

HANDBOOK

"INCLUSION OF DIFFERENT ABILITIES' YOUNGSTERS THROUGH NFE AND YOUTH WORK"

***IN TO THE FIELD!
INCLUSIVE SPORT SPACES FOR EQUALITY***



Dr. Alessandro Mazzini

INTRODUCTION

This Handbook **“Inclusion of different abilities’ youngsters through NFE and youth work”** is addressed to youth workers, sport coaches and civil society organizations with the aim of including youngsters with disabilities together with mainstream people **using sport as a method and a tool.**

Project partners assumed that the unique ability of sports to transcend linguistic, cultural and social barriers makes it an excellent platform for strategies of adaptation and fostering the inclusion and well-being of persons with disabilities.

However, Non-Formal Education (NFE) educators and youth workers working with disabled target groups often have little or no experience in using sport as an educational tool. Many do not know how to maximise the potential of sport as a method within the regular youth work. Despite the fact that sport activities can be considered one of the most valuable NFE experiences for children and youngsters.

This handbook serves as a basis for quality knowledge management and future capacity building of organisations which work with youth, including non-governmental organisations, governmental institutions and sport clubs. The guidebook provides an in-depth overview of all the topics relevant to inclusion in sport – non-formal education, sport methodology, disability and recommendations for methodology.

Most literature and other handbooks are focusing only on disabled people in sports or disabled people in youth work, but there is nothing similar which brings these two together.

Beginning of the booklet provides the explanation of the basic terminology which will be used throughout the text. The focus then changes to sport methodology from a general perspective.

The Inclusive space chapter offers practical advice on how to enable equal participation by **adapting the space, equipment and the attitude toward inclusion**. Adapted physical activity is proven to be highly effective when working with participants with disability, so this chapter gives a detailed overview of models, types and exercises for this methodology.

Special focuses are paid to concrete examples of **new inclusive sports merging people with disabilities and people with no disability: The Baskin and The Parkour**.

This booklet gives a number of practical advices on how to work with different abilities’ youth, how to prepare yourself as a youth/sport worker, your participants and your surroundings to include those with different needs.

Youth and sport educators **empowered by this Handbook** will further guide, lead and organise new inclusive activities involving youngsters to get more active in sport and health-enhancing physical activities for inclusion of different abilities’ youngsters.

TITLE:

Handbook “Inclusion of different abilities’ youngsters through NFE and youth work”
IN to the field! - Inclusive sport spaces for equality

PROJECT:

“Youth SPORT work with different abilities’ youngsters” - ySw4dAy funded by EACEA.
KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Capacity Building in the field of Youth.

Project partners are:

- Okret SPIN, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Fondazione Don Giovanni Zanandrea Onlus, Italy
- Active youth in happy Europe (AMUSE), Serbia
- Association for improvement of modern living skills “Realization”, Croatia
- Youth Power Germany e.V., Germany

PUBLISHER:

Fondazione Don Giovanni ZANANDREA Onlus, Italy

EDITOR:

Enrico Taddia

AUTHOR:

Dr. Alessandro Mazzini

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Association Spin, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Cento, Italy
September 2021

ABOUT THE PROJECT

According to WHO and their Factsheets on Health-enhancing physical activity (2015), more than half people in the EU above 15 years of age never/seldom engage in any kind of physical activity. Research also indicates that people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, minorities, as well as **people with disabilities engage in less physical activity and are harder to reach than others in terms of the promotion of physical activity.**

Typical barriers for people with disabilities to participate in sport include lack of awareness on the part of people without disabilities as to how to involve them in teams adequately; lack of opportunities and programmes for training and competition; too few accessible facilities due to physical barriers; and limited information on and access to resources.

Disability evokes negative perceptions and discrimination in many societies. As a result of the stigma associated with disability, persons with disabilities are generally excluded from education, employment and community life which deprives them of opportunities essential to their social development, health and well-being. **Sport can help reduce that stigma and discrimination, as it can transform community attitudes about persons with disabilities by highlighting their skills and reducing the tendency to see the disability instead of the person.** Through youth/sport work and sports, persons without disabilities interact with persons with disabilities in a positive context forcing them to reshape assumptions about what persons with disabilities can and cannot do.

Main **AIM** of our project is Building capacity of youth organisations, their youth workers in Non-Formal Education for youth/sport work with/**for different abilities’ youngsters.**

OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ Support youth workers to develop key competences for using sport methodology in youth work for inclusion of different abilities’ youngsters;
- ◆ Enhance knowledge management of youth organisations with new innovative resources and training models/curricula within the project topics;
- ◆ Provide the linkage of youth with other sectors through their cooperation during the study visits and local dissemination events, and thus to further build capacity of our youth (work) organisations for inter-sectoral cooperation;
- ◆ Develop the competency framework for youth/sport workers for inclusion of different abilities’ youngsters;
- ◆ Allow youth workers to practice their skills to manage creative youth/sport work projects on European level (through YE), as well as on national level (through workshops), and thus further increase competences of participating youngsters in inclusion of youngsters with disabilities;
- ◆ Engage into intensive dissemination and exploitation activities of newly produced products and attract more different abilities’ youngsters to our youth/sport work activities, and thus increase inclusion among youngsters.

The competency framework for youth/sport workers for inclusion of different abilities’ youngsters, that we plan to develop within this project is fully innovative, as there are no handbooks for inclusion of different abilities’ youngsters, which makes our Handbook also fully innovative.

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1

BASIC TERMINOLOGY INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH WORK, NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND DISABILITY

Educators working in the world of sport are often trained as sport coaches. As such, they are experienced in playing and organising sport activities. However, traditional sport organisations and clubs are “made up largely of youngsters with a talent for sport, whose families actively support their participation and who have the financial means to pay for it.” ¹

One consequence is that the sport coaches and the **sport organisations usually have little or no experience in dealing with young people with fewer opportunities** (with mobility issues, any form of disability, poor families, no motivation for sport, etc.). As much as they are experts in physical development, it happens that they often lack the theoretical knowledge or general competences for working with this target group of youngsters.

On the other hand, **youth workers** working with young people with fewer opportunities on a regular basis are mostly trained to recognise the social needs of individuals and to propose methods which directly respond to those needs.” ².

However, youth workers are usually not experts nor practitioners in sport methodology. They might have some experience in “traditional activities like football, basketball or excursions to the swimming pool to supplement their programme, they are generally not trained to steer the learning processes which come out of sport activities.”³

It happens that youth workers are not sport enthusiasts and they are not familiar with different sport options for young people, regardless of their background or abilities. They might not have the equipment, facilities or the support from the local community to initiate sport activities, especially activities **assuming the merging of disability and not disability (focus of this Handbook).**



¹ Schroeder K., Geudens T. - “Fit for Life”; SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre, 2011. Available from <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-628/FitForLife.pdf>, page 9

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

YOUTH WORK IN GENERAL

Youth work, as a practice and the field of work, emerged in the late 20th century to answer a growing need of the developing modern-day competences of young people. General social work had already been focused on young people with fewer opportunities, including those with disabilities, but mainstream youth were expected to develop competences in the formal education system, through family or friends or even later in their life, through work life.

According to the Council of Europe, “youth work had been recognised as a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is **based on non-formal and informal learning processes** focused on young people and on voluntary participation.

Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people’s active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.”⁴

Youth work has three essential features :⁵

- ◆ **Young people choose to participate;**
- ◆ **The work takes place where the young people are;**
- ◆ **It recognises that the young person and the youth worker are partners in a learning process.**

From the beginning, it has been widely accepted that youth work usually takes place in organisations, profit or non-profit, such as youth centres, youth clubs or institutions working directly with youth. However, the European Union recognised the need for inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. For the last 20 years, the European Union and the relevant stakeholders have been promoting development and integration of youth work also in a broader range of areas – mainly sport clubs, IT sector and schools.

This handbook will focus on **young people with disabilities and their integration and inclusion with people with no disability through sport.**

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal education (NFE) has been developing in parallel with youth work and eventually became its essential component. It reinforces youth work's essential features, mentioned above, and uses them as a basis for the learning process. We usually differentiate 3 basic types of the education – the formal, the non-formal and the informal one (picture 1) .⁶

Formal	Non-formal	Informal
Usually at school	At institution out of school	Everywhere
May be repressive	Usually supportive	Supportive
Structured	Structured	Unstructured
Usually prearranged	Usually prearranged	Spontaneous
Motivation is typically more extrinsic	Motivation may be extrinsic but it is typically more intrinsic	Motivation is mainly intrinsic
Compulsory	Usually voluntary	Voluntary
Teacher-led	May be guide or teacher-led	Usually learner-led
Learning is evaluated	Learning is usually not evaluated	Learning is not evaluated
Sequential	Typically non-sequential	Non-sequential

Picture 1⁷

⁴ Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-work>,

⁵ "Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union"; European Commission, 2014;

http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf, page 4

⁶ Eshach H. (2007.) - "Bridging In-school and Out-of-school learning: Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Education"; by. Journal of Science Education and Technology, 16 (2), 171-190; p.174

⁷ Ibid.

Non-formal education methodological features are : ⁸

- ◆ Balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning;
- ◆ Linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidarity and symmetrical learning/teaching relations;
- ◆ It is participatory and learner oriented;
- ◆ It is oriented to learning by doing, using intercultural experiences and encounters as a learning device.



Therefore, taking into account characteristics and methodological features of non-formal education, we can point out these **basic values of non-formal education**:

◆ **Values linked to personal development:**

- **Autonomy**;
- Critical attitude;
- Openness and curiosity;
- Creativity.

◆ **Values linked to social development:**

- Communication capacity;
- Participation and democratic citizenship;
- Responsibility;
- Team work;
- Conflict resolution.

◆ **Ethical values:**

- Solidarity;
- Tolerance and respect.

Interestingly enough, **sport is based on the same values as the non-formal education**. For many years, it was thought that sport education for young people is primarily focused on physical development of talented individuals or recreational players. **Now, we recognise that sport teaches young people the same values as non-formal education**, even youth work in general. **The question remains - why sports coaches don't use non-formal education methods and why youth workers don't use more sports methods?**

Non-formal education is characterised by a specific usage of methods, usually different from those implemented in the formal education. While the formal education is known for a traditional method of lecture, the non-formal education encourages a wide range of interactive methods in which the participants take more active roles, rather than being passive listeners.

Usual non-formal education methods include (table 1) :⁹

METHOD	CHARACTERISTICS
Discussion	Discussion of a problem common to all. Conclusion reached by learners responding to guided questions.
Brainstorming	To generate many alternative solutions to a problem or topic.
Ice breaker	Short activity with participants aiming to bring a more non-formal atmosphere and get participants a bit closer to each other.
Case study	Learners analyse a prepared description of a problematic situation. Usually in printed version.
Group work	Participants are divided into smaller working groups, where they work or discuss on one or more themes.
Role play	Learners try out behaviours in a simulated situation in a limited amount of time.
Simulation game	Participants are part of a created situation, where every person has a task. It is extended role-plays with extensive design.
Buzz Groups	Smaller discussion groups, sharing opinions on given or any topics without the presence of a trainer.
Open Space	Participants suggest topics for discussions and workshops and they are taking place with participation of others. It is a method which requests a high level of responsibility from participants.
Self-reflection	Time for self-reflection on activities that happened before
Excursion	Planned trip during training, which can give more information from practice to the topic.

All these methods can be used in any learning setting, **including sport**, and are highly applicable when working with youngsters with disabilities.

Unlike the traditional movement games, the non-formal games take place in the non-formal setting and atmosphere with an uncertain ending and they are accompanied by intensive social group processes leading to awareness of individual skills.

In addition, through the scenarios involved (choice, leadership and evaluation), they can improve the dynamic personal development, as we established before. These methods can easily be modified to suit the needs of all participants, can be played **indoor and outdoor**, and adjusted according to **the reachable STAIRWAY of competences for persons with disability interacting with non-disabled people**.

