

Contribution to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities concerning the general discussion on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment.

This contribution comes from the UNESCO Chair "Transforming the Lives of People with Disabilities, their Families and Communities Through Physical Education, Sport Recreation and Fitness". UNESCO established the UNESCO Chair in 2013 in Munster Technological University, Ireland (formerly IT Tralee). We work with UNESCO and other partners to advance disability inclusion in and through sport.

We welcome the Committee's decision to develop a General Comment concerning the right to work and employment and the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.

The relevance of sport[1]

The Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that "sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development". It recognises the contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace, the empowerment of women and young people, individuals and communities, to health, education and social inclusion objectives. Due to its popular appeal, sport is a powerful vehicle for spreading messages on topics related to equality, human rights, and non-discrimination. Often described as a "universal language" sport can be a unifying force and is an effective tool for improving relations between groups. Sport is a critical intervention in several aspects of social policy, including education and employment. Some research has shown that sport participation can increase young people's employability. They may have developed skills such as cooperation, leadership, respect for others, knowing how to win and lose, managing competition, etc.[2]

The sport sector is a significant employer of people globally and is growing as a sector. According to some estimates, the sport sector contributes up to US\$700 billion annually or a 1% of global GDP.[3] In the European Union (2019), 1.37 million people worked in sport and those employed in sport is increasing at a higher rate than overall employment. For youth in particular, sport was an important employer with the share of young people aged 15-29 as a percentage of the total numbers employed by the sport sector reaching 35 % - twice the share observed in overall employment.[4]

The sport sector must engage with people with disabilities in terms of access to sport and the right to work and employment.

Training and employment for people with disabilities in sport

A Eurofound study affirmed the relevance of employment as a primary inclusion factor. It shows that the extent to which people with disabilities feel left out of society varies considerably base on employment

status. Those in employment feel they are part of society more than those who are long-term unemployed or unable to work because of their disability.

According to the EU adult education survey, job-related non-formal learning activities accounted for almost 80 % of all learning activities in 2016. An increasing number of organisations are using sport-based initiatives to promote the integration and inclusion of people with disabilities. While a wide range of stakeholders has implemented diverse approaches, there is still a lack of opportunities for people with disabilities to engage at different levels and types of education and training. The transition between education/training and employment and between different roles within the sports and fitness sector is unknown. Yet, the reality is that there is a relatively low percentage of employees with disabilities in the sport sector. The UNESCO Chair is developing the UFIT Apprenticeship model, which aims to provide capacity building support to existing networks of adult education providers in sport and fitness by developing a training and apprenticeship model and a comprehensive set of capacity-building resources.

Education, Training and Qualification metrics

There is a lack of knowledge among the higher and further education sector on human rights responsibilities or duty bearing roles. Awareness-raising on implementing such public sector equality and human rights duty is needed. It alone could have a transformative impact on practice. Nationally through an Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission funded project TRUST Ireland, the UNESCO Chair MTU, and partners are working to increase understanding. Partners include the Federation of Irish Sport, Sport Ireland, Sport Against Racism Ireland, the GAA and the Central Statistics Office. Through this project, we are developing a template and resources for sharing with other NHRI.

Training and qualification metrics for those training to work in the sport sector have tended to accommodate and adapt to the needs of students with disabilities on an ad-hoc basis. This creates uncertainty for both students and teachers and examiners and results in uneven treatment and outcomes between students with disabilities. Qualification metrics should develop to include more standard measures of assessment for people with disabilities. The reasonable accommodation measures available to the student with disabilities in the workplace they are training to join should be reflected and integrated into qualification assessments. The UNESCO Chair has witnessed these disparities specific to sport education, but the recommendation may apply to training and education more broadly.

Overarching considerations for the General Comment

In addition to the above information relating to the sport sector, we urge the Committee to consider the following:

Intersectionality

The UNESCO Chair strongly advocates adopting an intersectional approach that recognises that people are more than a single identity. Many people will fall into two or more groups that may face discrimination. We, therefore, welcome the acknowledgement of the particular situation of women, migrants and refugees with disabilities concerning *section V. Interpretation of article 27 (b) part III on measures to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and harassment*. We recommend that the General Comment expand this intersectional approach to other aspects of the right to work and employment and expand the groups referenced to include race, ethnicity and members of the LGBTI+ community.

Data collection

The collection and use of robust, high-quality data is essential for making evidence-based decisions regarding policy development, implementation, funding, monitoring, and evaluation. Data collection, disaggregation and associated representation can affect how different groups are considered in policy and reporting. Robust data is a vital layer of evidence of disability participation in the workforce that is not transparent through examples of good policy and practice. Good practice and policy provide valuable insights; they do not give the country-wide view of the situation needed to inform implementation and enable investment according to need due to exclusion. The General Comment's Section 5 on National Implementation must call for robust data collection that is disaggregated by, at minimum, by age, gender, and impairment type. States should be encouraged to provide factual data when submitting their State Party reports to the CRPD. To allow for internationally comparable data, States could be encouraged to use the Bridging the Gap Human rights indicators on the CRPD and SDG indicators on Goal 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all. Collaboration with the ILO in this domain would also be beneficial.

For further information, please email: Catherine.carty@ittralee.ie and sarah.carney@staff.ittralee.ie or phone Catherine on 087 2868250.

[1] The UNESCO Chair uses the Kazan Action Plan definition of sport: 'The term "sport" is used as a generic term, comprising sport for all, physical play, recreation, dance, organised, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms.' (UNESCO, 2017, p.1)

[2] Sport and Dev, *Sport as a means to build skills for employability*, <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/economic-development/sport-means-build-skills-employability> accessed 12/02/2021

[3] A.T. Kearney (2014) *Study: Sports Industry Growing Faster Than GDP* <https://www.ameinfo.com/industry/business/t-kearney-study-sports-industry-growing-faster-gdp> accessed 17/02/2021

[4] Eurostat (2019), *Employment in Sport* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Employment_in_sport accessed 12/02/2021