

# SPORT AS IT SHOULD BE: A rights-based approach to inclusion in Irish Sport



“Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all. We will promote inclusion to deliver our desired outcomes focusing on addressing social, disability, gender, ethnic and other gradients.”

National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027

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This report is published by the UNESCO Chair MTU. The UNESCO Chair has a global mandate on the social inclusion of marginalised groups in keeping with the goals of the United Nations and specifically those of UNESCO. Using human rights-based approaches, the UNESCO Chair centres on changing minds through influencing policy and promoting education for sustainable development, and changing lives through innovative practice and partnerships.

**Sport as it should be: A rights-based approach to inclusion in Irish Sport**





## OUR PARTNERSHIP

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### **UNESCO Chair, Munster Technological University**

The UNESCO Chair “Transforming the Lives of People with Disabilities, their Families and Communities, Through Physical Education, Sport, Recreation and Fitness” works across policy and practice to deliver change in inclusive Sport, Physical Activity, Physical Education, Fitness and Recreation. The UNESCO Chair supports UNESCO in advancing its agenda. The UNESCO Chair is responsible for leading a global response to the inclusive policy actions of the Kazan Action Plan (KAP), which emerged from the World Conference of Sports Ministers and Senior Officials in 2017. This has extended the Chair’s remit beyond disability inclusion to include all areas of marginalisation and exclusion.



### **Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)**

The Gaelic Athletic Association has a network of 1,600 clubs across the 32 counties with a membership of 650,000. Since 2013 the GAA Healthy Club Project has given the GAA a platform to deliver health and well-being and GAA for ALL messages to our GAA units, transforming clubs into hubs for inclusion and health in their local communities. The GAA has implemented GAA for ALL Committees at national, provincial, and county level to support and coordinate the delivery of Diversity and Inclusion promotion resources, training, and interventions, across the Association. GAA conducted four national workshops on Responding to Racism, in Limerick, Mayo, Dublin and Wicklow areas where county boards requested the workshop and a rise in discipline issues in the GAA had been seen.



### **Sport Against Racism Ireland (SARI)**

Sport Against Racism Ireland is a not-for-profit, volunteer-driven social enterprise with charitable status dedicated to using sport as a medium to promote social inclusion, cultural integration, global development and peacebuilding at home and abroad; while addressing the issues that violate human rights such as racism, sectarianism, homophobia, conflict, and all forms of discrimination. SARI is governed by a board of directors and has an Education and International Departments with sub-committees on Projects/ Events, Global Development Education, Finance, Media, Youth Leadership and Employability.



### **Central Statistics Office (CSO)**

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is Ireland’s national statistical office whose purpose is to impartially collect, analyse and make available statistics about Ireland’s people, society and economy. At national level, CSO official statistics inform decision making across a range of areas including construction, health, welfare, the environment and the economy. At European level they provide an accurate picture of Ireland’s economic and social performance and enable comparisons between Ireland and other countries. The CSO is also responsible for coordinating the official statistics of other public authorities.



### **Federation of Irish Sport**

The Federation of Irish Sport is the representative organisation for the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) in Ireland. Our membership consists of over 110 NGBs and LSPs from every corner of the country. Our vision is to provide a dynamic and effective voice for Irish sport, promoting the value of sport to Ireland while providing outstanding representation and services to members. As governing bodies, our members’ priorities lie with their sport. Therefore, our job is to communicate their views regarding the benefits of sport in areas such as personal health/well-being, the economy and society as a whole.



### **Sport Ireland**

Sport Ireland is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. This includes participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. In Summer 2018 the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport published the National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027. The National Sports Policy provides the policy context in which we will operate over the next 10 years. Sport Ireland strongly endorses the National Sports Policy and, as the statutory agency responsible, will have a lead role in many of the key operational and strategic challenges contained within the Policy.

## Advisory partner



The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is Northern Ireland's national human rights institution. It has been working on the subject of Sport and Human Rights since 2016, building partnerships with governance bodies and promoting the importance of embedding the protection and promotion of human rights in and through sport. They seek to achieve this through initiatives such as the Declaration on Sport and Human Rights, and the Sport and Human Rights Forum. These initiatives are very much led by sports representatives and focus on issues that are of mutual benefit, with the expertise of the Commission made available as resource on which they can draw. A number of all-island bodies have joined, and the forum has been able to reach out and partner with a number of global networks such as the Centre for Sport and Human Rights in Geneva and the Commonwealth Games.