⁸ Youth work essentials ,<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-essentials>

⁹ T-STEY, Training course for starting trainers in European youth work, November 2010, Prague, Czech Republic

DISABILITY – TERMINOLOGY AND MODELS



Understanding of reduced and limited physical or mental functionality is important for the work of experts in the field of physical activity and youth sport work activities. Knowledge of the changes that occur due to an impairment and disease, whether they occur at the level of physical function, anatomical structures/function and/or mental function, are equally important for the creation and successful implementation of the youth sport work programmes/activities.

Physical activity is one of the most important prerequisites for human health. When it comes to people with disabilities, participation in physical activity is far more significant. In addition to the positive effects on biological health, participation in physical activity, sports and sports recreation, enables individuals with disability to reintegrate into society, and thus contributes to their mental and social health.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) “around 15% of the global population – over a billion people – lives with some form of disability, of whom 2–4% experience significant difficulties in functioning. Many of these people require assistive technologies such as low-vision devices, wheelchairs or hearing aids. This number is expected to double to 2 billion by 2050.” (WHO global disability action plan 2014-2021”, 2015).¹⁰

And for sure, this is something that concerns all of us. **The people with disability are usually exposed to discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation. Since it concerns all of us, it means that we are also the ones who can change and improve that.** The youth/sport work activities and non-formal methodologies in general get all the people closer, improve the physical and mental activities of everyone no matter of their disability/ability.

Before entering into details on how the youth sport activities are improving the quality life and inclusion of the people with disabilities, it is important to **define the terminology used, models of disability, classifications and different perceptions.**

When it comes to the issue of disability, the first obstacle that experts face is related to **the choice of the most appropriate terminology to define a person with a disability.**

According to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (article 1 of the Convention).¹¹

According to the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps published by the World Health Organisation, the following terms are defined as:

- ◆ Impairment as “loss or abnormality of a structure, psychological, physiological or anatomical function”;
- ◆ Disability as “any limitation or loss (resulting from impairment) of the ability to perform an activity in the manner or extent considered normal for a human being”;
- ◆ Handicaps such as the “condition of disadvantage resulting from an impairment or a disability which, in a certain subject, limits or prevents the fulfilment of the normal role for that subject in relation to age, sex and socio-cultural factors”.

In this conception, the distinction between impairment, disability and handicap was interpreted in terms of the relationship between causes and effects: **the impairment determines the disability and the disability causes the handicap.**

¹⁰ WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014 - 2021 <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/who-global-disability-action-plan-2014-2021>

¹¹ Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability <https://www.globalhealthrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Convention-on-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities-CRPD.pdf>

MODELS OF DISABILITY

Throughout history, there have been various theories about the disability, from the traditional, the medical, to the social model with all its variations. **Today, we could say that the dominant model is the one that unites both the disability and the social aspects of the phenomenon** itself because it poses the problem of disability outside the individual, **in the relationship between individual disability and barriers in society and the environment.**

The social model has been developed by the people with disabilities themselves and is a different way of looking at disability. This model says that **disability is actually the result of an interaction between people who have a certain physical, intellectual or sensory disorder and the environment**, which is filled with physical, communication and social barriers.

According to this model, the environment is the one that needs to be changed in order to enable people with disabilities to fully participate in society on an equal basis with everyone else. The social model sees people with disabilities as subjects with their own rights, not as objects, and therefore emphasises the respect for their rights equally with other people in society.

2

SPORT AS AN INCLUSIVE METHOD AND A TOOL

Today when we talk about sport, we often take for granted the positive aspects of the movement itself. Sport is universally recognised as a tool of integration, as a facilitator of a person’s development and consequently, development of our society. It is known from many studies that sport benefits not only the physical, but above all, the mind.

In addition to these advantages, there are other equally important positive aspects, such as: development of self-esteem, ability to self-organise and self-regulate, ability to cultivate resilience, ability to develop problem-solving, ability to facilitate relationships with other people, to develop the ability to adapt and the possibility of developing loyalty and honesty through defeat and victory.¹²

OVERVIEW OF SPORT METHODOLOGY

Sport can be divided into many levels – professional, amateur, school or recreational (sport for all). Sport training, in a broader sense, is a technical-pedagogical process aimed at the formation of skills, development of abilities and improvement of motor skills. The Training theory encompasses all aspects of fitness knowledge, including social, psychological, and scientific.

The coach uses this information, along with the knowledge about the athlete as an individual, to devise the most effective training programme.¹³ Depending on the level and the desired outcome, sport training and methodology may differ, but the objectives of the training should be :¹⁴

- ◆ To invoke adaptation changes;
- ◆ To connect new type of physical and mental labour;
- ◆ To implement it regularly and repetitively;
- ◆ To be specific according to the level of readiness.

Physical recreation, or recreational sport, is a great form of learning, entertainment and healthy lifestyle. It provides the movement of the body, necessary for the normal functioning of the human body. It also supports the biological side of the body-movement – cognitive, cultural, communication, entertainment elements, which offer a co-solution to the problem¹⁵. Therefore, we can name the following sports training components¹⁶ :

- ◆ **Physical component which consists of basic biomotor abilities:**
 - Strength;
 - Endurance;
 - Speed;
 - Flexibility;
 - Coordination.

◆ **Technical component which can be divided into:**

- Fundamental skills - based on natural ontogenetic development of a human. It includes gait, run, jump, climbing, basic overarm throwing, etc.
- Sports skills - based on contents of a specific sports discipline.

◆ **Tactical component which focuses on different ways to conduct sports competition towards victory. Key terms of this component are strategy and tactic.**

◆ **Psychological component focuses on positive influence on the athlete’s personality as far as fair play is concerned.**

However, not all these elements can receive equal emphasis throughout the training cycle. Many factors determine the type of the training programme, and the stress placed upon each element. These include the age and sports maturity level of the person, his or her prior state of fitness, and, of course, **the possible level of disability**. Taking all of this into account, we can say that **sports training is a process of motor learning**.

To achieve the goals mentioned above, sport coaches plan every training session to match the needs and readiness of the individual. Usual training process looks like:



- ◆ **Introductory part** – warming up all body parts and basic motor exercises.
- ◆ **Main part A** is mostly focused on learning or perfecting a specific technical skill. In football, that would include dribbling the ball. In tennis, it would be learning forehand or backhand.
- ◆ **Main part B** is focused on applying the knowledge or the skills from part A – playing the sport, either in a team or individually. That would include playing a mock game or practising with a coach.
- ◆ **Closing part** – in the last part of the training session, coaches usually finish with an easy and fun activity. The last part of the session is reserved for stretching and verbal evaluation of the exercises and the general progress of the athlete.

¹² Council of Europe - CDDS (Committee for the Development of Sport) - "European Sports Charter" - 7th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Sport, Rhodes, 13 - 15 May 1992. Commission of the European Communities - "White book" - Brussels, 11.07.2007, 391 final. t for all

¹³ Brown C.H. - "Medical Manual / IAAF Medical and anti-doping commission"; International Association of Athletics Federations, 2006; available at: <https://www.worldathletics.org/about-iaaf/documents/health-science>, <https://www.worldathletics.org/download/download?filename=f9fa48c2-2a0c-46f3-88b9-149f4d561326.pdf&urlslug=Chapter%203%3A%20Training> p 1 of Chapter 3.

¹⁴ Milanović D.V., Theory and methodology of Training (2009); p.38.

¹⁵ Cieślicka M., Szark-Eckardt M. - "Methodology of physical recreation: problems, experience, recommendations"; Journal ... of physical training ..., 2013. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313882248_Methodology_of_physical_recreation_problems_experience_recommendations

¹⁶ Zahradník D., Jorvas P. - "The Introduction into Sports Training"; Masaryk University, 2012. Available from <http://www.fsps.muni.cz/emuni/data/reader/book-6/02.html>

CONNECTING SPORT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

“Sport provides the “hook” that draws otherwise disconnected, marginalised young people into a programme, and then that gets them actively involved and invested in its activities taken as a whole” .¹⁷ “While sports are competitive by nature, the two aspects of a healthy balance between cooperation and competition are important to take into account.

First, it is inevitable that in a competition, only one wins while the rest fail. Competition leads people, especially young athletes, to define themselves by the outcome”¹⁸ . They can be either winners or losers. When this happens, their self- esteem and self-worth will depend on their ability to beat others.¹⁹ “Cooperation, on the other hand, helps build self-esteem, helps children learn to communicate, and does not depend on the ability to beat others.”

Competition and cooperation are not mutually exclusive and coaches don’t need to choose between these two. People may have a tendency toward each, but those who are generally more competitive don’t necessarily reduce cooperativeness. However, young people, while still in formative years, may focus only on winning and define their performance and personality based on their ability to win. This can be unhealthy for both the physical and mental state of a person. Therefore, the term **cooperative competitiveness is used to describe a training environment where both cooperation and competition are focused on.** ²⁰

This is where non-formal education can step in by helping the participants to focus on the process of sports and learning from it, not on the competition or cooperation itself. **By preparing the participants for a sports environment and including youth with fewer opportunities, youth workers and sport coaches can help them in understanding that the aim is not winning, but rather learning or improving physical capabilities.** Many non-formal education methods help facilitators to ask participants to set their own aims, which can be a great way to start a sports activity.

Evaluation, which is an essential step in non-formal education, is proving to be very important in sports activity, as well. Instead of telling participants of a certain activity to improve in a particular skill, it is recommended to ask them to evaluate themselves or to focus on good and bad outcomes of a certain sport activity. **Evaluation is especially important when including youth with disability, because it helps all participants, with or without the disability, to learn and to find a meaning in a sport activity, apart from winning.**

Usually, when adapting sport games/methods for usage in youth work, we can use following types of activities related to the competition and/or teamwork :²¹

- ◆ **COMPETITION** based activities / sport games - games that assume Individual involvement of participants competing against all other participants, and usually the whole group of individuals / participants are involved in the same specific activities.
- ◆ **TEAMWORK** based activities / sport games - games that assume involvement of individual participants as a part of a team, and usually the whole groups of participants are divided in one or more teams, where each participant contributes, not necessarily by being doing same physical activities, but contributing complementarity to the team success and to the building positive teamwork feeling among them.
- ◆ **TEAMWORK-COMPETITION** activities / sport games - games that assume involvement of individual participants as a part of several teams, and usually the whole groups of participants are divided in two or more teams, where each team is competing with the other teams in the group of participants. Each participant complementarity contributes to the success of his/her team in competition with other teams.
- ◆ **TEAM BUILDING** activities / sport games - games that assume involvement of individual participants as a part of the overall group / team, where all participants are involved in order to build the team feeling and trust level within the whole group.

It is important to implement sports and other physical activities as a tool to support the general aims and objectives of the youth work activities, mostly those educational or developmental ones. Sport becomes secondary and its role is redefined. There, sport becomes an inclusive tool in the social and physical education of young people, regardless of the cultural, socio-economical, educational or any other background.



¹⁷ Hartmann D., Kwauk C. - "Sport and Development An Overview, Critique, and Reconstruction"; Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 2011. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258158933_Sport_and_Development_An_Overview_Critique_and_Reconstruction.

¹⁸ Cooperation and Competition in Sport, <https://academy.sportlyzer.com/wiki/cooperation-and-competition-in-sport/>

¹⁹ "Competition-vs-cooperation."educatedsportsparent.com.
<http://educatedsportsparent.com/competition-vs-cooperation/>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Matorčević, D., "Youth Sport Work for Intercultural Learning and Acceptance of Diversity"; Active youth in happy Europe, 2018; page 35.

