed, attention to people, and respect for the rules**. Such management makes sport **more inclusive and effective for everyone**.”

Degree of innovation with regard to the educational practices and resources applied for the management of the selected social sport program

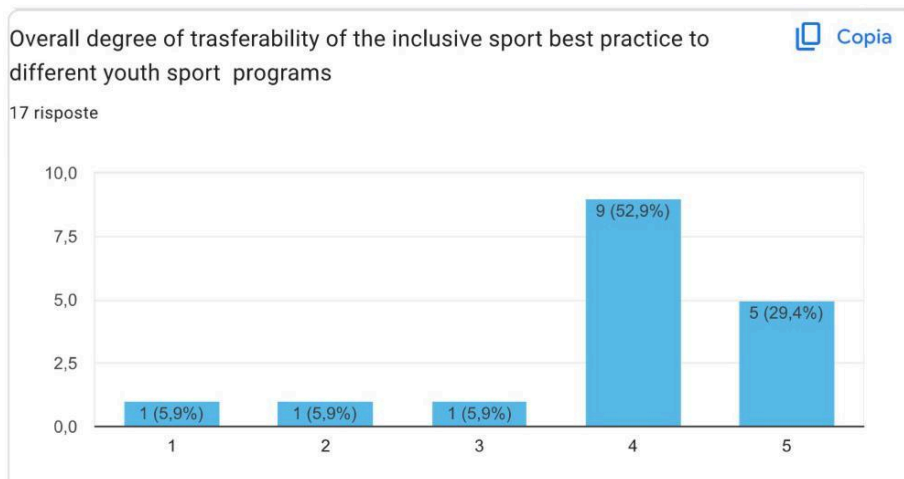


17 risposte



**Chart 13 – Level of Innovation of Inclusive Sports Activities**

“The activities proposed seemed **innovative** to me because they naturally combined **sport and inclusion**. They were not the usual sports experiences, but something different that made me **reflect**. This made the project **more interesting and engaging**.”



**Chart 14 – Transferability of Inclusive Sports Good Practices**

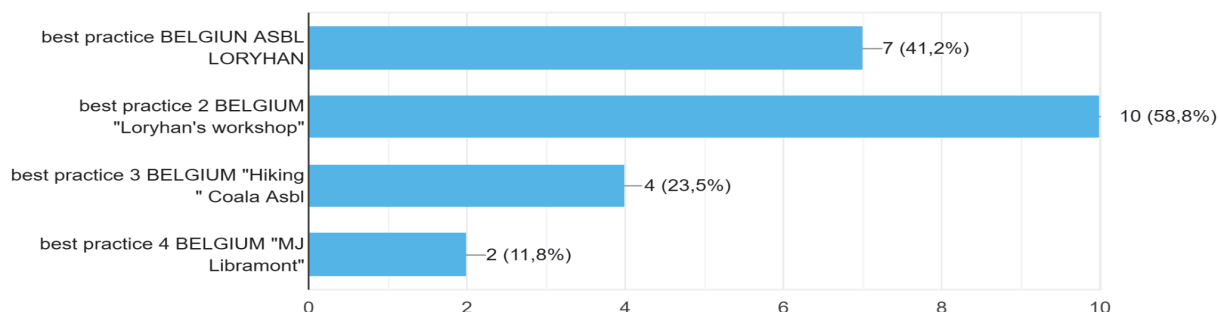
**“I think these activities can be easily replicated in other contexts or countries. They don’t require overly complex facilities, but above all prepared and motivated people. This makes the project useful and replicable for the future.”**



## TOOL EVALUATION FORM BEST PRACTICES OUTDOOR SPORT 4 INCLUSION - THINK THANK BELGIUM - AUGUST 2025, BOTASSART, BELGIO

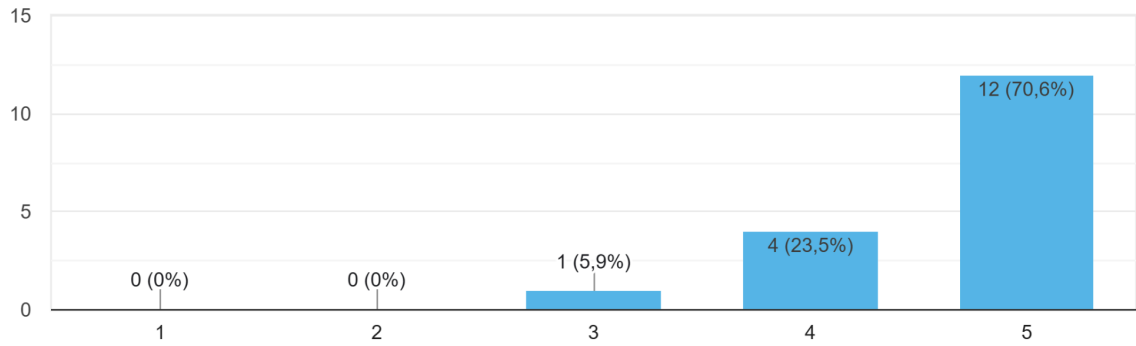
Please select with one of the following best practices did you experience within the Think thank mobility