## FOREWORD

### Chief of Sport Section, UNESCO, the lead UN agency with responsibility for sport

Sport has a unique role in our societies, with the potential to reach across communities and individuals, bringing people together to benefit our health, education, well-being and social inclusion. A rights-based approach to sports provision is needed for sport to meet this potential. As Chief of the Sport Section of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it gives me great pleasure to see this report, Sport as it should be: A rights-based approach to inclusion in Irish Sport from the TRUST Ireland partnership.

This is an exciting time for sport globally. UNESCO has been calling for greater alignment of the sport sector with human rights and Sustainable Development Goals through the Kazan Action Plan and Fit for Life. In line with TRUST Ireland's calls, it is vital that we can showcase sport as it should be: fun, fair, clean, safe and accessible to all.

Ireland has committed to creating a sports ecosystem that is welcoming and inclusive through the National Sports Policy 2018 –2027. We were very glad to see the commitment in Ireland's policy to working with UNESCO on international sports policy and were very happy for the Dáil Committee to move this agenda forward in 2022. The Irish policy recognises that many groups of people have been left behind in terms of access to sport and set the goal of targeting participation gradients around gender, disability, ethnicity and other groups.

This report Sport as it should be is a valuable resource setting out Ireland's current state of play. Speaking directly to rightsholders from groups in vulnerable situations who have historically been most likely to be excluded from sport, it provides unique insights into what is, and what is not, working on the ground in Irish sport.

Through these conversations with rightsholders on their experiences, and by engagement with international human rights and sports policy frameworks, TRUST Ireland have developed recommendations that set out a call to action to transform the Irish sport sector to one that is truly inclusive and rights-based. The challenge these recommendations set is one that I hope sports leaders will strive to meet in the coming years while supporting the communities and volunteers around the country to embrace human rights in and through sports.

I encourage all those who make up Ireland's sport ecosystem in a paid or voluntary capacity including policymakers, club managers, administrators, coaches, participants, teachers and educators, to take the time to read this report, to engage with the voices of the rightsholder and to reflect on how you can integrate the recommendations and human rights values into your own practice.



**Philipp Müller-Wirth**  
Chief of the Sport Section,  
UNESCO, the lead UN agency with  
responsibility for sport

"UNESCO's work in sport drives inclusive, peaceful, and resilient societies. We were very glad to see the commitment in Ireland's National Sports Policy 2018 -2027 to working with UNESCO on international sports policy. We commend the UNESCO Chair MTU and partners for this important report and its ambitious yet well-considered recommendations. The TRUST Ireland report showcases the relevance of international human rights and sports policy to the everyday practice of inclusion on the ground in Irish sport. Through the voices of rightsholders, the recommendations of this report give practical meaning to the aspirations of international sports policy at a national level."

**Nancy McLennan**  
Fit for Life Lead, UNESCO



"The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission has worked on Sport and Human Rights since 2016, building partnerships with governance bodies and promoting the importance of embedding the protection and promotion of human rights in and through sport at all levels. The TRUST Ireland report is an important new resource centring the voices of rightsholders in providing a picture of the current state of play in Irish sport and putting forward rights-based recommendations for an equal, accessible and fair sports ecosystem. The issues and recommendations set out in this resource resonate and have applicability in an all-island and indeed, international sporting context. We are delighted to have this report and we encourage sports policy makers and practitioners to respond to its calls to action."

**Dr. David Russell,**  
CEO Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission



## GLOSSARY

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUCFR</b>	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
<b>GAA</b>	Gaelic Athletic Association
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>IHREC</b>	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
<b>KAP</b>	Kazan Action Plan
<b>LGBTI+</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and other non-cisgender and non-straight identities
<b>LSPs</b>	Local Sports Partnerships
<b>MINEPS</b>	International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport
<b>MTU</b>	Munster Technological University
<b>NGBs</b>	National Governing Bodies
<b>SARI</b>	Sport Against Racism Ireland
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SNA</b>	Special Needs Assistant
<b>TRUST</b>	The Rights Understanding in Sport Toolkit
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

## Introduction from partnership

Human rights has become a topical issue in Sport. While everybody has the right to enjoy sport, physical activity, and physical education and play, not everyone is facilitated to do so. From removing all forms of discrimination to promoting equity, equality, cultural integration, social inclusion, respect, teambuilding, perseverance and fairness, sport's universal appeal makes it an ideal environment to actively respect, protect and fulfil human rights while building values that contribute to a democratic and inclusive culture. Seeking to build on and operationalise these values in Ireland, we have formed TRUST Ireland. With funding from IHREC, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, TRUST Ireland is a partnership of the Munster Technological University (MTU) UNESCO Chair, the Federation of Irish Sport, Sport Ireland, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Sport Against Racism Ireland (SARI) and the Central Statistics Office.