DISABILITY AND NOT DISABILITY IN INTEGRATED SPORTS: AN OVERVIEW OF EXISTING PRACTICES

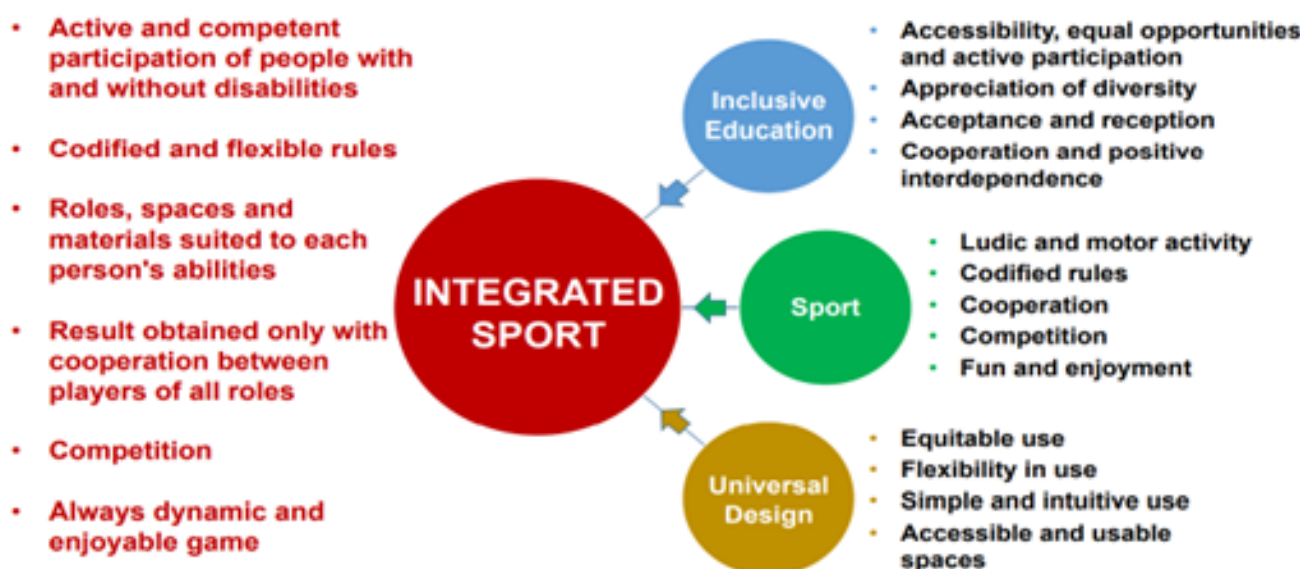
In ordinary sports designed for competition all the participants aim for the same goals and those who are more capable and good at achieving these goals are successful and can continue to practice the sport. **This purely competitive logic excludes those who are unable to achieve these common goals and are "forced" to leave.** This exclusive selection mechanism leads to the departure from sport not only of youngsters with disabilities but also of mainstream youngsters who are not considered sufficiently good, especially in the high school period in which sports clubs focus on higher competitive categories.

In order to involve a greater number of people, a paradigm shift is necessary, **moving the objectives from competition to socialization, inclusion and fun.** In this case it is necessary to create diversified objectives based on the abilities of individuals, creating a team spirit and a healthy competition with a view to personal challenge and improvement. In this case, the social skills of youth workers become important in order to take advantage of NFE techniques. This way would be possible for a greater diffusion of sport among young people with disabilities, currently not widely used although it could help achieve the quality of life objectives theorized by **Robert L.Schalock** (examined in this handbook in a dedicated chapter).

Today there are several models of accessible sports to persons with disabilities. Some of these are specific only for people with disabilities, while **others allow the participation of persons with and without disabilities together.** Within the first group we can make a further distinction between sports invented specifically for certain types of disabilities, such as the **Torball** (<http://www.ibsasport.org/sports/torball/>) for blind persons, and those created by adapting existing Olympic sports to the impairments of certain groups of people with disabilities, such as **Wheelchair Basketball** (<https://iwbf.org/>). Within the second group we can make a distinction between traditional sports open to the participation of people with disabilities through small changes to the regulation, such as **Unified Sports** (www.specialolympicsitalia.org) and **Mixed Ability Sports** (www.mixedabilitysports.org).

mixedabilitysports.org), and sports created specifically to guarantee participation of people with and without disabilities together, such as **Baskin** (<https://baskin.it>). Unified Sports bring together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities in mixed teams to play football, basketball, petanque, volleyball and other team sports together. The latter are part of a model that we can define «**Integrated Sport**». ²²

Integrated Sport is a set of ludic and motor situations codified in a cooperative and competitive form in which people, with and without different types of disability, both men and women, through roles, spaces and materials suited to the skills and potential of each, **can participate actively and competently together**. With a view to dialogue and synthesis between the principles of Inclusive Education, Universal Design and Sport, an inclusive sport model should possess characteristics that guarantee the active participation of all persons with and without disability, enhancing, within the game, the diversity of everyone in terms of maximum expression and development of their skills and potentiality.



A scheme with main features follows:

Every Integrated Sport should have a regulation with these characteristics:

- ◆ Different playing roles with their specific actions allowed and prohibited (e.g. markings are only possible for players of equal or greater role);
- ◆ Assignment of roles through the assessment of motor skills, regardless of the presence or absence of disability;
- ◆ Protected zones for some roles (e.g. in the Baskin roles 3, 4 and 5 can not enter the area that delimits the side baskets if not to deliver the ball to roles 1 or 2);
- ◆ Material suitable for the functioning of different players (e.g. ball can have different size and weight);
- ◆ Rules system implies strategies of cooperation between all roles to get the final victory (e.g. in the Baskin the player with the role 5 can not perform more than three shots per time). ²⁴

²² INTEGRATED SPORT: KEYWORDS OF AN INCLUSIVE MODEL, November 2018, Conference: 3rd International Eurasian Conference on Sport, Education and Society, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329775201_INTEGRATED_SPORT_KEYWORDS_OF_AN_INCLUSIVE_MODEL

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

3

SETTING UP OF INCLUSIVE SPACES FOR INTEGRATED SPORTS AND YOUTH WORK PERSPECTIVE

INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FROM YOUTH WORK PERSPECTIVE

Inclusive physical activity is a practice of making sure that all individuals, regardless of ability or age, have equal opportunity in physical activity. This opportunity should include a right to make decisions and to successfully and actively participate. “In other words, inclusive physical activity is defined as an *accessible physical activity program provided to all individuals across the age span in a wide range of settings.*”²⁵

Truly inclusive physical activity includes all of the following : ²⁶

- ◆ Infant and toddler movement experiences
- ◆ School-based physical education programs
- ◆ Community-based recreation and leisure activities
- ◆ Exercise and fitness programs
- ◆ Multilevel sport opportunities

Inclusive physical activity is not necessarily based on a particular setting, depending on the level of disability among participants, but rather on participation in meaningful activity selected from a range of options. To do this, youth workers and sport coaches need to be able to modify methods and tools, in order to meet the needs of all involved. Sport educators should have the attitude and skills they need to allow all youngsters to succeed, both in their non-formal physical education classes or within smaller groups of youngsters with and without differences in abilities.

²⁵ Kasser S.L., Lytle R.K. - Inclusive Physical Activity, A Lifetime of Opportunities (2013); p.8.

²⁶ Ibid.

INCLUSION OF YOUNGSTERS WITH DISABILITIES

"Sport isn't just a competition, it is an opportunity for people to come together, demonstrate their skills and enhance their ability to communicate with one another."²⁷ Sport provides an opportunity for young people to participate. It is the reason why it is an ideal mechanism for practical implementation of inclusion and equality.

It is widely "accepted" that individuals with disabilities cannot participate in a sports activity on the same level as the healthy ones. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt the space and the process of the training or physical activity.

A person with disability should not passively undergo the adaptation action, but must actively participate in the process by carrying out a self-evaluation and programming of the objectives. On the contrary, the operator must overcome a vision centred on the deficit and on improvement solutions for themselves in order to assume a personalised vision that starts from the residual abilities of the person with disability, but also from his/her needs and expectations in order to build an individualised path shared with the team (teachers, doctor, family, person with disability him/herself, etc.).

In choosing the most appropriate adaptations we must first of all start from the assessment of the potential of the person with disabilities, the emotional state, as well as the social context in which we are going to operate. On the basis of this initial evaluation we could plan the activity in his/her curriculum, choose teaching strategies and select the context conducive to the learning.

Operational tools that may affect the environmental context, we can act on:

- ◆ **Physical and social environment:** with this tool, we can modify the game space by adapting it not only in size, but also in the equipment. We could then think about widening the playing field in sports where wheelchair users are involved, or use raised signs on the ground to direct movement in activities for the blind people.
- ◆ **Equipment:** with the materials, we can facilitate the execution of the motor gestures (e. g. with larger balloons for easier grip), protect athletes (foam pads or the use of the light balloons) or facilitate the analysis of the movement (use of sound balloons or companions as a guide).
- ◆ **Regulations:** this tool allows us to change the rules, scores, times to ensure greater ease in the game.
- ◆ **Language:** language also becomes an important operational tool because it can be simplified in the case of a mental disability (use of imitation, expressive language and use of simple terms) or it can be an aid in the movement of the blind person (use of a language rich in spatial information).

Another important aspect is the **modification and the alignment of the motor task to the real potential of a person with disability**. It is in fact equally important that within the adapted activities the subject who participates in it can interact physically to the fullest potential, while maintaining an active role in the activity. It is therefore necessary to take into account 3 other elements and act on them, to make the motor gesture effective and motivating. The three elements are : ²⁸



- ◆ **Biomechanical characteristics of the motor gesture:** in this adaptation, the subject may not be able to perform a technical gesture according to the rules for that activity. Let's think about the adapted archery where amputees shoot with the biomechanically different gestures from the original technique (see fig. archery with the mouth).
- ◆ **Coordination complexity and required cognitive and attention skills:** in these activities, adaptations are foreseen to overcome a mental and cognitive disability or disabilities on the neuronal level. The complexity of the gesture and the demand for the complex coordination require good capacity of intersegment and dissociative ability, and for this we can intervene by reducing the complexity of the gesture (example of artistic gymnast with cognitive disability).
- ◆ **Affective-emotional component of the generated sensorimotor pleasure:** in this last component, the motor gesture is not directed towards the performance, but towards the emotional part, seeking pleasure in moving for the simple pleasure of doing so. Let's think, for example, of all the psycho-motor activities designed to seek compatibility with the motor gesture, although simplified.

²⁷ Kelly F., Southwell K., Teow K. - "Youth can open doors to all abilities through sport"; ENGSO Youth with the European Paralympic Committee, 2011. Available from https://b2edbaa4-f3ed-4569-9d16-de917ed9777c.filesusr.com/ugd/6fa9e5_676d81cb60c74581896b10a841b82b87.pdf

²⁸ Janney R., Snell M. - "Modifying schoolwork"; Paul H. Brooker, Baltimora, 2000.

INCLUSIVE SPACES FOR INDIVIDUAL SPORTS AND TEAM-BASED SPORTS INTEGRATING PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES: THE PARKOUR AND BASKIN EXPERIENCES.

Sports educators and youth workers often find themselves designing and implementing Integrated Sport activities, without having suitable indoor spaces available for the inclusion of young participants.

Inclusive Space means not only the physical space available and its characteristics, but also the type of supports that can be found in the playing space, the ease of access to it and finally the game setting (the working climate and the social approaches of the peers that the youngster with disability meets in the playing field).

The difference is made by the availability of the following components:

- ◆ Accessibility of the space for the activities;
- ◆ Environment and equipment: e.g. lowering the height of the net; reducing the size of a playing field, adapting the rules and using different materials and balls of different sizes;
- ◆ Products and technologies that facilitate accessibility;
- ◆ Support and relationships of the family members and other people who are relevant to people with disability;
- ◆ Attitudes of instructors, youth workers and peers;
- ◆ Services, systems and policies, including transport;
- ◆ Equipment.

Further here we analyse the categories on which the youth worker and sport trainers must be informed in order to plan correctly the activity to be carried out. The physical place where an integrated sport activity is carried out has an important role in itself in making the activity inclusive. The places that are most often available are mainly of 2 types: sports facilities and free open spaces (parks, gardens etc.)