17 risposte



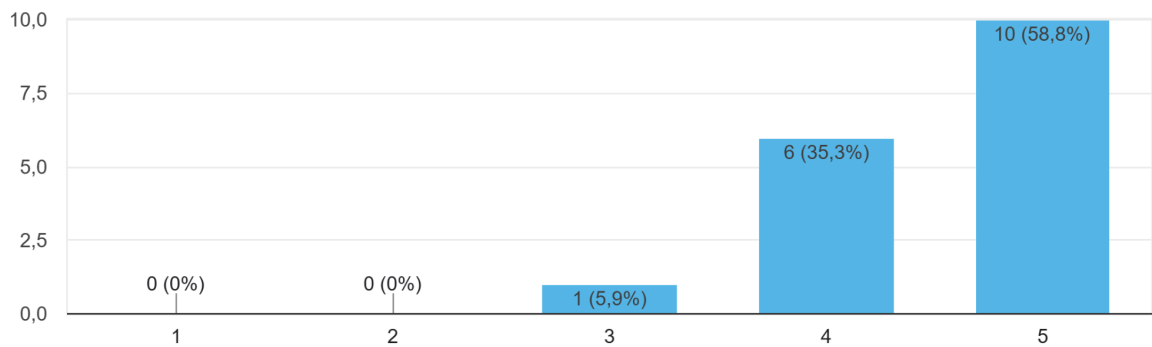
contribution of the selected best practice to the enhancement of the quality of the non formal learning (experiential learning) chances being involved in social sport programs

17 risposte



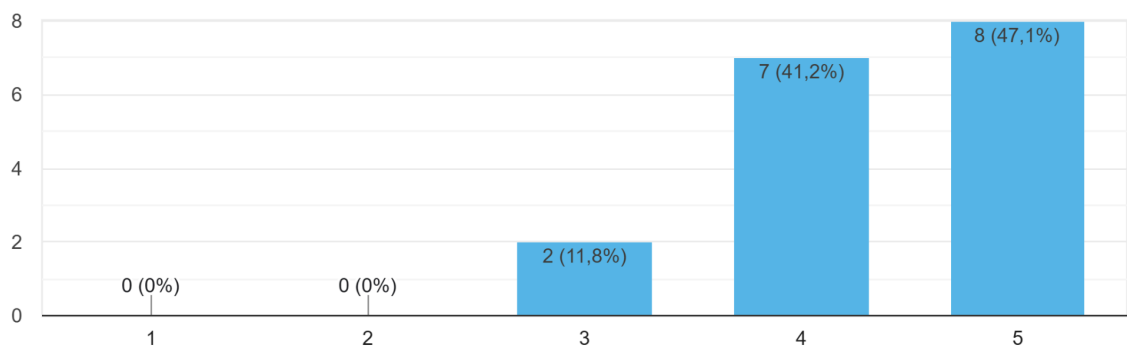
contribution of the selected sport best practice toward inclusion of the reference target of disadvantaged of young people suffering from geographical isolation

17 risposte



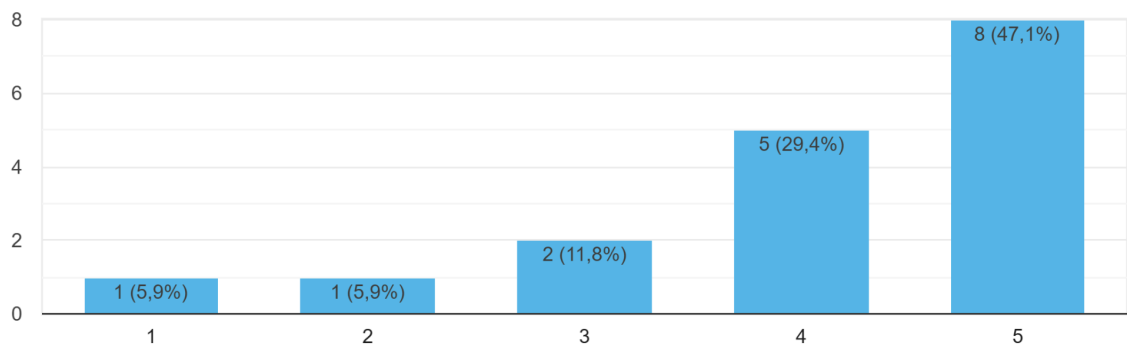
contribution of the selected sport best practice toward inclusion of the reference target of of young people with disadvantaged socio economic background