International efforts to socialise and build capacity on human rights in and through sport are ongoing. With funding from the Council of Europe and the European Union, MTU's UNESCO Chair, the GAA and European partners launched TRUST – The Rights Understanding in Sport Toolkit – a series of online educational resources in the domain. This resource can complement TRUST Ireland's efforts.

Increasing participation is a primary objective of the National Sports Policy. In keeping with the United Nations Agenda 2030 principle of no one left behind, TRUST seeks to level the participant gradients seen in sport in Ireland. TRUST Ireland aims to increase understanding of the interplay between sport, human rights and SDGs among government agents, the sports sector, higher education and training, and rightsholders on the island of Ireland. TRUST Ireland believes that embracing a human rights-based approach aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is critical to addressing participation gradients sustainably. Embedding a human rights-based approach in sport represents a change that can help deliver system change, ensuring sustainable changes and enduring impact.

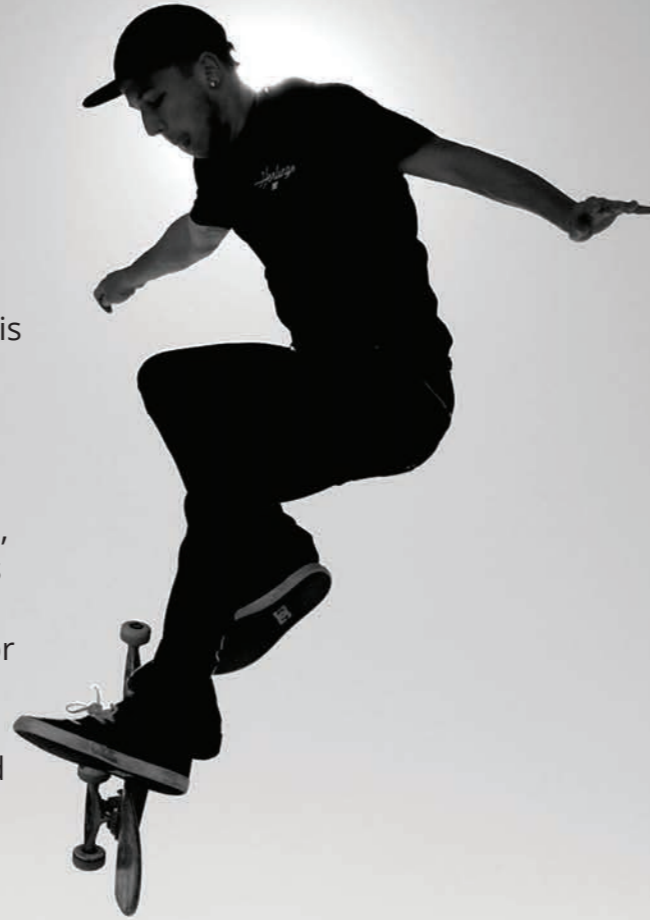


## Report Purpose

This report is for policymakers and the broader sports sector. It moves from the global policy context to local relevance. It elaborates on the linkages between human rights and sport and outlines how human rights duty applies to the sector and can help ensure inclusion and participation in and through sport.

This report presents the TRUST Ireland methodology, its human rights-based approach to sport and the research undertaken. The report presents our consultation findings and suggestions to increase participation by rightsholder groups. This is followed by the reaction from the Sport Sector to the rightsholder feedback and expressed needs. Processes for reporting to the UN Human Rights monitoring mechanisms which are a potentially pivotal moment for engagement between the State, the sport sector and rightsholders on human rights in and through sport are introduced. Finally, the report issues conclusions and recommendations for the State and sport sector.

We believe sport should be fun, fair, safe, clean and accessible to all. We hope this report will support all stakeholders in their endeavours to ensure this vision becomes a reality.



## Acknowledgements

The partnership wishes to thank the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for funding this project and supporting our work throughout.

We want to thank all of the rightsholders and their family members, service providers, and members of the sport sector who took the time to attend our workshops, contribute to these critical conversations and fill out online questionnaires. We hope that this report faithfully represents your views.

We also particularly wish to acknowledge the work and input of Mr Paul Crilly. Paul is a self-advocate for people with intellectual disabilities whose insights were very valuable in designing the rightsholder workshops. Paul also played a crucial role in trialling a model of rightsholder facilitation of the workshops, facilitating the workshop for people with intellectual disabilities.