SPORTS FACILITIES

In order for Integrated Sport to be functional, the sports facilities must be made accessible to all, by making new facilities or adjusting the existing ones. Main entrances, changing rooms and activity rooms must all be on the same level of height. The legislation governing this type of adaptation differs from country to country. In general, the most important architectural adaptations include the following:

- ◆ **Entrance doors:** they must be easy to open; if necessary, automatic doors must be provided.
- ◆ **Reception:** must be able to accommodate both wheelchair users and the persons without disability. The height suitable for wheelchair users is 750-800 mm.
- ◆ **Lifts:** they must be larger than normal lifts; in addition, the buttons must be at a height suitable for wheelchair users and other users.
- ◆ **Stairs:** they must be as straight as possible, with easily visible steps.
- ◆ **Corridors:** they must not present obstacles of such to present a risk; furthermore, their width must allow easy access to wheelchairs and other mobility aids for the people with disability. The walls must be equipped with handrails, so as to provide support for people with problems of balance or limitation of motor functions.
- ◆ **Toilets:** they must be accessible all the time, in public areas or in changing rooms. In addition, they must have sufficient space to allow people with disabilities to move from the wheelchair to the toilet bowl; from the front or from the side. The foldable armrests must be placed on both sides of the toilet bowl.
- ◆ **Locker rooms:** they must have large space to move around. On the walls, there must be support handles at different heights to allow the person with disability to stand up. Lockers with locks must also be put on different heights than usually.

There are also more specific adaptations concerning certain sports facilities.

- ◆ **Swimming pools:** they must be equipped with facilitated steps, with handrails on both sides and with the lift.
- ◆ **Gymnasiums and related equipment:** gymnasium must be on the same level of height as the sports hall or be accessible by ramps or lifts. Gymnastic equipment must be suitable to be used independently by people with different types of disabilities (for example weights must be indicated in Braille alphabet for the visually impaired), seats must be removable in order to make space for wheelchairs.
- ◆ **Dance halls:** wheelchair users can access dance halls which must be larger than traditional halls, and must be able to listen to music anywhere. People with hearing impairments can use special induction loop systems.
- ◆ **Riding stables:** they must have covered spaces in which to park wheelchairs. People with disabilities should have at their disposal a ramp and a special scaffolding to get on horse’s back; moreover, they must be able to rely on a quiet horse and on an experienced instructor, so that they can ride pleasantly and safely.



OPEN SPACES

We are not always lucky enough to be able to take advantage of indoor spaces to use them for integrated sports. However, it is possible to make use of city parks and easily accessible green areas (fortunately, many parks have been made accessible, thanks to the impetus of European legislation, which is dealing with the issue more and more).

On the other side, adaptations are more difficult, because the natural conformation of the park is difficult to change, so it will be up to the youth/sport worker to evaluate the most suitable area for everyone to participate. Precisely because a public park is difficult to shape, it is recommended to make a patrol of the area before conception of the activity, **as it is the activity to be modified to adapt to the available space and not vice versa.**

However, it is important to note that “inclusive parks” are increasing in all Europe. These parks, besides being easily accessible, are designed with an “Inclusive Design”; which is a design methodology of objects, structures and infrastructures that can also be used by people with physical and mental disabilities. In these areas youth workers and trainers could find games and activity facilities that can be used by all participants in the activity designed by them. Types of equipment for inclusive parks:

- ◆ Sensory games that allow people to interact through touch, smell, hearing, as well as eyesight;
- ◆ Playgrounds with no physical barriers for the passage of wheelchairs and with systems to safely stabilise people with limited or no physical stability;
- ◆ Devices for the development of motor coordination and for the development of logical capabilities;
- ◆ The urban arrangement for parking without barriers and with variable heights;
- ◆ The green spaces - properly dimensioned and with the appropriate equipment - where it's possible to interact with natural elements such as plants, soil, water.

GAME SETTING

Once the place is defined, youth/sport workers can intervene by changing the game setting to make the activity space even more inclusive. The main aspects that can be modified are the following three: (1) structures (nets, baskets, etc.), (2) spaces (field dimensions) and (3) instruments (balls, rackets, etc.).

- ◆ As far as the facilities are concerned, whether the youth worker or sport trainer wants to design a sport activity that takes its cue from basketball, he/she may want to consider lowering the basket if she/he knows that one or more of the participants would not be able to reach it. Or he could plan two different ways to score by placing two baskets at two different heights.
- ◆ The playing space is also an important adaptable element. Going back to the previous example of basketball, if there are young people in wheelchairs taking part in the sport activity, it might be useful to consider widening the court to avoid unnecessary crashes.
- ◆ The most easily adaptable are the objects used during the sports activities (balls, rackets, etc.). Thanks to the development of technology and materials, we can find the game tools in different variations, specially designed to be more manageable and inclusive. Referring again to the previous example, youth workers or sport trainers might decide to use a smaller ball with more grip on the surface, to allow a young participant with limited strength in the upper limbs to be equally effective in controlling the ball and thus the game.

Transforming and adapting the environment means giving everyone involved in the activity the opportunity to be an active part of the game. However, it is important, as well, to avoid offending the sensitivity of the participants. **Adaptations should not be explained to participants as a solution for an individual or a group with specific characteristics, but rather as a variation of the rules that changes the game experience of players, improving it.**

PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGIES THAT FACILITATE ACCESSIBILITY

Many people with disabilities lead an independent life and need few facilities and support to carry out daily activities. There are, however, people for whom various types of support are required, from wheelchairs to the guide dogs and the prosthetic aids. The progress made in the field of specialised equipment has helped people with disabilities to be more independent and has also helped to loosen prejudices and social barriers. Participation in leisure and recreational activities is important in order to follow an active lifestyle and maintain good health.

SPORTS TECHNIQUES AND EQUIPMENT

People with disabilities have more and more opportunities to take part in sports activities, despite the large number of barriers that prevent their full participation. Adapted sports equipment is available for any discipline in which they wish to take part in.

For example: some special equipment such as mono-skis and sledges allow people with disabilities of all kinds to participate in winter sports. Techniques and equipment vary according to:

- the sport;
- the type and the degree of disability;
- personal preparation and skills;
- individual preferences.

Sports equipment is an important aspect for the athletes of the future. Limb prostheses, competition wheelchairs, cycles of various kinds or equipment adapted for archery must be adapted to the individual athletes. They may be adapted at home or in specialised workshops. The most important thing is that the athlete benefits from optimal adaptation and can use the equipment safely. Equipment adaptations range from minor (changes to the width, length or material of a belt) to complex (shape of an artificial prosthesis or competition wheelchair).

An example of an adapted instrument is the hand bicycle, which is also defined as a manually operated bicycle or a manually propelled bicycle. This type of bicycle allows people with disabilities with a passion for cycling and with functional limitations of the lower limbs, to practice an alternative sport to cycling. These cycles are equipped with three wheels instead of two and allow the vehicle to be driven using only the upper part of the body, while limiting the need for balance.

ATTITUDES OF INSTRUCTORS, YOUTH WORKERS AND PEERS

Another important factor that allows defining the inclusiveness of a space, are the attitudes of those who live in that space.

Youth workers and sport instructors, when planning the non-formal education sessions, devote great attention and energy to creating a serene and open working environment, which is important to effectively achieve the set/planned goals. Although these aspects may seem secondary, in activities where participation and interaction are the cornerstone of the methodologies, devoting attention to them and planning them in detail, makes the difference between success and failure.

The proof of this particular attention lies in the fact that in the non-formal education, ice-breaking and team building are key activities of the sessions and also the methodologies help to create connections between participants and encourage collaboration. In particular, there are attitudes on the part of instructors, youth workers and peers who, more or less

consciously, might contribute to ruin the working climate and make a non-inclusive space for young people, especially those with disabilities. Youth workers and instructors can become the first barrier to the inclusion of the target group. A few attitudes are enough to frustrate all the efforts to make the space inclusive.

Here are some examples:

- ◆ threatening a young person who does not obey orders;
- ◆ mocking a young person for his or her inability;
- ◆ excessively protecting a young person in such a way as to prevent him/her from doing any autonomous activity;
- ◆ deciding for a person what is good and what is bad for him/her;
- ◆ impose the competitive spirit while participants are still learning to perform a basic task;
- ◆ have a cynical attitude towards a participant.

These attitudes create a real separation between the young person and the activity and are difficult to repair.

At the same time, an instructor or youth worker can use the attitudes that, on the contrary, facilitate the young person's perception of an inclusive space. For example:

- ◆ adopt minimal changes for the activities;
- ◆ provide support so that there is **no emphasis on disability**;
- ◆ recognise the skills of a young person rather than his or her disabilities;
- ◆ make the young person participate in the decisions taken in relation to the changes to be implemented;
- ◆ ensure an atmosphere and a sense of entitlement.

However, the instructor/youth worker must pay attention not only to his/her own attitudes, but also to those of the whole group. Peers are able to assume attitudes that can contribute to making a space unsuitable for integrated sports activity. Some examples of interaction behaviour of peers, considered by young people with disabilities as real barriers:

- ◆ mocking a young person who misses the target or the ball, who stumbles over an obstacle, etc.
- ◆ mocking a young person for his/her obesity;
- ◆ over-protecting a participant in such a way as to prevent him or her from carrying out any autonomous activity;
- ◆ ignoring a young person in social activities;
- ◆ feeling pity for him/her;
- ◆ insisting on staring at a young person who is different from the others;
- ◆ taking away from a person with disability the auxiliary that allows him/her to move (wheelchair, crutches, etc.).

These attitudes can be contrasted with the behaviour of the peers who can act as facilitators. For example:

- ◆ accepting him/her into a social group;
- ◆ visiting him/her during their free time;
- ◆ inviting him/her to social activities during free time, e. g. birthday parties, going to the cinema, etc.
- ◆ to let him/her to participate in different games;
- ◆ morally supporting him/her in case of discriminatory situations.

When planning the activities, the youth/sport worker should try to stimulate this positive kind of attitude in the participants and should raise awareness of the importance which these attitudes have on the game climate and the success of the activities.

PARKOUR EXPERIENCE

Parkour is an urban sport born in France at the end of the 20th century. It consists in the ability to complete a path/track, going from a point A to a point B, overcoming every obstacle in the fastest and in the most efficient way. Parkour includes many movements: run, climb, oscillation, vault, balance, rolling and many others. People who practise parkour are called **tracers**.

This sport originates from Georges Hébert's "natural method". Hébert was a researcher and theoretical and practical physical education teacher, and he was also a French naval officer in the Great War. He studied African indigenous populations and was amazed by their incredible bodies (so perfectly trained!), even though they didn't have any knowledge about scientific training methodologies, typical of occidental athletes.

Inspired by them, Hébert built a training, focused on men's natural characteristics that included 10 essential skills for a natural context. Specifically: walking, running, jumping, quadrupedal walking, climbing, balance, throwing, lifting, fighting and swimming. After that, Hébert built a specific training methodology, called "fighter's path", that included an obstacle course with the motto "be strong to be useful".

Later, Hébert was discovered and appreciated by Raymond Belle, who decided to train his family with his methodology for their personal safety, so they could escape in case of danger. Belle's fireman son, David, started to train testing efficiency, creativity and adaptability in the city with some friends and relatives, contributing to develop the sport.

In the Italian National Council of 19 December 2017, the CONI (Italian national Olympic committee) recognised parkour as an official discipline. Today, in Italy there are many amateur sports associations, for the majority associated to UISP (Italian Union Sport to Everyone).

SPORT AND PEDAGOGY: PARKOUR AS AN EDUCATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE TOOL

Parkour, individual or team sport? Parkour is an individual sport; **everyone moves according to his/her level and grows according to his/her individual characteristics. There's no competition, but only the will to increase skills and techniques** to be further and more efficient than before. Although, it could be also seen as a team sport. That is because the team could have the potential to make every component grow, until its maximum limit; **it's not important that every person of the team has the same level, the most important thing is moving together**, supporting each other and helping whoever needs help. With the support of his team, everyone could grow better by himself.

The figure of the trainer (in our case it could be a sport educator, a youth worker or a coach) is crucial. The trainer should develop this team spirit by the support of some strategies, such as giving exercises that are simpler to solve in pairs, asking the more expert to help who needs help or creating team-plays at the end of the training session.

The most important thing is to create a good atmosphere and to do this the trainer could also do some training out-of-town or create dialogue moments. If the teammates are friends and they respect each other out of the training, they certainly support each other during the training sessions. So, **parkour could become a team sport, deleting competition feelings and developing inclusion and mutual help.**

WHY COULD PARKOUR BE AN INCLUSIVE SPORT?