17 risposte



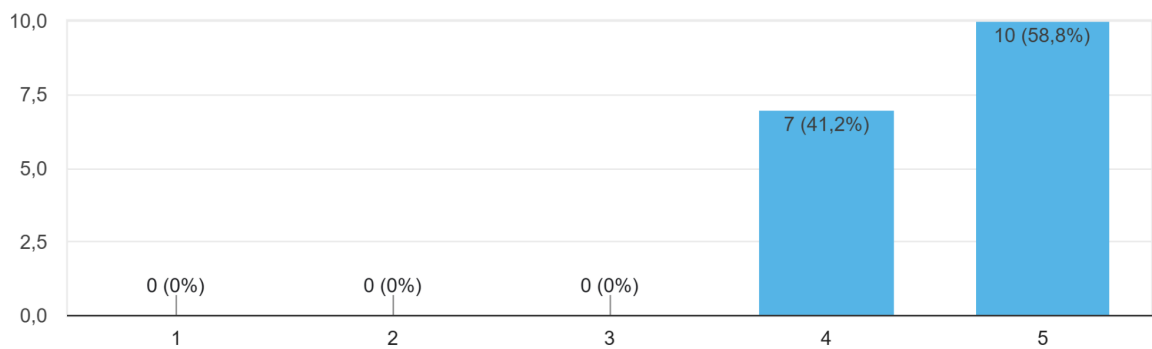
contribution of the selected sport best practice toward inclusion of the reference target of disabled young people

17 risposte



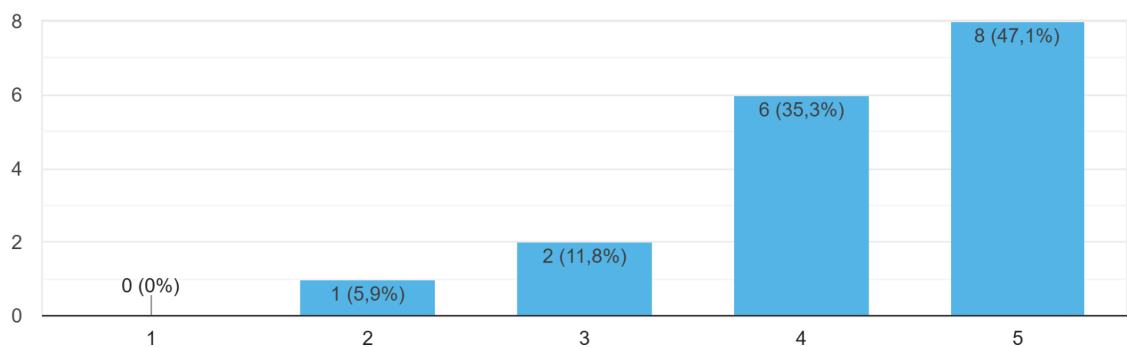
contribution of the selected sport best practice toward the skills empowerment of social emotional skills

17 risposte



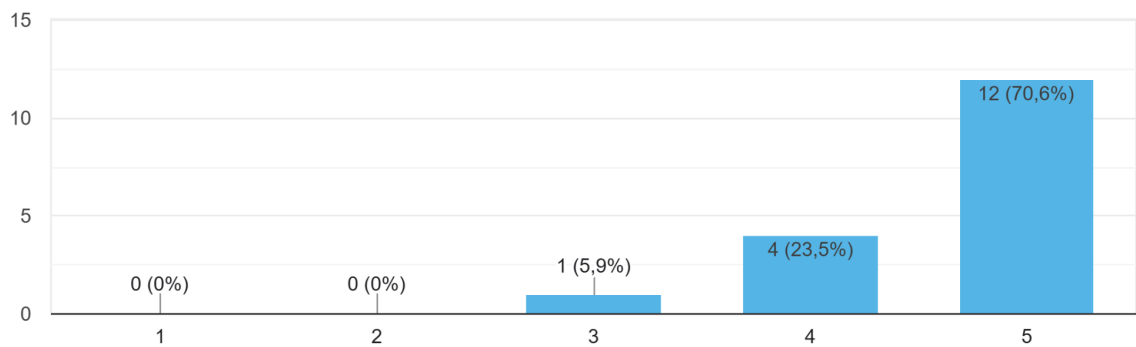
contribution of the selected sport best practice toward the skills empowerment of digital skills