## SPORT AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

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Human rights create both a moral and a legal duty for us all to work toward inclusion in sport and promote a sporting environment that is fun, fair, safe, clean, and equitable. Through international and European treaties the Irish state, and by extension all those providing services within the State, have taken on a duty to promote, protect and respect human rights.

As well as legal duties, human rights also offer a comprehensive framework which brings together a number of commitments and priorities from areas such as Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Sustainable Development. Through the guidance and monitoring mechanisms established at international level, the human rights framework offers clear commitments and requirements covering the gamut of inclusion and safety issues in sport which, when fully embraced, can offer a stable foundation to ensure change is systematic and robust.

While the links between human rights and sport may not always seem obvious at first glance, Ireland has ratified UN human rights treaties which explicitly recognise the right to participate in sport. Indeed, recent research in Ireland has found that Irish children consider the right to sport and play to be one of their most important human rights.<sup>1</sup>

In the following sections of this report, the linkages between human rights and sports and the implications of this for all those working in the space of sport will be outlined.

TRUST Ireland adopted 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.”<sup>2</sup>

In conversations on human rights and inclusion there can be discussions as to whether “equality” or “equity” is a more appropriate term to communicate going beyond treating everyone the same, to treating people in such a way that the outcomes for each person can be the same. In this document we are primarily using the word “equality” in line with Irish policy and legislation.

<sup>1</sup>Government of Ireland (2022) What We Think: Consultation with Children and

<sup>2</sup>Young People on Children’s Rights 2021 UNCRC, UNCRPD and UPR UNESCO (2017) Kazan Action Plan





The Trust Ireland logo and strapline neatly captures many human rights concepts.  
TRUST Sport As it Should Be: Fun, Fair, Clean, Safe, Accessible to all.



The terms are interlinked and relevant at all levels of sport and all sports stakeholders. In promoting participation, we must ensure that the participant is safeguarded from potential harm, especially when promoting to marginalised population groups who are most vulnerable to abuses.

The term fun captures that sport should be enjoyable and when it seeks to be we need to examine what human rights issues may be at play. We know that when sport stops being fun, drop-out can occur. This appears to be amplified when the voice was not heard in shaping their sporting experience.

Fair relates to values in sport, such as fair play, giving everyone a go, playing by the rules, respecting others, integrity, and friendship. This needs to come from both participant and organisational levels.

Clean embraces anti-doping, supplements, and a healthy approach to sport in contrast to an emphasis on "winning at all costs", valuing the activity and not just the result.

Safe refers to safeguarding of all participants at all levels including online. Going beyond child and vulnerable adult safeguarding to ensuring the rights of everyone involved in the sport are protected.

Accessible to all, looking across all groups who may experience barriers in access to sport in Ireland taking proactive approaches, reaching into the communities currently marginalised and welcoming them into the sports ecosystem at all levels.





## International policy context

As an overarching driving and unifying instrument, the 2030 Agenda has provided a focal point for the sport sector globally to unify and advance its alignment with sustainable development and human rights. In particular, paragraph 37 of the declaration states:

**“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.”<sup>3</sup>**

While not a goal in and of itself, it does carry as much weight as one. A mapping exercise has shown that sport directly contributes to at least ten of the goals while impact across the suite of goals is reported.

Since 2015, the sports sector initiated its response to the Agenda. In 2017, the sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VI) adopted the **Kazan Action Plan (KAP)**. It aimed "to facilitate international and multi-stakeholder policy convergence, ease international cooperation and foster capacity-building efforts of governmental authorities and sports". KAP is a coherent mechanism for policy development, implementation and monitoring aligned with universal human rights and the SDGs within and beyond the UN system.

Many other international policies link with the human rights agenda in and through sport. The 71st World Health Assembly in May 2018 endorsed the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030.<sup>4</sup> The United Nations General Assembly, at its 73rd session in 2018, adopted the resolution "Sport as an enabler of sustainable development".<sup>5</sup> The resolution confirms the growing convergence around KAP in the alignment of work on sport across the United Nations system and Member States' recognition of its potential as a pivot point for policy coordination. It further acknowledges the significance and complementarity of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity. These actions are part of growing acknowledgement globally of the importance of human rights in and through sport.