To answer this question, we need to start explaining a philosophical theory hidden behind this sport, that is: **to practise parkour means overcoming your own limits.**

During the training, limits are defined by physical and visible obstacles, such as a little or big wall, a bench, a tube. But in reality, each one of these material obstacles reflects some mental limits that we impose to ourselves (such as a fear, the perception of not being up to par, laziness.), but that in reality we can face and overcome.

Practicing parkour means understanding which ones are the limits that our mind (not our body) imposes on ourselves and trying every possible strategy to overcome them.

We would like to expose an example related to everyday routine.

Some people affected by blindness impose on themselves not to go out alone, because they might be afraid, they would not find any more way to return back home. That's mostly a mental or social limit because these people can walk, so they have the capability to move away from their houses. Anyway, they must face this problem by finding some methods that allow them not to be afraid any more, such as doing a little piece of the way and then returning, having a mobile phone to call someone in case of need or having a dog or electronic device to help them. It doesn't mean that if it is difficult at the first moment, they could not overpass their limits. Whether these persons act like in parkour philosophy, they should commit to try every day, until they could reach the final aim.

Even neurotypical persons put some limits in their lives. They could, for example, be afraid of a school test and they don't want to go to school because of the fear of getting it wrong. But if those people work hard with every resource (ask for help from a friend, take private lessons...) and they go to school to do the test instead of staying home, they face their limits. Neverminded the test will be bad; they have learnt to work harder for next time.

At the same time, parkour philosophy wants to teach us to face our fears and our limits, finding the best way and trying many times until we overcome them. Although they are guided by clear basic techniques, the exercises in parkour could be adapted because there isn't only a final aim (for example the goal of the football play), but many aims that a person could decide to work on. A same path could be realized in different ways, the trainer has the skills to find the most appropriate to each tracer. In that way, **parkour could be an inclusive sport. It considers everyone on his own and it works on the individual skills in a team context.**

Parkour teaches us to overcome our limits, facing the obstacles along our way. It also could be motivational and educational. It works on spirit before the body. In support of this theory, we can share two experiences to show how parkour could be an important educational and motivational tool.

A first experience was James Black Gallion's one. He was a boy with cerebral palsy. James wanted to practise parkour, so her mother signed him up for a course, although she was very afraid, because she knew that her son couldn't do the same things as other people. James was welcomed in the team like every other pupil, he was doing all the training and he had to work hard. The power of inclusion, his motivation and the support of the team were very important to make James grow up, he had learnt movements that anyone expected of him. Here, the link to his history: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-e7jC6qwJc>

A second experience is the one that talks about the realization of the first parkour Academy in Gaza, Palestine. In this State, one of the most militarized and isolated in the world, parkour became a sport that could reduce stress and anxiety produced by the surrounding society and closed physical spaces. Parkour became a free space where people could try liberty and passion, where everyone could peacefully practise a sport, without thinking about the violence in where they live every day. Here, the link to this experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-e7jC6qwJc>

HOW TO STRUCTURE AN INCLUSIVE PARKOUR TRAINING

As we first mentioned, to structure a good training it's important to define space, structure and tools. Parkour can be practised in sport facilities as well as in open spaces by using the cities' areas and parks. There are many sports' facilities set up for parkour training, they have walls, wood or metal's structures, vaulting horses, mats and everything that can be a fixed obstacle to exercise. The open spaces must be chosen based on the number and position of the urban and/or natural obstacles (benches, trees, footpaths' sides.).

The possibility to choose where to do the training represents a big advantage for an inclusive session, because in that way we can include everyone. We can involve young people with fewer opportunities: the open space offers a place to train with any costs and it spares us to research a gym provided with sport gears or locker rooms suitable for every type of disability.

First of all, it's better that the trainer knows if the people who he/she will train have some disabilities and which kind of disability they have. Accordingly, s/he can choose the most suitable space to train them. This will be less relevant when the trainer has proven experience to quickly identify the exercises suitable to a certain kind of disability. Clearly, not every space is suitable for everyone, but the trainer can search for the best one before starting the training based on his group's characteristics, and if s/he discovers during the training that this space isn't really a good choice, s/he can move to another area.

The only disadvantage to practising in an open space is that the tools being part of the space can't be modified but we can choose a space where we find the most suitable tools or we can have a flexible thought to see the various ways to use particular instruments and obstacles.

To structure an inclusive training session, the trainer should work to make it possible, thinking of the most efficient teaching methodology that could be flexible.

Now, **we would like to propose a typical structure of a parkour training session, making some examples of specific exercises which young people with and without disability can do together.** Following the model presented in the chapter "sport as an inclusive method and a tool", the most appropriate flow in a parkour training session is: (1) Introductory part, (2) Technique part, (3) Game/final path, (4) Evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTORY PART

The introductory part is characterized by all-body dynamic warm-up. In this part we must do some simple warm up exercises, before doing some exercise to strengthen the body. Here, the trainer must choose exercise for everyone, remembering that everyone must warm up every single part of the body.

Examples:

- ◆ Little running
- ◆ Dynamic stretching (make circles with shoulders, bending knees, do some stretches, make circles with wrists...);
- ◆ Example of an arms warm up: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkPHqdUtpg4>;
- ◆ Quadrupede: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYR_hx_8Dds ;

Examples of exercises to include young people with disability in the team:

- ◆ With tracers without a limb: the person can repeat the exercise twice with the same limb;
- ◆ With tracers without a leg: make couples (able-bodied tracers should not place one of their legs on the floor); the two tracers must stay one in front of the other with their hands on the shoulder of the other and then they bend over, shaping a 90° angle with the knee;
- ◆ With tracers with blindness: it's possible to warm up with all the body with the eyes closed. It's a good exercise also because if you close your eyes, you could better hear your body.

2. TECHNIQUE PART

The second part is more specific. It refers to the technique training of parkour specific movements. Based on the choice of the trainer, this part can include many different exercises with shorter time to dedicate to everyone, or only a few exercises, but with a longer time to practise them. Now we want to propose a methodology, the "aim breakdown" one.

To build the **"aim breakdown" approach** you must have a long-term vision. You must not establish a maximum time, but you should think that you would need to train a lot to reach the objective. It consists of identifying an aim, that's a movement that you want to improve (for example a vault, a precision or a wall run) and break it down into different levels. These levels must be simpler than the final aim and they must be useful to reach it. By learning the technique and improving every single part of the final aim, it will be possible to do it eventually.

Example:

Final aim: make a 150 cm precision, from the side of a footpath to another.

Time table: Minimum one par of training per day, no maximum time.

Training: I can dedicate a training only to explain the theory at the base of the movement and at the strengthening of the muscle of the back and the legs; another session to improve the precision technique, with little distance to jump; another session to make little jump on the side of the footpath and so on, until that the tracer reaches the aim.

The aim obviously changes depending on tracer, on their characteristics and skills. Moreover, it must be realistic and achievable; the more the trainer knows his pupils, the more s/he could understand their limits and capabilities. As with other sports, parkour requires to practise hardly before obtaining good results.

During this part, it's very important to have regard to inclusion and team empowerment. Here some advices:

- ◆ If someone makes a mistake (in the technique), everyone must pay for this mistake. For example, the trainer counts the number of mistakes of every participant and at the end of the training all the tracers must make as many squats as if it were a team mistake.
- ◆ During the training couples are accepted, when a tracer does the exercise, the other supports him/her to prevent falls.
- ◆ Flexible positions: if someone needs more mates not to be afraid of exercises, it could be helped in that way.
- ◆ Make the whole group grow up together.

Examples of exercises to include young people with disability in the team:

- ◆ With tracers with blindness: everyone closes her/his eyes and make balance exercises;
- ◆ With tracers with wheelchairs: trainer can propose a path in catleap position grasp on a tube.

3. GAME/FINAL PATH

This third part should resume the exercises made during the second part of the training, but it also can be freer. It wants to connect many movements to create paths or games that allow to train many techniques, but in a funnier way.

Examples of games/final paths to include young people with disability in the team:

- ◆ "The floor is lava": this game consists in choosing and defining an area where the tracers can move freely. Then, the coach will shout "the floor is lava", so the tracers will have 3 seconds (variable time) to climb on something that isn't the floor. If there are tracers with blindness, the trainer should find an area without little obstacles (branches, roots, broken tiles..) that could make them trip. It's recommended that these tracers touch every element of the chosen area before the exercise. To make the game even more inclusive, each participant should be blindfolded.

- ◆ “Forrest and Bubba”: Trainer makes couples. Then, s/he builds a path. To do that, the trainer should consider the general characteristics of her/his pupils, but without restricting anyone and allowing the creativity of the tracers who he’s training (such as propose to overcome a bench but without saying how). Then, the roles are chosen: one tracer of the couple will be Bubba, who must stay in isometric position (click the link to discover some example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH5F-dKoM98>), the other will be Forrest, who must execute the path. The trainer establishes a duration (for example 20 minutes), during that the couple must play. While Forrest is doing the path, Bubba must stay in an isometric position; when Forrest ends the path, the roles change and so on, until the duration ends. Only the tracers who have the role of Forrest can have a break or drink, but he must remember that his mate is staying in an isometric position until he returns. If there are tracers with blindness, everyone can be blindfolded. If there are tracers in wheelchairs, the path could contain many parts that could be overcome with the only arms (for example make a muscle up).
- ◆ “Blind path”: the trainer chooses a path; the tracers make the couples. One tracer of the path will be blindfolded while the other will give him verbal instructions to solve the path (without touching him). Then, the roles change. If there are tracers with blindness, when they have the turn to give verbal instruction, they can touch the obstacle before giving instruction to the mate.

4. EVALUATION

The last part is focused on stretching and relaxation, besides a general evaluation of the training session. The Evaluation will focus on the levels of difficulty in overcoming obstacles and barriers, in the solutions the single/team could find to solve them and the steps of the skills’ stairway reached during the exercise. It is a fundamental step to support the educator/youth worker to monitor results and plan new future exercises with a more inclusive approach.

SPECIFIC ATTENTIONS WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Now, we want to expose some particular attention to pay when we plan and implement training sessions with people with some kind of disability. You should keep in mind that it's important to pay attention to any specific impairment, also an obesity or a phobia could limit a person during the exercises. Furthermore, parkour is an extreme sport and it's not so hard that a tracer could hurt her/himself.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY: This person could physically do the exercises as the other people; if the deficit involves physical coordination, it's suggested to propose movements that are not very difficult, but propose a lot of coordination movements to improve this impaired area. It's suggested to use the “aim breakdown” methodology also for the single movement. It's important to control that the person is making the technique correctly. These people could need more time to do the exercise.



PEOPLE WITH BLINDNESS: The trainer must explain verbally every single movement in every single part. He/she must not explain the exercise, only showing it. It's recommended that these tracers touch every obstacle before they overcome them and we must be sure that they have an abstract idea of the track. It's necessary to have permanent support while they are doing the exercise.

DEAF-MUTE PEOPLE: The trainer should make sure that these people have entirely seen and understood the exercise.

PEOPLE WHO USE WHEELCHAIR: It's possible to include this target, keeping in mind that their participation will be strongly restricted, especially in case of quadriplegic people. Quadriplegics could participate by observing or supporting the tracers, he/she can help the trainer to note eventual technique mistakes. If these people can't only use the legs, but they have good arms' skills, their training will be focused on catleaps and paths which can be solved with the arms.

PEOPLE WITHOUT A LIMB: Depending on the missing limb, the trainer can propose different exercises, focused on legs or on the arms. These people can do the exercises as their mates, but with more support by the trainer. Person without a leg, practising parkour: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K56kg_ohcWc

PEOPLE WITH DWARFISM: It's better to choose an area provided with low obstacles. Person with dwarfism practising parkour and free running: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP8a1UVf9JU>

BASK-IN EXPERIENCE

From the need to combine integration and fun, a sport was created: the Baskin. It was born in 2003 in Cremona (Italy), from the idea of a father of a girl with disability and a professor of physical education who had the intuition to change the rules of basketball **to make it practicable by mainstream people and people with physical and mental disabilities, all together.**

"Baskin is a sport built in such a way as to allow as many people as possible to play it: people with disabilities, male and female, all together. **The architecture allows team members to express their personality and ability.** Playing a sport to allow children with disabilities to play, experience the emotions and educational paths that sport has in itself. " (Antonio Bodini, president of the Italian Baskin Association).