17 risposte



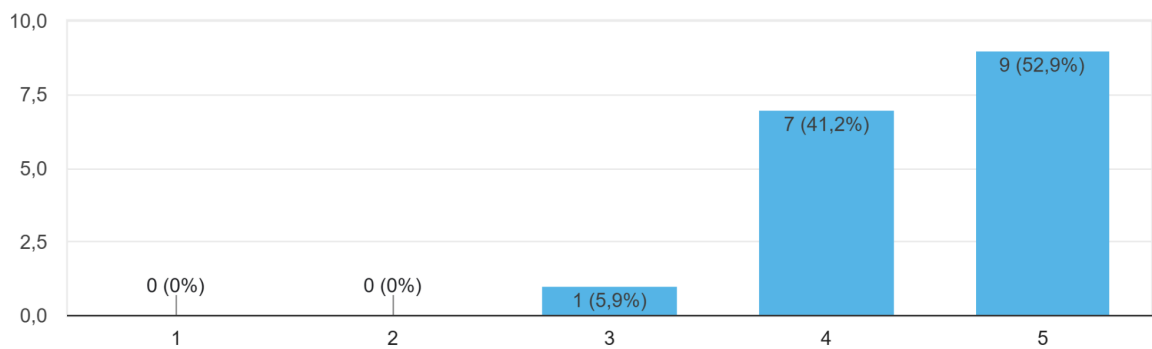
### contribution of the selected sport best practice toward the skills empowerment of green skills

17 risposte



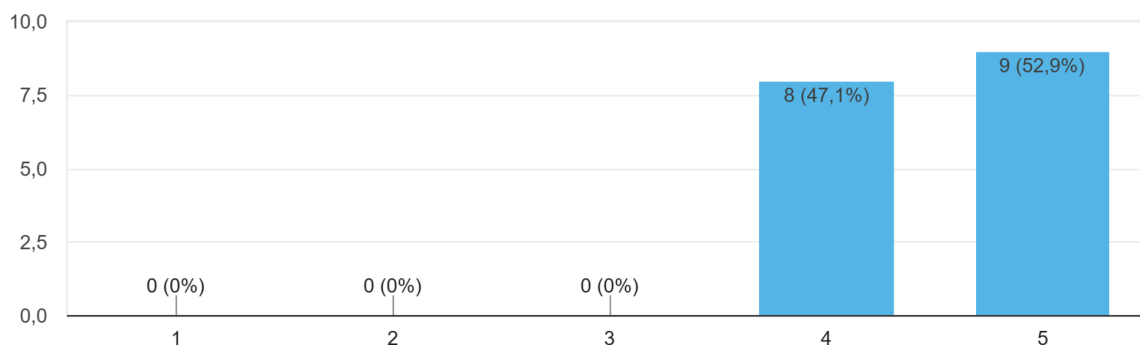
### level of compliance with regard to the inclusion needs of the reference target of disadvantaged young people

17 risposte



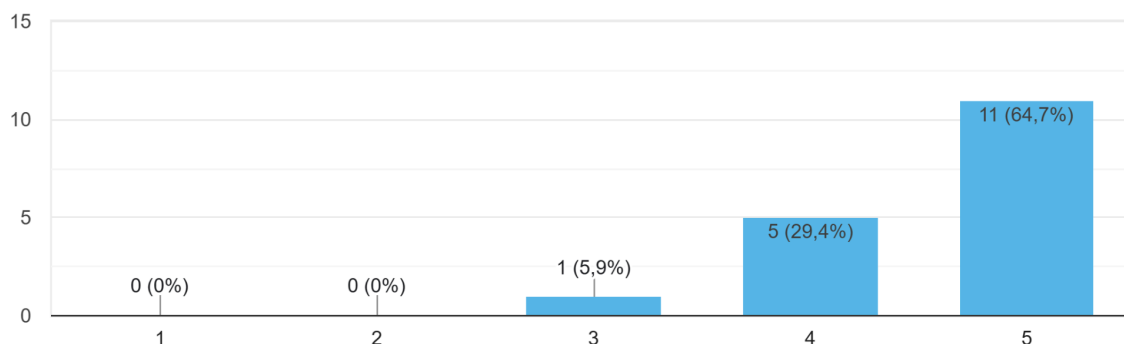
level of compliance with regard to the needs of the organizations in social sport field when applying the selected best practice for the management of social sport programs

17 risposte



Overall degree of trasferability of the inclusive sport best practice to different youth sport programs

17 risposte



## GUIDELINES

**Proposed by young people for improving the quality and effectiveness of good practices in outdoor education & the inclusion of disadvantaged youth, based on the best practices collected from Italy and Belgium**

From our experience with the activities in Italy and Belgium, we realized that outdoor sport truly works to create inclusion and support those in difficulty. We appreciated that the activities were personalized and supervised by volunteers, but in our opinion, some aspects could be improved. We have tried to summarize these points in the guidelines proposed below.

### PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE DIFFERENT KEY DIMENSIONS

#### FOR THE INCLUSIVE QUALITY OF SPORT

## 1. Intercultural Welcome and Group Building

### Emerging Evidence:

The presence of participants from different countries and cultures enriched the experience and encouraged **open-mindedness and new perspectives**. Sports activities helped to **overcome initial shyness**.

### Operational Proposals:

- Plan **ice-breaking activities and cooperative sports** during the first days.
- Create **small mixed groups** based on nationality and background.
- Introduce **informal cultural exchange moments** (games, food, storytelling) before sports activities to foster mutual understanding and the development of **positive group dynamics** among participants.
- Assign **tutors or peer leaders** to support the integration of young people with additional needs for guidance and support.

**Good Practice:** Use sport as a **first universal language** to build trust and connection.

The young participants emphasized how sport can serve as the first and most immediate universal language, enabling the establishment of a dialogue based on physical expression and a shared purpose.

In contexts characterized by language barriers or socio-economic disparities, sports activities act as a powerful catalyst for mutual trust, transforming diversity from a potential obstacle into a collective resource and facilitating the creation of deep social bonds where other forms of cultural mediation may be lacking.

### Participants' comments – Origin of participants:

The group included young people from Italy and Belgium, which made the experience much more interesting. The sports activities helped **break down language barriers** while introducing **new perspectives**.

## 2. Designing Truly Inclusive Sports Activities

### Emerging Evidence:

Adapted activities (e.g. **inclusive cycling**) enabled **everyone to participate without barriers**.

### Operational Proposals:

- Prioritize **sports that can be adapted** to different ability levels.
- Support “workshop-based” projects to enhance **creativity, initiative, and intergenerational knowledge transfer** for the development and continuous adaptation of sports equipment to make it inclusive or alternative (inclusive bikes, adapted trail setups).
- Train educators in **adapted sports and disability inclusion**.
- Always provide a “**plan B**” to address specific needs.

**Good Practice:** Design activities by **first considering the person with the greatest difficulties**, so that no one is left out. Designing sports activities based on the needs of the most vulnerable participants ensures that inclusion is not a marginal addition, but rather the very foundation of the experience.

Gathering information in advance about each individual’s abilities and providing appropriate supportive tools allows the group to grow together, moving beyond the concept of assistance toward that of equal participation.

In this context, the sharing of effort and common goals transforms diversity into a multiplier of value, making sports activities a moment of deep and unconditional growth for all those involved.

### Participants’ comments – Inclusive sports activities experienced during the mobility:

Among all the sports activities experienced, the **inclusive cycling activity with Casa di Alice** was the most striking. It was well organized and allowed **everyone to participate without difficulty**. The other activities were also interesting, but this one truly helped me understand what **inclusive sport** really means.

### 3. Non-Formal Learning Through Sport

#### Emerging Evidence:

Participants developed **teamwork, communication, and respect** without perceiving the activity as a “lesson.”

#### Operational Proposals:

- Integrate **post-activity reflection moments (debriefing)**.
- Make the **skills developed explicit** (soft skills, leadership, problem solving).
- Use **cooperative games** rather than only competitive ones.
- Document results with simple tools (**journals, videos, feedback**).

**Good Practice:** Transform every sports activity into a **conscious educational experience**.

For sports practice to become a truly meaningful learning opportunity, it is essential to integrate structured moments of debriefing and critical reflection into the design of the activity, ensuring sufficient time for post-event analysis.

Such a methodological approach helps counter the automatism of “competitive intensity,” fostering self-awareness and strengthening transversal skills through dialogue and exchange.

Dedicating intentional space to reflection not only prevents the experience from going unnoticed, but also enables each participant to internalize its pedagogical value, making the activity fully inclusive, rewarding, and capable of generating a lasting educational impact for the entire group.

The integration of systematic debriefing protocols within sports sessions allows participants to move beyond mere physical execution, transforming instinctive reactions into conscious learning.

This approach can be applied both in sports activities specifically designed for educational purposes and, with the right care and intentionality, in sports practice more generally, turning it into an opportunity for personal growth and skills development.

Through guided reflection, participants are provided with the methodological tools to decode the relational and technical dynamics they experience, preventing performance-focused emphasis from overshadowing the educational potential of the activity.

This process of “reflective slowing down” ensures that the experience does not remain an isolated episode, but instead becomes a set of internalized competences accessible to participants of all ability levels.

#### Participants’ comment – Contribution of sports activities to non-formal learning:

“By participating in these activities, I **learned many things without even realizing it**. Sport helped me **improve my teamwork, communication, and respect for others**. It was a **different and more engaging way of learning** compared to more formal learning paths.”

#### 4. Inclusion of Young People from Isolated Areas or with Fewer Opportunities

##### Emerging Evidence:

Sport facilitated **social integration and the creation of friendships**, reducing the sense of isolation.