<sup>3</sup>United Nations General Assembly (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> para. 37

<sup>4</sup> World Health Assembly (2018) WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030 <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2018) Sport as an enabler of sustainable development A/RES/73/24 [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/24](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/24)

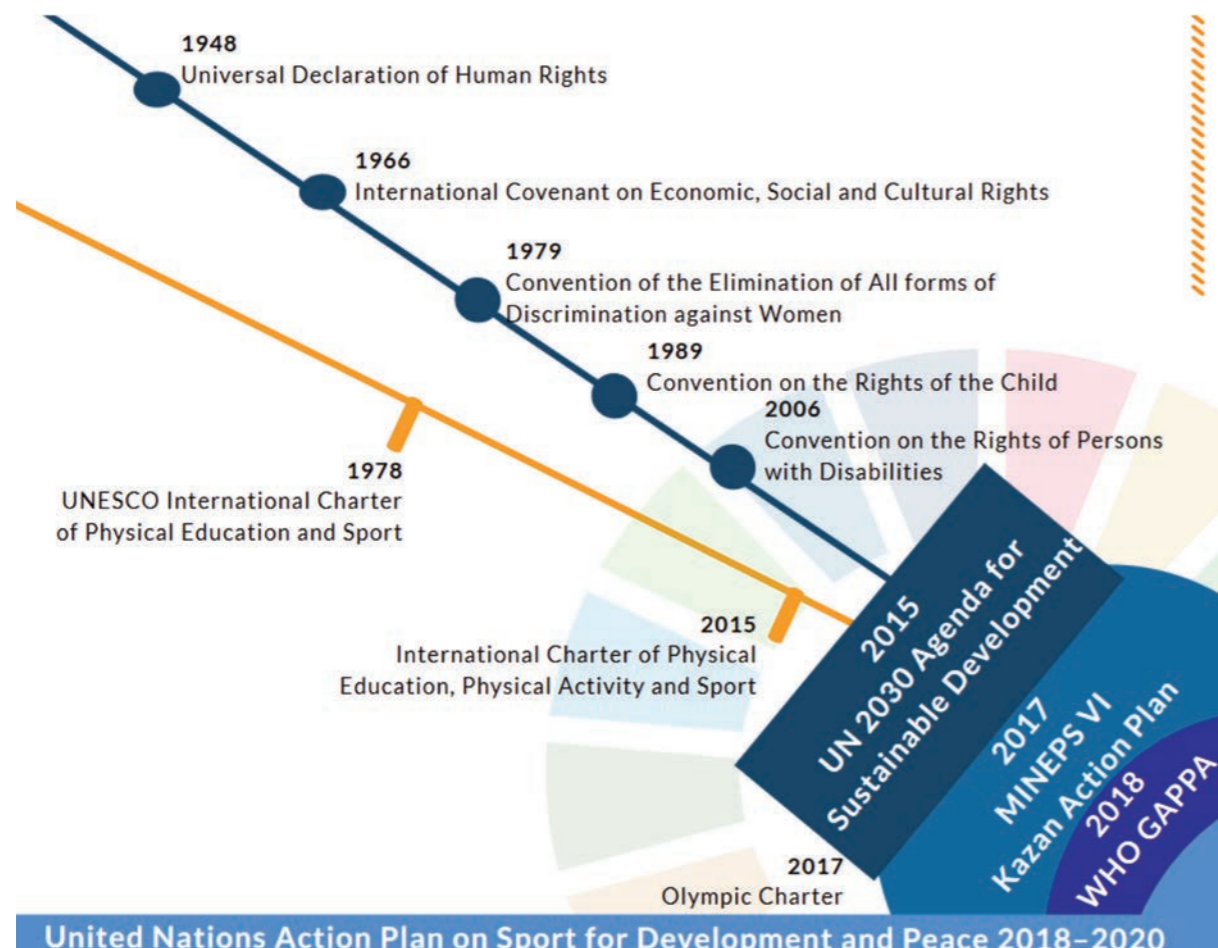


Figure 1 Representation of the growing convergence between sport and human rights over time

## Human Rights In and Through Sport

The term “human rights in and through sport” encapsulates three linked ideas.

Firstly, everyone has the right to participate in sport. In Ireland this right is recognised and protected through EU human rights law and the UN human rights conventions which the Irish state has ratified.

The right to participate in sport is explicitly referenced in article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The right to sport is also a part of the right to education found in articles 13 and 14 of ICESCR, article 10 of CEDAW, articles 28 and 29 of CRC, and article 24 of CRPD. Physical education is considered a core aspect of the right to education by the UN human rights treaty bodies.

Secondly, while sport can be a source of good and an implementer of human rights, there is also the potential for human rights abuses in sport. Therefore, rights need to be protected **in** sport.

These include the right to safety for those participating in sports. For example, article 16 of CRPD refers to the rights of persons with disabilities to be free from exploitation and abuse. Article 17 relates to respect for the physical and mental integrity of persons with disability.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has several relevant articles, such as article 19 on the right to protection from violence, article 34 on protection from sexual abuse, article 35 on protection from the sale and human trafficking of children and article 36 on protection from exploitation. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EUCFR) also recognises the importance of child protection in article 24. These rights mean that people participating in sport need to be protected from harm. This is linked to the notion of safeguarding.