The Baskin embodies the true meaning of sport: recreational activity that engages the psycho-physical abilities of the participants. In this sense, no one is on the pitch to "make presence" or assistance but everyone contributes to the game according to their abilities and skills and **everyone is important and decisive for the game.**

Mainstream people in this sport represent not only the assistance or help present on the pitch, but they too are real protagonists of the game. They become part of a **heterogeneous team** from the point of view of skills needing new methods of interaction and aggregation in order to create a group. They must therefore develop new communication skills, establishing relationships that involve a more intense emotional and physical involvement than the relationships that are established in a team of only mainstream people. Furthermore, they become capable of appreciating the richness of diversity by pursuing common goals from a sporting point of view.

Youngsters with disabilities in this sport are stimulated to increase self-confidence, the ability to combine sacrifice and pleasure, increase psychic, motor and interaction skills with a heterogeneous group of people.

You can find a short presentation video at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/kHe-Pkrp1Ng>

BASKIN'S "FUNDAMENTALS"²⁹

The Baskin is based on basketball from which it takes most of the fundamental principles, but modified and transformed some aspects to make it accessible to the greatest number of athletes of any level.

(Official complete rules in the following document: <https://Baskincremona.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/regolamento-inglese-rev-12.pdf>)

The most substantial changes are:

COURT: insert 2 low and high side baskets and side areas to facilitate the shot of people who are unable to walk smoothly;

Example of side basket



Enlargement of the side areas with the subdivision in sectors:



GAME TIME: 4 periods of 6 minutes each. Every time the referee blows the whistle, the time stops. On every score from the side baskets the time stops;

BALL: it is a small basketball for kids (mini-basket). Other balls with different dimensions and weight can be used by players with role number 1;

PLAYERS: max 14 players, 6 on court. Players are divided by role from 1 to 5, where 1 is the player able to use his hands for shooting but only in the lowest baskets and with adapted balls and 5 is the able-bodied basketball player who knows the rules and the fundamentals. In order to assess the abilities and choose the level you might use this Assessment questionnaire/tool: <https://baskincre98mona.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/questionario-valutaz-ingl.pdf>

For each role there must be a player of both sexes in the team and all the players of each team must take the field before the third quarter. It is played with 6 players on the field and the sum of the numbers of the roles must not exceed the number 23.

PLAYERS' TASKS: The roles n. 1 and 2 are pivots and they cannot be obstructed. It is possible to have only one pivot at a time in the area. The roles number 3, 4 and 5 can use any type of man marking. The role 3, 4 and 5 cannot enter the side areas (3 mt radius) unless they want to give the basketball to the pivot.

The role n. 1 (pivot who cannot walk) stays in the side areas, watches the game and has 10 seconds to shoot from the moment when his teammate gives him the ball. They have two options: a) the pivot role n. 1 decides to shoot only once; if he scores the basket, it counts three points. b) the pivot role n.1 decides to shoot twice; in this case if he scores, the basket counts 2 points. The role n.1 can use a smaller ball to shoot. The pivot cannot drop the ball in the basket by placing his hand over the basket. If the spasticity of the player does not allow him to bend his wrist or his arm, the throw can be modified by placing the ball on a slide with no edges within the usual 10 seconds.

The players with the role n. 2 must watch the game and shoot at the high side basket. They have 10 seconds to shoot from the moment when the teammate enters the area and they must shoot over the line of the area. Like the players with role n. 1, they are free to shoot without defence and, for safety reasons, they must stay in the protected area while the other players are playing on the rest of the court. Once a teammate brings the basketball to the pivot, he must dribble at least twice. He also must move to one of the three sectors and shoot over the line. The basket is worth two points from the central sector and three points from the side sector.

The players with role 3 can shoot at the high side baskets from out of the area or at the regular baskets. When they start to run they have to dribble at least twice with or without interruption. If a role 3 receives the basketball while in the three seconds area, he can run without dribbling. Every basket at the high side basket is worth 2 points (shot from out of the area), every basket at the regular basket is worth 3 points.

The players with role 4 must shoot only at the regular baskets and they must run dribbling. Players with role 4 can defend against other players with role 4. Every basket is worth 2 or 3 points, depending on where the shot started, if inside the three points area or outside.

The players with role 5 must shoot at the regular baskets; they can defend only on other players with role 5. Every basketball rule applies to them and they can shoot only three times per period. Every basket is worth 2 or 3 points based on where the shot started, inside or outside the three points area.

²⁹ <https://Baskincremona.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/regolamento-inglese-rev-12.pdf>

REAL CASE: CENTO BASKIN CITY (ITALY)

Fondazione Don Giovanni Zanandrea Onlus has been starting in 2021 a project for a Baskin team in its city, Cento, Italy.

For over 100 years Fondazione Don Giovanni Zanandrea (<https://www.fondazionezanandrea.org/>) has been responding to the needs of the most fragile target groups of our territory. Since 1985 it has managed the PILACÀ Daily Rehabilitation Social Center, which welcomes 25 people and since 2014 the CSO Zanandrea Social Occupational Center which hosts 8 people with disabilities. PILACÀ assists youngsters and adults with physical and cognitive disabilities and promotes the acquisition and maintenance of autonomy supporting families in the shared management of users. The CSO is a protected laboratory with the aim of facilitating the inclusion in the world of work of individuals who would not have the opportunity independently.

The city of Cento (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cento>) has all the characteristics to start a sports project linked to Baskin, first of all for the sensitivity of the territory towards people with disabilities and for the visceral passion for basketball and especially for the historical local team, Benedetto XIV, which involves many youngsters and adults too as players or fans. The Baskin project is particularly suitable for achieving the set goal of this handbook, as it would give many children/youngsters with disabilities the opportunity to practice a real sport (with official matches, championships, etc.), a possibility that is not yet present in the area.

Thanks to its particularities, its own and characteristic aspects, the Baskin **spreads a culture and a strong message of sport oriented towards integration between people with and without disabilities**, promoting their inclusion, a fundamental mission for anyone who works in the field of disability. The theme of inclusion in this particular historical moment is particularly relevant: **the Covid-19 pandemic has seen most of the youngsters with disabilities and their families face fatigue and fears related to their physical frailties**, thus putting the aspect of health at first place, however, neglecting socializing and inclusion activities.

It therefore becomes important to reposition the issue of inclusion and the sociability of people with disabilities at the top of the priorities once back to normal life. However, this challenge cannot be pursued only by people with disabilities and their families, but should be a goal of all citizens. We believe that the Baskin project could represent an excellent tool for pursuing the objective described above.

Furthermore, the Baskin represents an opportunity for mainstream people to practice a sport very close to basketball, but in which each person is valued for what s/he can express, a sport which brings with it new stimuli and new ways to play.

The project is also aimed at those guys who, after completing the youth sector, stop sports for lack of space or enthusiasm and thus have the opportunity to find them in the Baskin in a more captivating, different and innovative way; to all those girls who do not have the opportunity to play basketball in the territory because there is no female team; to those people who have stopped playing basketball for a long time but want or need to get back in the game and in shape. It is also aimed at all those people who are not passionate of basketball, but who could be attracted by the novelty of being able to play a sport together with youngsters with disabilities, learning new methods of communication and maybe overcoming some fear, or have relatives and friends of people with disabilities who they would thus have the opportunity to practice a different sport together, in a context where **there is no "assistance" but really game and fun together.**

The opportunity to create integration through sport is not only precious for the physical benefits that sport itself can give but it is wealth for the whole community because it brings personal and collective growth, strongly sensitizing the culture of diversity not as a limit but as a value.

The project includes several elements of complexity, none of these insurmountable. The creation of an effective collaboration between a structured reality such as the local basketball team Benedetto XIV in the sports field and Fondazione Don Giovanni Zanandrea in the field of disability will certainly be the revolutionary added value. The ultimate goal of the "Cento Baskin City" project is to create a team that can participate in the regional Emilia Romagna - Marche Championship. To achieve this goal, however, it has been essential to follow precise steps, that we share with all EU interested stakeholders namely:

PHASE 0: Construction of the working group - Sharing of intentions, operating methods and complementary competencies, partnership between social organizations and local basketball team;

PHASE 1: Identification of the necessary resources - Spaces for training, specific materials, trained personnel, equipped vehicles, etc.

PHASE 2: Promotion of the project (positive communication about inclusive sports involving also local school for designing payoff and communication campaign) and creation of the Baskin team, sensitizing mainstream people on rules and positivity of a new inclusive sport, overcoming stereotypes;

PHASE 3: Starting the training and understanding the rules and fundamentals of a new sport;

PHASE 4: Registration for the Championship and start of the tournament.

We strongly believe that Cento Baskin City will pave the way for a positive exchange with other European countries with a snowball effect on other local territories in Italy.



4

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES IN USING SPORT METHODOLOGIES WITH YOUNGSTERS WITH DISABILITY

When thinking about the goals and objectives of sport activities for youth with disabilities, **it is very important that the environment provides engagement that benefits the healthy development of the whole person.**

This leads towards researching the community where young live, accessible facilities and information, health awareness, safety, organisations and associations offering active programs. Developed areas offer a more diverse spectrum of activities for youth with disabilities which does not exclude participation of the non-government sector in less developed areas and involvement of youth workers as well as community efforts to produce not just sport but also pass time activities.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM AND PARTICIPATION

Enhancing **participation** actually means working on development of youth with disabilities not to feel unprepared and uncertain about their abilities and performances.

When it comes to participation, it is very important to say that sport helps challenge normative assumptions, and diminishes typical barriers for youngsters with disabilities which are lack of awareness, lack of opportunities, limited information and stereotypes. Participation should not be compared to inclusion.

Important observation is that youngsters with disabilities sometimes cannot reach school outcomes without facing failure, but if sport education is taken into the context of developmental chances, **building self-efficiency and individual social identification**, youngsters with disabilities are seen as progressing in the school and improving their academic achievements.

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Actually, sport creates positive stimulations and a **positive learning environment**. Positive interactions from sports activities, encouragement from teachers, youth workers and peers are sources of self-efficacy. This also refers to empowering youth with disabilities.

Working on developing social skills sometimes brings more impact than relying on making improvements in physical well-being.³¹ Even if participation in sport sometimes will be modified, it is very important that regular physical activity can foster **independence, coping abilities** (related to transition to secondary school) , **competitiveness and team work**.

Working on physical health as well as emotional involvement in sport prepares people for different life situations. Youth with disabilities generally are functioning among a small circle of people, those people are usually their parents, teachers, volunteers and some of their peers. This circle mainly functions on a daily basis helping a youngster to get over the daily activities. Lack of social relationships sometimes can lead towards loneliness, which appears quite often among youth with disabilities. Sometimes loneliness and depression can appear as a consequence of

negative experiences within daily functioning and facing different daily problems. Emotional consequences in youth with disabilities especially appear during adolescence. Age of adolescence brings problems with self-awareness, social pressure, lack of positive experiences especially for youth with disability. Taking sports into this context, youth with disabilities being involved in sports brings a wide range of benefits such as, **support and motivation, spending time with peers, taking part in all aspects of planning and engagement and preparing them for life within their social community.**

Effective social interaction results from not having difficulties to apply social skills in any different social situation. Involvement in sport activities with youth of the same age is important because of the feedback and sense of being accepted among different groups. Youngsters with disability are more likely to be aware of others negative attitudes towards themselves, they are already prepared to encounter prejudice and discrimination, even though many steps are taken to fight the above mentioned. ³²

The goal is for sport activities to be repetitive. Repetitive sports activities and games are considerate to bring positive effects. These activities should be in accordance with individual disabilities, adequate and equipped people such as teacher, coach or youth worker, consultation with doctors along with participation of volunteers or assistants. For this reason, physical activity should be used as an instrument for increasing motor behaviours, cognitive skills, attention, self-confidence and social relationships.