##### Operational Proposals:

- Encourage **mixed teamwork**.
- Create moments of **mutual support**.
- Ensure **transport and logistical accessibility** to sports activities, especially for young people in geographical isolation.
- Provide **safe spaces for socialization** beyond sports activities.

**Good Practice:** Strengthen the **logistical support** offered to young people from rural areas to enhance territorial mobility represents a key condition for ensuring equitable access to sports practices, understood as a primary vehicle for socialization and inclusion.

For young people living in rural areas, geographic isolation and the lack of adequate infrastructure connections constitute discriminatory barriers that hinder participation in essential educational and relational opportunities.

It is therefore crucial to develop logistical support systems and dedicated transport solutions capable of overcoming spatial gaps and enabling the creation of meaningful and lasting relationships.

Only through guaranteed and structural accessibility can sport fully fulfil its role as a tool for social cohesion, transforming logistical challenges into opportunities for connection and growth for younger generations.

Sport provides valuable opportunities for social interaction and, given its nature, represents a powerful tool for inclusion and socialization, capable of fostering lasting and meaningful bonds among young people.

For these reasons, limited mobility and the reduced opportunities caused by the geographic isolation of rural areas can prevent young people from accessing important experiences. It is therefore essential to strengthen logistical support and improve young people's mobility opportunities.

e inclusion and accessibility to sports activities.

##### **Participants' comment – Contribution of inclusive sports activities to the inclusion of young people in geographical isolation:**

“These sports activities greatly helped **everyone feel part of the group**. Even those from more isolated areas or with fewer opportunities to practice certain sports were able to experience how, during sport, **people help each other and no one is excluded**. This made the experience **easier, more natural**, and fostered **new friendships**.”

## 5. Socio-Economic Equity

### **Emerging Evidence:**

During the activities, no economic differences were perceived: everyone had the same opportunities.

### **Operational Proposals:**

- Provide materials and equipment **free of charge**.
- Avoid hidden costs or financial requirements for participants.
- Prioritize simple and easily replicable activities with limited resources.
- Ensure equal access to meals, transport, and participation.

### **Good Practice: Ensure equal conditions for everyone in sports practice to achieve true inclusion.**

Real inclusion in the sports context can only be achieved by ensuring equal starting conditions for all participants, regardless of their socio-economic background.

It is therefore essential to support sports organizations in providing equitable technical equipment and resources, removing the material barriers that often fragment the youth experience.

### **Participants' comment – Contribution of inclusive sports activities to the inclusion of young people with socio-economic disadvantages:**

During the sports activities, I never felt any differences related to people's economic situation. Everyone had the same opportunities to participate and have fun. This created a peaceful atmosphere, where the focus was only on being together and helping each other.

## 6. Inclusion of Young People with Disabilities

### Emerging Evidence:

Active participation by everyone strengthened **solidarity and empathy within the group**.

### Operational Proposals:

- Personalize activities according to **individual needs**.
- Provide **educators or support volunteers**.
- Raise awareness within the group about **cooperation and respect**.
- Remove **physical and communication barriers**.

### Good Practice: Inclusion must be **intentionally designed**.

Inclusion cannot be framed as a theoretical statement or a formal requirement, but must instead be translated into a conscious design process grounded in the empirical analysis of participants' needs.

Genuine accessibility in sport arises from a prior understanding of both individual and collective needs, allowing educational and technical provision to be tailored to each participant's actual capacities.

Designing with an inclusive approach means deconstructing standardized activities and rebuilding them around the participants, ensuring tools and modes of engagement that enable every individual to interact on a level of relational equality.

Within this framework, methodological adaptation is not a compromise, but a fundamental prerequisite for transforming diversity into a dynamic of fair and effective interaction for the entire group.

### Participants' comment – **Contribution of inclusive sports activities to the inclusion of young people with disabilities:**

The activities were designed so that **even young people with disabilities could participate without problems**. No one was excluded, and we **helped each other a lot**. This made me realize how **sport can be an important tool for true inclusion**.

## 7. Development of Social Skills

### **Emerging Evidence:**

**Improvement in listening, collaboration, and mutual respect.**

### **Operational Proposals:**

- **Introduce cooperative sports games and group challenges.**
- **Rotate leadership roles.**
- **Encourage dialogue and conflict management.**
- **Promote shared responsibility.**

**Good Practice: The success of the group is more important than individual performance.**

The sports experience has demonstrated how prioritizing group objectives over individual achievements represents the fundamental driver of genuine social growth.

The strengthening of communication skills, based on active listening and reciprocity, enabled participants to transform competitive interaction into a process of unity and mutual respect.