The Kazan Action Plan, recognises the need to ‘protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of all involved in the delivery of physical education, physical activity and sport’<sup>6</sup>.

Finally, sport also has the potential to contribute to other human rights. Therefore we have human rights **through** sport. For example, being physically active has an important role to play in people’s health and well-being. Therefore, sport can contribute to the right to health, found in article 12 of ICESCR, article 12 of CEDAW, article 24 of CRC and article 25 of CRPD. It is also recognised in article 35 of the EUCFR Sport’s empowering impact can also contribute to a variety of rights such as non-discrimination (ICESCR article 2, CEDAW article 2, CRC article 2 and CRPD article 5), participation of women (CEDAW article 8) and the rights of people with disabilities to live independently and in the community (CRPD article 19, EUCFR 26). The sport sector is also a significant employer, and therefore contributes towards the right to work found in ICESCR article 6, CEDAW article 11, CRPD article 27 and EUCFR article 15. Meanwhile, the right to education both recognises the right to sport and can be contributed towards by sport.

<sup>6</sup>UNESCO (2017) Kazan Action Plan



## Duties in Ireland

Under human rights law, the State has the primary duty to ensure that human rights obligations are being met. This means that the Irish State has a duty to respect, protect and promote human rights in and through sport. All government departments that have responsibility for any aspect of sport in its broadest sense, and the cross-cutting areas that sport can contribute to such as health and employment should be working on the agenda of human rights in and through sport.

This duty extends beyond the immediate apparatus of the State to encompass all public bodies and those in receipt of public funds through the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, which established Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.<sup>7</sup> The Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty (the Duty) is a duty on public bodies to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people. All public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. It obliges public bodies to demonstrate the steps taken to assess, address and report on issues effecting participation, discrimination, equality and human rights including in the sphere of sport.

As such, the Duty provides an important framework for public bodies to systematically consider and reflect the particular needs of staff and service users who may be at risk of inequality, discrimination or disproportionate impact.<sup>8</sup>

Public sector duty means that the sports sector, inclusion bodies and the higher education sector all have a statutory obligation to work towards the full implementation of human rights in and through sport.

<sup>7</sup>Houses of the Oireachtas (2014) The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

[https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/ihrec\\_act\\_2014.pdf](https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/ihrec_act_2014.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>IHREC, Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

<https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/> accessed 9/2/22

## Irish policy

The National Sports Policy 2018 -2027 outlines Ireland's vision as follows:

**Our vision for sport seeks to capture the importance of sport to life in Ireland and to counteract a commonly-held view that it is nothing more than a game or merely a distraction from the important events in life. We believe that getting more people involved in sport as active and social participants, enabling them to have quality experiences, and securing international success from our top sports people will enrich our country in a variety of ways. We believe that the vision must also acknowledge the importance of a strong and vibrant sports system, continually growing and developing, and operating in a strong spirit of collaboration with partners within and beyond the sporting sector to deliver these outcomes.**<sup>9</sup>

One of the core values of the National Sports Policy is the promotion of inclusion: "Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all. We will promote inclusion to deliver our desired outcomes focusing on addressing social, disability, gender, ethnic and other gradients."<sup>10</sup>

The accompanying Sports Action Plan 2021 – 2023 has several dedicated actions on inclusion and participation, including delivering an information campaign highlighting the unacceptability of prejudice, racism, homophobia and all forms of discrimination in sport, and focusing campaigns to increase participation, especially of women, minority communities, people with disabilities and communities with lower levels of participation.<sup>11</sup> References are also made in the Action Plan to dedicated funding for Disability Inclusion, training on LGBTI+ participation and other important actions which can support the right to participate in sport.

Furthermore, the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Get Ireland Active! – sets out as a guiding principle of the plan to "Embrace an equity and human rights approach aimed at reducing social inequalities and disparities of access to physical activity."<sup>12</sup>

These existing policies and action plans reflect some ambitions to implement the State's human rights duties related to sport. The following sections of this report will outline how rightsholders view the implementation of these policies and recommendations for a more holistic human rights-based approach to sport.