When it comes to aims and goals, it is very important to provide a role model. Role models are seen as people who possess certain qualities which youth would like to acquire. Sports activities also provide mentoring, either it is a peer, a volunteer, a teacher, a youth (sport) worker or a coach, who **can motivate a young person with disabilities to become a mentor one day, too.** Sport can change attitude about youngsters with disabilities focusing on their skills and talents by reducing stigma and discrimination. Sometimes youth's participation in sport is avoided because of the fear of injuries. This is where talking about sport for youth with disabilities helps making new standards whereas prevention and adequate equipment and safety precautions would be taken beforehand, in the preparatory phase.

PSYCHOSOCIAL, PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

When it comes to the aims and goals of sports activity among youth with disabilities, we should state three different areas of benefits: psychosocial, physical and psychological benefits.

Psychosocial benefits of sport include participation, quality of life, community without stigma, positive experiences, identity and self-efficacy.³³ The goal is to achieve active participation that will offer joy and will to participate without expecting whether they will succeed or not.

Sport can facilitate real social interaction, actually it can be a substitute for other social interaction that they cannot approach for several reasons. **Social interactions help us build social identity.**

Building identity differs, from finding yourself working on your body shape and strength, discovering a group of people who share your interests to creating new friendships. Sport, recreation and pastime activities offer a wide range of options.

Benefits of physical activity are most often reflected through increased self-esteem, reduced stress, depression and anxiety, better cognitive and listening skills, attention, higher level of energy and preventing development of illnesses.³⁴

If aiming towards reaching self-esteem within youth with disabilities through sport, primary goals would be **teaching them that lack of confidence doesn't mean lack of ability to do something**, sport activities should not be based on unrealistic expectations, comparison or competition, sports activities should not test your skills but your motivation to learn and have fun, sports activities help fighting generalisation. By building self-esteem through sport activities, youngsters with disabilities gain new tools, new skills to manage different social situations that can be applied from one life situation to another.

³⁰ Watson A., Timperio A., Brown H., Hinkley T., Hesketh K.D. - “Associations between organised sport participation and classroom behaviour outcomes among primary school-aged children”; 2019. Available at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0209354>

³¹ Kızar O., Dalkılıç M., Uçan İ., Mamak H., Yiğit Ş. - “The importance of sports for disabled children”; 2015. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281086748_The_importance_of_sports_for_disabled_children

³² Murphy N.A., Carbone P.S., MD, and the Council on Children With Disabilities - “Promoting the Participation of Children With Disabilities in Sports, Recreation, and Physical Activities”; American Academy on Pediatrics, 2008. Available at: <https://pdfslide.net/documents/promoting-the-participation-of-children-with-disabilities-promoting-the.html>

³³ REPPSI, & Hanass-Hancock, Jill. (2014). “Psychosocial Support for Children with Disability and their Carers’ “. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307575395_Psychosocial_Support_for_Children_with_Disability_and_their_Carers

³⁴ CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND ADAPTIVE SPORTS, available at: <https://kidcompanions.com/children-with-special-needs-benefits-of-physical-activities-and-adaptive-sports/>

IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH



Emotional well-being as a result of several factors relies on mental health aspects such as, stress and relaxation, depression, anxiety, expressing emotions and mood swings.³⁵ During adolescence (12-19), emotional well-being takes an important role, especially because children have to be prepared to learn a new way of functioning, adapting, understanding and accepting. Emotional well-being comes from relationships between others and with ourselves, also. Youth with disabilities have problems coping with the changes in relationships.

If the setting is more formal and activities are regularly provided such as going to school or rehabilitations, children develop co-dependency. In this way they meet a lot of difficulties when they have to adjust to unfamiliar situations. If sport activities are introduced as fun games, those games stimulate creativity and the understanding that dealing with unfamiliar situations could be more manageable for youth with disabilities.

Furthermore, benefits of sport activities while creating firm relationships and facing unfamiliarity would be: **ability to solve social problems, ability to adjust to different people, giving and accepting different opinions, not feeling isolated in smaller or bigger groups, accepting failure, more tolerance**, etc.

The main aim while building emotional well-being with sport activities would be happy and enjoyable activity that improves performance. Happy and self-aware youngster who receives support **creates great internal values, which lead to emotional intelligence and willingness to adapt, participate, take risks**... Working with these aims, especially in adolescence, leads towards a greater goal and that is a youngster who is able to set goals, have a positive self-talk, knows how to cope with different situations and build quality relationships with oneself and with others.

Sport activities can benefit in teaching important life skills. When we talk about life skills, we can refer to developmental, affective and societal. Learning developmental skills while being exposed to sport activities means we learn how to lose, we learn how to cope with disappointments, unpleasant experiences and we mature with the time.³⁶ Participation in sport, recreation, gatherings or pass time activities are always about positive messages.

It is very important to repeat positive and encouraging messages very often. Those messages can be very simple, such as, "You can do this", "I believe in you", "You got this", etc. Positive messages build trust and firmer relationships. This means that a youngster will share their concerns, interests and needs and that you as a teacher, coach or youth worker will be able to fix it on the way.

Staying positive and spreading positive messages doesn't actually mean hiding the truth or masking it, but empowering.³⁷ In the phase of developing it is very important to know how to control emotions and channel negative emotions. Since sport has a competitive spirit and involves a lot of emotions, while producing sport activities for youth with disability it is very important to talk about rules and possibilities of losing and winning.

Developmental skills also mean understanding that sport needs a lot of

practice and that it is a process not just a goal.

Affective skills refer to relationships towards obligation such as school or sport, confidence and belonging. Sense of belonging through sport is built by being involved, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, supported and cared for. Youth workers and organisations providing activities for youth with disability take a primary role in developing a sense of belonging. Non-formal atmosphere, volunteers, equipped youth workers provide a basis for feeling accepted, understood, involved and becoming a multiplier for other youngsters with disabilities. Belonging also means accepting the rule of being a part of the team and accepting yourself as "I matter and I contribute to this".

Societal development through sport refers to listening better, organising, making decisions, free choices, discipline and making friends outside of the school circle.

Last but not the least, sport does not only benefit in developmental sense but also stimulates intellectual progress. This progress is seen in the **ability of problem solving and planning**. Sport participation requires being involved in planning and ability to plan alone. Working together with the coach/youth worker in adaptation and modification of activities, suggesting new activities and improvement of the current ones.

Youngsters also become observers and judges if the activity is good for them or not. They also learn that rules are important in order to understand the game as a whole, not as a punishment. They also learn that sport does not test their abilities but is the activity that requires certain skills.

³⁵ Disability in Sport, available at: <http://psychology.iresearchnet.com/sports-psychology/disability-in-sport/>

³⁶ Koenderink F. "Intellectual Disability Among Children Everywhere", Orphanage Projects (2018)

³⁷ Byers T. - "Contemporary Issues in Sport Management: A Critical Introduction"; SAGE Publications, 2015

5

DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCES FOR MAINSTREAM AND YOUNGSTERS WITH DISABILITY THROUGH SPORT AND NFE

The term competence is used in different contexts and disciplines, but a single shared definition does not exist. There are a number of different ones, which also depend on the context and culture to which the term refers.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008, presents the European Qualifications Framework (EQF); a unitary system of certification of citizen’s competences, whether they have been acquired formally, **non-formally** or informally. The Recommendation also clarifies the meaning of the term’s “knowledge”, “skills”, “competences” in the European framework.

- ◆ **“Knowledge”**: means the result of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is a set of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a field of work or study. Knowledge is described as theoretical and/or practical;
- ◆ **“Skills”**: means the ability to apply the knowledge and use the “know-how” to complete the tasks and solve the problems. Skills are described as cognitive (including the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (including manual skills and the use of methods, materials, tools);
- ◆ **“Competences”**: means proven ability to use personal, social and/or methodological knowledge, skills and abilities in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. **The competences are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.**
- ◆ To complete the definition of competence, it is necessary to insert one last term: **“aptitude”**. The aptitude indicates an inclination or predisposition or potential ability to carry out a given activity, which is only realised as such, if it finds external (contextual, i.e. environmental) and internal (motivational) conditions. The aptitude is understood as an innate individual predisposition, either influenced by the environment or acquired through experience or learning.

Having defined these terms we can then conclude that each competence is made up of knowledge, skills and aptitudes.

COMPETENCES IN INTEGRATED SPORT

Thanks to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and the use of the individualised diary of objectives, we are therefore able to define the individual objectives for each of the young people (with and without disability), participating in the planned activity. In fact, it is important to remember to take into consideration both the objectives and related skills of the individual and the objectives of the group, which contribute to making the practice of sport fun and engaging.

In integrated sport and youth sport work activities, in fact, the goal of the individual, created and calibrated according to the individual’s abilities, is as important as the team goal, created and calibrated according to the group’s abilities and set in such a way that any participant of the sport practice is able to give a contribution to reach it.

We can divide the competences that are acquired through the integrated sports practice into two types: **motor competences and transversal competences.**

Motor competence represents the proven ability to use personal, social and methodological knowledge, skills and abilities in play, expression, sport, wellness and leisure. Competences are expressed in terms of responsibility, autonomy and awareness.

The identified competences cover eight fundamental macro-fields:

- ◆ knowledge and mastery of your body
- ◆ sensory perception
- ◆ coordination
- ◆ expressivity
- ◆ game, game-sport and sport
- ◆ safety and health
- ◆ natural environment
- ◆ water movement

These competences will have a strong impact on the growth of participants (both normally-endowed and with disabilities), and on the youth sport work activities. But pay attention, working in the field of integrated sport and consequently setting individualised goals, each participant will get different form and declination of the competences. This is not only a problem, but it is a strength of integrated sport, which allows one to achieve specific objectives, calibrated to the capabilities of each individual. The young normally-endowed will have developed competences that will mostly refer to the physical and motor sphere, training motor skills and physical condition.

The young person with disability will also develop competences on individual and personal level, closely related to the physical sphere, but in this case the impact they will have on his daily life may be even greater. In fact, in these cases we talk about transfer of competences. We can take people in a wheelchair as an example.

The physical and proprioceptive development might develop by practicing “Baskin” (the “integrated” version of basketball), as it will help them to better manage the wheelchair also in city contexts and in the contexts where there are some barriers. They will therefore develop skills that will empower them in terms of autonomy and self-awareness. These types of competences are particularly important for young people with motor disabilities who, through fun activities conducted and designed for their possibilities and skills, develop capacities that are fundamental to their daily lives and can help them to overcome limitations and open up new possibilities for them.

However, not only the motor competences are learned through integrated sport, but also the social and the **transversal competences**. These are all those competences that represent personal knowledge, skills and qualities that characterise the person’s way of being; in study, at work and in daily life. Precisely for this reason they are called “transversal”, because they do not refer to technical areas or specific knowledge of a subject of study, but call into question all those aspects of personality and knowledge that everyone uses every day in different contexts.

Transversal skills emerge when we have to make decisions, when we try to get out of a difficult situation, when we try to change things, we don't like, when we are with others, every time we have to learn something new. The WHO identifies a list of 10 life skills³⁸, for which it also provides a short description and some ideas at educational level for their understanding:

- ◆ **Ability to make decisions:** to be able to deal constructively with decisions in different periods of life, evaluating different options and the consequences that possible choices may involve;
- ◆ **Problem-solving skills:** knowing how to deal constructively with life's problems, which, if left unresolved, can cause mental stress and physical disturbances;
- ◆ **Creative thinking:** it contributes to decision-making skills and to the ability of problem-solving, allowing us to explore available alternatives and the various consequences of our actions or non-actions; it helps us to look beyond direct experiences and to respond with adaptability and flexibility to everyday situations;
- ◆ **Critical thinking:** being able to analyse information and experiences objectively; helps to recognise factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the influence of the media;
- ◆ **Effective communication:** knowing how to express yourself, verbally and non-verbally, in a way appropriate to your culture and the situations in which you find yourself; it means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears and being able, in case of a need, to ask for advice and help;
- ◆ **Interpersonal skills:** being able to interact positively with others; being able to establish and maintain friendly relationships; being able to end a relationship constructively;
- ◆ **Self-awareness:** includes the ability to knowing yourself, your character, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes; it can help recognise when we are stressed or under pressure; it is a prerequisite for effective communication, positive interpersonal relationships and developing empathy with others;

- ◆ **Empathy:** being able to imagine what another person can feel, even in unfamiliar situations; helps to understand and accept others, even when they are very different from us; can improve social interactions especially in situations of ethnic or cultural differences or with the people in difficulty;
- ◆ **Managing emotions:** recognise our emotions and those of others, be aware of how emotions influence behaviour, and be able to manage them appropriately;
- ◆ **Stress management:** recognising the sources of tension in daily life, what effects they have on us and being able to identify the appropriate actions to control them.