This relational development not only enhances the team's effectiveness in the short term, but also lays the foundation for a lasting culture of collaboration, making the group a safe, inclusive environment strongly oriented toward solidarity.

The individual's development within the sports group finds its fullest expression in the transition from individual action to a dimension of conscious reciprocity.

In this context, active listening ceases to be a merely passive function and becomes a strategic competence: learning to perceive the needs and potential of teammates allows individuals to adjust their contribution in a way that serves the common good.

This ongoing exercise of attention fosters deep personal growth, as it cultivates respect not as an imposed rule, but as a recognition of the intrinsic value of others.

### **Participants' comment – Development of social skills through inclusive sports activities:**

**By participating in the sports activities, I greatly improved the way I relate to others. I learned to collaborate, listen, and respect everyone's opinions. Working together during sport helped us become a more united group.**

## 8. Development of Digital Skills

### Emerging Evidence:

Young people recognized that, when used consciously, digital tools can strengthen connections, visibility, and opportunities for inclusion in and through sport, especially for those living in rural or mountainous areas or in conditions of social isolation. The use of digital tools in geographically isolated areas offers opportunities to communicate, share, and tell experiences.

### Operational Proposals:

- Use online collaborative tools among international groups.
- Involve young people in creating blogs, video diaries, and sports storytelling to share inclusive experiences.
- Create youth digital teams to manage social media, photos, and videos of sports events.
- Use online platforms to connect young people from isolated areas with international groups.
- Organize mini-workshops on digital communication, media education, and responsible use of social media.
- Promote online exchanges and virtual sports challenges before and after mobilities to keep youth networks active.
- Value the digital skills developed through sport as useful competences also in the labor market.

**Good Practice:** Digital tools should be experienced as a means of connection, inclusion, and opportunity, not as a source of isolation or distraction.

### Participants' comment – Development and strengthening of digital skills:

During the activities, I improved my digital skills, which, when used consciously, can enhance communication, sharing, and inclusion, especially among young people.

## 9. Environmental Education and Sustainability

### **Emerging Evidence:**

Outdoor sports activities increased environmental awareness among young people, particularly those living in European mountainous and rural areas, strengthening their connection with the territory.

### **Operational Proposals:**

- Consistently integrate outdoor sports activities in nature as educational tools.
- Promote “leave no trace” behaviors during all activities.
- Raise awareness among young people about waste sorting, waste reduction, and sustainable mobility during sports events.
- Organize moments dedicated to the cleaning and care of the spaces used for activities.
- Include short educational sessions on sustainability and environmental responsibility.
- Ensure that sports events are accessible but also eco-friendly.

**Good Practice: Sustainability is not only explained to young people, but experienced directly through sports activities.**

### **Participants’ comment – Development of digital skills through inclusive sports activities:**

“Even though the project was mainly focused on sport, I still improved some digital skills. Thanks to the virtual challenges using the rowing ergometer, I learned to better use technology to track my results, compare myself online with others, and understand my performance data, improving both in sport and in digital skills.”

## 10. Group Organization and Management

### **Emerging Evidence:**

Outdoor sports activities increased environmental awareness among young people, particularly those living in European mountainous and rural areas, strengthening their connection with the territory.

### **Operational Proposals:**

- Consistently integrate outdoor sports activities in nature as educational tools.
- Promote “green and zero-impact behaviors” during all outdoor activities.
- Raise awareness among young people about waste sorting, waste reduction, and sustainable mobility during sports events.
- Organize moments dedicated to the cleaning and care of outdoor spaces used for activities.
- Integrate sports activities with short educational sessions on sustainability and environmental responsibility.
- Ensure that sports events are accessible but also eco-friendly.

### **Good Practice:**

Sustainability is not only explained to young people, but experienced directly through sports activities.

Sustainability, in the context of outdoor activities, goes beyond a theoretical dimension to become a lived and deeply internalized experience.

Full immersion in natural environments acts as a powerful pedagogical amplifier, making a detached approach impossible and engaging young people in a multisensory participation that fully captures their attention.

The natural environment does not merely serve as a backdrop, but as a catalyst for inner balance: it fosters states of calm and serenity, facilitating a reconciliation with oneself that is conducive to learning.

Within this synergy between physical effort and the contemplation of the landscape, respect for the ecosystem becomes an instinctive value, transforming sports practice into an act of conscious and regenerative ecological citizenship.

### **Participants’ comment – Development of green and environmental skills through inclusive sports activities:**

“Being in contact with nature, especially during the inclusive trekking with CAI, where we experienced the Joëlette, made me realize how important it is to respect the environment. I learned to pay attention to the places where we carry out sports activities and to leave no trace. This experience made me more aware even in everyday life.”

## 11. Innovation and Transferability

### Emerging Evidence:

Young people perceive **inclusive sport as an innovative methodology**, which can be **replicated in other European territories**, particularly in **rural and peripheral contexts**.