<sup>9</sup>Government of Ireland (2018) National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027

<https://assets.gov.ie/15979/04e0f52cee5f47ee9c01003cf559e98d.pdf> pg. 17

<sup>10</sup>National Sports Policy pg.19

<sup>11</sup>Government of Ireland (2021) Sports Action Plan 2021 – 2023

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/93232-sports-action-plan-2021-2023/pg.8>

<sup>12</sup>Health Ireland, (2016) Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/b60202-national-physical-activity/> pg. 11



## Data collection

The collection and use of robust, high-quality data are essential for making evidence-based judgments regarding monitoring and evaluation. Decisions about data collection and disaggregation can have important knock-effects on how different groups are considered in policy. In 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, noted

**“Only robust and accurate statistics can establish the vital benchmarks and baselines that translate our human rights commitments into targeted policies, and only they can measure how effective those policies truly are”.<sup>13</sup>**

Ireland has many policies and action plans focusing on sport, physical activity, health, education and inclusion of specific groups. To be able to fully assess their effectiveness and see where further work is needed, robust data on the implementation of actions, targets, and indicators are required.

While collecting data on all existing and developing policies seems onerous, much data can be used for a multiplicity of purposes. This reflects the overlapping and complimentary natures of many policies. The SDGs and Ireland’s human rights treaty obligations come with reporting requirements. The SDGs have a comprehensive framework of indicators on which Ireland reports. Given the SDGs’ rights-based nature, much data gathered to monitor progress on the SDGs can also be used to monitor progress on human rights. The Central Statistics Office’s SDG Division is publishing a series of e-publications that monitor how Ireland is progressing towards meeting its targets under the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>14</sup> These existing data sources can be utilised to report on human rights and track national policies and action plans progress. At the international level, as part of the implementation of the Kazan Action Plan, indicators on the contribution of sport to the SDGs were developed. A mapping exercise undertaken by the UNESCO Chair found that these indicators were generally applicable for reporting to UN human rights treaty bodies. The SDGs’ rights-based nature means that sport indicators, and data gathered on SDGs can also be used to monitor progress on human rights. Sport Ireland is currently exploring SDG reporting.

Further developments relating to data gathering are ongoing in Ireland following the Budget 2021 announcement of plans for a well-being index to measure living standards in Ireland. The development of the index could potentially see the large and disaggregated data samples suitable for reporting on human rights treaties, the SDGs, and individual policies and action plans. The headline indicators and a dashboard were published in June 2021, and work to align with the CSO and identify data gaps

<sup>13</sup>Navi Pillay (2013) The factual backdrop for human rights protection and development agendas <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/ThefactualbackdropHRprotectiondevelopmentagendas.aspx> accessed 26/03/2021

<sup>14</sup>Central Statistics Office, UN Sustainable Development Goals <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/unsustainabledevelopmentgoals/>

<sup>15</sup>Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2022) Minister O’Gorman announces the development of a National Equality Data Strategy <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/5a7f4-minister-ogorman-announces-the-development-of-a-national-equality-data-strategy/>

is ongoing. Engaging with this project could provide valuable data for this report. The themes of this report, inclusion and sport, are both pertinent to the concept of well-being and there is potential for further overlap.

The recent announcement of plans to develop a National Equality Data Strategy by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Central Statistics Office is a welcome development.<sup>15</sup> Efforts to improve the collection, use, and dissemination of equality data can help develop inclusive sport policies.

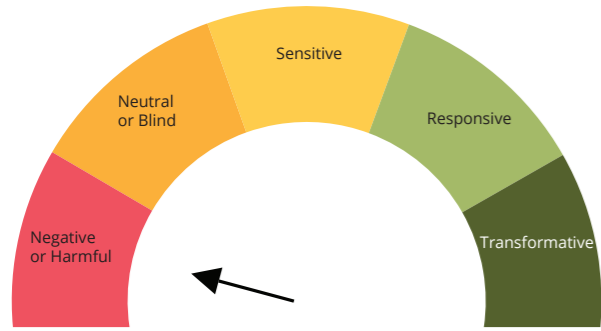




# SHIFTING THE DIAL

There are strong policies and duties in place in the Irish sport structures. With TRUST Ireland we are calling for a shift in the dial where policies and programmes are neutral or sensitive to inequalities, to being fully transformative.

Policies and programmes intentionally or unintentionally reinforce or take advantage of inequalities and stereotype, or whose approach exacerbates inequalities

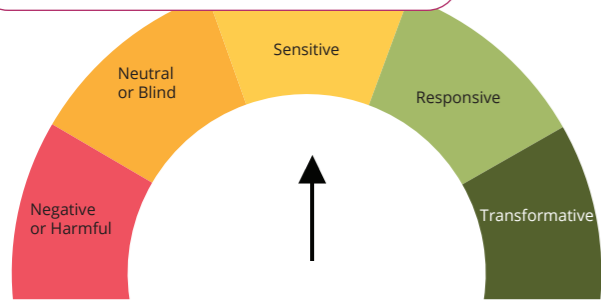


Policies and programmes that ignore discrimination altogether. Designed without analysis of the economic, social and cultural roles, rights, obligations and power relations. Understands "fair" as treating everyone the same.