These skills, some more than others, can be acquired through the practice of integrated sport, both by normally-endowed and participants with disabilities. A normally-endowed person for example will be able to manage the emotions through the team play, recognising the emotions of the group and understanding the relationship between one’s own actions and the response emotions of one companion.

Bringing the same example to a person with Down’s syndrome with proven aggressive tendencies in response to certain external demands, s/he can learn to manage that emotion by passing the ball to her/his teammates in an integrated football context. **Again, for a participant with a disability, the importance of learning these skills is even greater as it has a real impact in everyday life and for some cases it can also mean acquiring skills that can enable him/her to be placed in other contexts, such as work.**

³⁸ Birrell Weisen R. at al. - “Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools - Introduction and Guidelines to Facilitate the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes”, World Health Organisation, Geneva, 1997. Available from http://origin.searo.who.int/entity/mental_health/documents/who-mnh-psf-93.7Arev2/en/

ABILITY TO RECOGNISE COMPETENCES IN SINGLE OR GROUP SPORTS



The acquisition of the competences mentioned in the previous chapter is very important, but often, in the practice of sport an aspect, which contributes in parallel to allowing this competence to be effectively applied also in contexts other than sport, is underestimated. We're talking about being able to recognise proper competence. This allows the young person to recognise its usefulness and consequently to apply it in other contexts.

An element that distinguishes sporting activity from sports training is the process that allows the young participant to achieve awareness and master competence in all contexts in which it is required. To achieve this goal, it is important to apply the paradigms of non-formal education appropriately.

Let's take a standard session of non-formal education. Once the training objectives have been set, the youth worker plans the session by preparing all the elements. Presumably the first activity will be an energiser or ice-breaker that will aim to activate the group of participants and introduce the theme of the activity.

After that there will be a main activity that will deeply involve the group and that will have as primary objective to make the group work on the learning objectives that will be immediately followed by a **Debriefing** that will have the objective to bring the participants to reflect on the activity carried out and to reach the awareness of the acquired competences. The session will presumably end with a possible less intense activity to strengthen the concept and a “wrap-up” activity that quickly summarises the session and the objectives achieved.

Example of a session schedule:

- ◆ Introduction or quick ice-breaker (5/10 min)
- ◆ Overview of the days' activities (2 min)
- ◆ Main activity (30/60 min)
- ◆ (break)
- ◆ Debriefing of the main activity (25 min)
- ◆ 1 or 2 activities to solidify the learning objectives (30 min)
- ◆ “Wrap-up” (2 min)

As a youth/sport worker, our goal should be to combine Integrated Sports Activity with Non-Formal Education. Using the previous scheme, the above proposed session can evolve into:

- ◆ Introduction and Energiser (warming-up) or Ice-Breaker (giving priority to movement activities)
- ◆ Integrated Sports main activity
- ◆ Debriefing of a main activity
- ◆ 1 or 2 movement activities to consolidate the learning
- ◆ Summary of the day

It is important to focus on the debriefing, in order to make participants aware of the competences they have acquired. Debriefing is the moment where the youth/sport worker analyses an experience with participants in order to focus on and compound what they have learnt from it. It is a moment to take a step back, review the objectives of the activity and spend the time drawing ideas, conclusions and questions from the experiential component. In short, it is like taking somebody by his/her hand and guiding him/her through the experience, stopping to collect what has been learnt.

Like in any other youth work activity, after the integrated sport activity it's important to have a proper debriefing of the experience. It is usually easier to have participants first share their general impressions and then ask specific questions to drill down into different aspects of their experiences.

To guide the discussion, we are listing here some possible questions:

- ◆ How do you feel now?
- ◆ Has anything changed since the beginning of the activity? Why? Why not?
- ◆ What have you learnt?
- ◆ What have you not understood or appreciated?
- ◆ Does this relate to the situation in...?
- ◆ If you were to do this again, what would you do differently?
- ◆ You/the team faced some difficulties? Who solved them? How?
- ◆ How was the conflict handled?
- ◆ What patterns did you notice in how your team worked together?
- ◆ Did you personally feel like you contributed?
- ◆ Who was "checked-out" or didn't contribute as much, and why?
- ◆ How did you communicate among the players? Did you develop new strategies of communication? If yes, would they be useful even outside the sport activity?
- ◆ Would you be able to recognise a role for each person of the team?
- ◆ Has something happened in the field related to the real world?

It is important to note that not every moment in the activity needs to be talked over. As a youth/sport worker who is aware of the individual and team's challenges and goals, one will want to draw attention to the patterns and moments that will best meet those goals. Since the target group is an integrated group of youngsters and the main goal is to go toward inclusion through sport, it will be important to highlight moments of successful joint effort and shared emotions, moments of problem-solving process and moments when the different approach helped to reach the goal. It is recommended to write down these moments during the activity in order to recall them precisely during the debriefing.

The debriefing is the most important moment of the facilitation. With a proper debriefing the participants will feel to have enjoyed a funny game and meanwhile empowered themselves as people.

In conclusion, integrated sports activity, combined with the principles and methodologies of the non-formal education, can lead a group composed of normally-endowed and people with disabilities to achieve personal and group goals and to acquire competences consciously and then use them in the challenges presented to them in daily life, greatly improving their psychophysical state.

THE COMPETENCES' STAIRWAY IN PARKOUR EXPERIENCE. APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE

In regard to parkour, we can talk about it as a sport that can use NFE as an activity background. In fact, it brings individual characteristics out. To have an effective NFE impact, it is important that the trainer recognizes her/his pupils' competences from the beginning; in that way he can build a training, aimed at developing the individual potentialities.

Unfortunately, there doesn't exist a standard stairway to recognize everyone's individual skills; the trainer should rely on her/his experience and her/his observation. Some advice might be to focus first training on games and little and simple activities, watching every tracer in their skills on motor coordination, balance, explosiveness and courage to overcome obstacles. Only after that observation we should have a starting point to divide the group into subgroups to work better on their own potentialities. That's not a duty. We can work with the whole group together, only at the end or during the all training, remembering the suggestion of the "aim breakdown" mentioned in the chapter dedicated to Parkour.

Then, also in this sport the debriefing becomes a very important part when we organize a training session. It allows one to perceive own improvements and discover his own mental and physical development.

The debriefing should take place at the end of the training and during this part, the trainer should open a conversation or use visual or augmented tools in case of people with disabilities. Some of the questions could be:

- ◆ What exercise was the most frightening? The most difficult?
- ◆ What do you think you need to do to work more?
- ◆ There's a mate that makes you feel safer when you practise some exercise?
- ◆ What do you feel you have improved today?

SCHALOCK THEORY AND APPROACH ABOUT QUALITY-OF-LIFE DISABILITY/NOT DISABILITY ³⁹

The aspiration to a “good life”, to a life of well-being, satisfaction and happiness, has probably accompanied humanity since its birth and is already reflected in the theories of the most ancient philosophers. However, it is starting from the second half of the 20th century that the interest in the Quality of Life (QOL) has become more consistent, thanks to the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and this construct has been developed as a political matter and as a research field and discipline.

Within the different existing definitions, Schalock suggests that three are the most exhaustive: the first is that of **Goode** (1998) which indicates that the quality of life is achieved when the individual needs of a person are satisfied and the same has the possibility to pursue and achieve their goals; the second is that of **Felce & Perry** (1997) who sees it as a multidimensional concept that encompasses a series of central dimensions closely linked to individual well-being and the third is that of **Schalock** himself (1996) who describes it as the set of conditions of life, health and well-being desired by a person.

Table 1
Quality of Life Domains and Exemplary Indicators

<i>Quality of Life Domain</i>	<i>Exemplary Indicators</i>
Personal Development	-Education status -Personal competency (cognitive, social, practical)
Self-Determination	-Autonomy/personal control -Choices
Interpersonal Relations	-Interactions (e.g., social networks) -Relationship (e.g. family, friends, peers)
Social Inclusion	-Community integration -Community roles
Rights	-Human (respect, dignity, equality) -Legal (citizenship, access, due process)
Emotional Well-Being	-Contentment (satisfaction, enjoyment) -Lack of stress (predictability and control)
Physical Well-Being	-Health status -Activities of daily living (self-care, mobility)
Material Well-Being	-Employment status -Personal possessions

The attractiveness, power, and utility of the QOL concept involves its values (e.g. equity, inclusion, self-determination, and empowerment), its focus on the person, and its universal nature. Individual quality of life can be defined as a multidimensional phenomenon that is composed of domains that reflect one’s personal well-being. QOL domains are influenced by personal and environmental factors and are enhanced by individualized support strategies.

A widely used individual QOL conceptual model is described in Table 1. The 8-domain conceptual model summarized in Table 1⁴⁰ is an individual-referenced QOL Model that was developed by synthesizing QOL-related literature in the areas of education/special education, mental and behavioural health, mental retardation/ intellectual disability, and aging. Subsequent research has confirmed the factor structure of these eight domains, validated their cross-cultural etic (i.e., universal) properties and described its use in conjunction with logic models in implementing and evaluating intellectual and developmental disabilities policies and practices.

Specifically, by quality of life:

- ◆ in the domain of **Personal Development**, it refers to satisfaction and the ability to gain autonomy in all contexts and for the entire life span;
- ◆ in the domain of **Self-Determination**, we mean the ability and satisfaction to make choices, to express, each according to their abilities and means of communication, their preferences, to take advantage of the opportunities that the environment offers based on their wishes and intentions;
- ◆ in the context of **Interpersonal Relations**, it refers to the possibility of enjoying contacts and exchanges with family members, friends, people they know;
- ◆ in the context of **Social Inclusion**, it refers to the possibility of feeling part of a group and a community, of not feeling excluded or in other words of frequenting one’s living environment with satisfaction using fully the resources and possibilities that this offers;

- ◆ in the context of **Rights**, we mean the guarantee and benefits of the protection and active protection that everyone enjoys as a human being, thanks to the existence and compliance with adequate rules and laws;
- ◆ in the context of **Emotional Well-Being**, this refers to the possibility of feeling satisfied with oneself and one’s life, to appreciate one’s state of mind as positive, to perceive a pleasant setting of one’s relationship with oneself and with the world;
- ◆ In the area of **Physical Well-Being**, we mean the condition of good health that everyone enjoys, thanks to good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle, to the care they receive, to the possibility of controlling pain and stress and the ability to rest and relax adequately;
- ◆ In the domain of **Material Well-Being**, it includes considerations about income, the standard-of-living or purchasing power and housing quality.
- ◆ It is important to highlight how these QOL domains are valid both for people with and without disabilities and that in both cases the achievement of one’s goals can be supported by practicing a sport.

On the whole youth and sport work presents characteristics that can improve the quality of life in all eight domains, offering opportunities to make choices and exercise self-determination. They offer environments in which are provided access to resources, information and relationships, support to encourage growth and development and opportunities to accommodate psychological needs related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

³⁹ The Quality of Life Supports Model: Components and Applications. Robert L. Schalock, Ph.D. Key Note Address: 17th International Conference on Positive Behavior Supports Miami, Florida-March 12, 2020.

⁴⁰ <https://www.apbs.org/conference/files/2020presentations/Keynote-Schalock-text.pdf>

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PUBLISHER:

**FONDAZIONE DON GIOVANNI ZANANDREA ONLUS,
ITALY**



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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