### Operational Proposals:

- Document the **methodologies, tools, and approaches** used in inclusive sport.
- Create **replicable kits** for organizations working with young people with fewer opportunities.
- Train **local operators and volunteers** on using sport as a tool for **empowerment**.
- Promote **international partnerships** for the exchange of best practices.
- Develop **sport models adaptable to mountainous and rural areas**.
- Connect sports experiences to **socio-professional inclusion pathways**.

### Good Practice:

Design every sports activity with **replicability and future dissemination in other European contexts** in mind from the start.

### Participants' comment – Transferability of inclusive sports best practices:

"I think these activities can be easily **reproduced in other contexts or countries**. They don't require overly complex facilities, but above all **prepared and motivated people**. This makes the project **useful and replicable for the future**."

## 12. Active Involvement of Young People in Project Design

### **Emerging Evidence:**

Young people want to be protagonists, not just participants, especially those with fewer opportunities who often lack decision-making spaces.

### **Operational Proposals:**

- Involve young people in the co-design of sports activities.
- Conduct surveys and structured listening sessions with participants.
- Give space for autonomous proposals from young people.
- Introduce roles of responsibility (team leader, facilitator, communication manager).
- Train young peer educator athletes capable of supporting other young people with vulnerabilities.
- Support young people in developing organizational and leadership skills.

### **Good Practice:**

Accompany young people in the transition from beneficiaries to co-creators of inclusive sports experiences, strengthening autonomy, responsibility, and skills useful for future social and professional inclusion.

### **Participants' comment – Best practices for managing inclusive social sport:**

“These activities made me realize how important good organization is in social sport. It wasn't just about doing sport, but also about how the group was managed, attention to people, and respect for rules. Such management makes sport more inclusive and effective for everyone.”



## **Conclusions elaborated by the young people of the “Out&In” project**

Participating in Out&In meant much more to us than just taking part in outdoor sports activities between Italy and Belgium: it was a journey of personal and group growth. Coming mostly from rural areas or contexts with fewer opportunities, we discovered that outdoor sport can become a real tool for inclusion, capable of bringing together people with different stories, abilities, and backgrounds.

During the THINK TANK mobilities in Italy and Belgium, we were able to directly experience that, when an activity is designed by truly considering the needs of young people facing some disadvantages, inclusion becomes concrete. Adapted sports experiences, such as inclusive cycling and trekking with a Joëlette, also realized in collaboration with the Italian Alpine Club (CAI), showed us that removing a physical barrier to sport can mean helping a young person in difficulty overcome fears, gain trust, confidence, and self-esteem, which can be transferred to improving their inclusion

prospects beyond sport, in school or for future employment. Inclusion is not only technical accessibility, but also welcoming, empathy, and collaboration.

From an emotional point of view, the project had a very strong impact. Many of us experienced it as one of the most significant moments of our lives, because we felt accepted, valued, and part of a community. Sharing sports activities, meals, informal moments, and group challenges helped us build authentic bonds. In particular, adapted sports promoted a sense of equality: playing together, without differences between those with or without disabilities, strengthened mutual respect and empathy.

Even initial difficulties, such as the language barrier between Italians and Belgians, became opportunities for growth. Through mutual support, translation, and collaboration, we learned to communicate more simply and directly. Sharing sports activities made us understand that inclusion is not only about physical access to activities, but also about the possibility to express oneself and feel heard.

Outdoor sport helped us develop fundamental skills: collaboration, shared leadership, conflict management. At the same time, we strengthened digital skills, documenting experiences, participating in challenges, and using online tools to keep international group contacts active. Furthermore, practicing sport in nature increased our environmental awareness: we understood that inclusion and sustainability can go hand in hand. Taking care of the environment, reducing waste during sports events, and respecting the places that host us became an integral part of the experience.

A central element was our active involvement. We were not just recipients of the activities but co-authors of the improvement proposals. Being listened to made us feel responsible and capable of contributing to change. This strengthened our self-esteem and the perception that even those living in disadvantaged situations can generate innovative and useful ideas for the community.

Looking to the future, we believe that outdoor sport as a tool for inclusion should continue to develop through:

- a stronger network between associations, schools, social services, and sports organizations;
- continuous training for volunteers and educators on inclusion and sustainability issues;
- greater attention to economic, logistical, and communication accessibility;
- enhancing youth protagonism in the design and management of activities.

In conclusion, for us, Out&In demonstrated that outdoor sport, if designed inclusively and sustainably, can help create spaces for youth protagonism, transform communities, strengthen empathy, and create real opportunities for personal growth. Outdoor sport is not just physical activity, but a laboratory for active citizenship and a space where everyone can feel part of something greater.