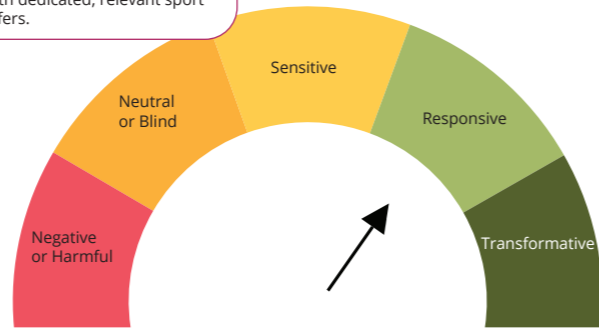
Policies and programmes consider norms, roles and relations but do not address the inequality generated by these.

e.g. Coaches are aware of transportation difficulties for participants in direct provision centres and do not sanction players for being late to training. However, they also do not seek solutions to the transport issue.

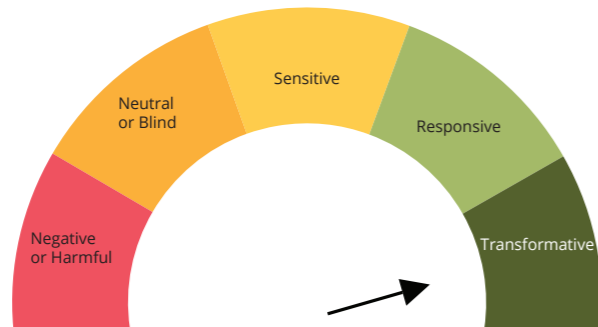


Consider how norms, roles and relations affect access and power dynamics. Considers the specific needs of groups and intentionally targets and benefits a specific group.

e.g. Campaign targeting involvement of specific group, with dedicated, relevant sport offers.



Policies and programmes seek to transform power relations and promote equality. They promote the position of marginalised groups and seek to transform the underlying social structures, policies and norms that perpetuate inequalities.



We invite you to consider as you read this report what a transformative approach to sport would look like for you. You may wish to come back and fill in the example yourself.





## THE TRUST IRELAND MODEL

Marginalised groups in Ireland experience barriers in accessing sport, resulting in lower participation. This highlights difficulties in accessing human rights. Traditional approaches to the design and delivery of sport programmes and policies, did not have human rights at their core. By reorienting sport to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, TRUST believes we can change outcomes for the good of all. The TRUST Ireland model helps socialise human rights in and through sport. TRUST applies a multistakeholder lens to understand and advance human rights in and through sport in Ireland. This reorientation towards human rights approaches is of global interest, making this an opportune time for Ireland to embrace a human rights-based approach to sport.

### Human Rights Based-Approach to Sport

A human rights-based approach is a way of looking at something and examining what human rights issues are at play, who is affected, are their rights upheld and how this area can be developed in such a way that it promotes and protects the rights of everyone involved.

As outlined in the explanation of human rights in and through sport, there is significant overlap between sport and human rights. Therefore, a human rights-based approach can and should be adopted by the sport sector and by those developing policies relating to sport. Under a human rights-based approach all programmes and policies should further the realisation of human rights. Human rights standards and principles guide all phases of the programming process and policy design. Activities should contribute to the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and of 'rightsholders' to claim their rights.

The impact of reframing an approach to a human rights-based approach can create important shifts in the way programmes and policies are viewed. Most importantly, it can change how the targets of policies and programmes are viewed. A rights-based approach no longer sees target groups as charitable cases or dependents who, by being included, are having a favour bestowed upon them. Instead, they are viewed as rightsholders who are not asking for a favour but claiming rights that they hold and are entitled to.

When implementing a human rights-based approach, it is important to ask the following:

- **Why are we doing this?** Because it is a right(s)
- **How are we doing this?** In a way that empowers rightsholders
- **What rights will it help to uphold?** Will human rights be advanced?
- **What are the consequences of this?** Will it have any unintended negative impacts on other rights?
- **Who are we doing it with?** Are rightsholders being centred in discussions and design?

## Methodology

The TRUST Ireland project uses a modified version of quintuple helix model<sup>16</sup> which focuses on how different facets of society interact in a state. This methodology can be taken on by national human rights institutions or interested partnerships such as TRUST Ireland and adapted to their own countries.

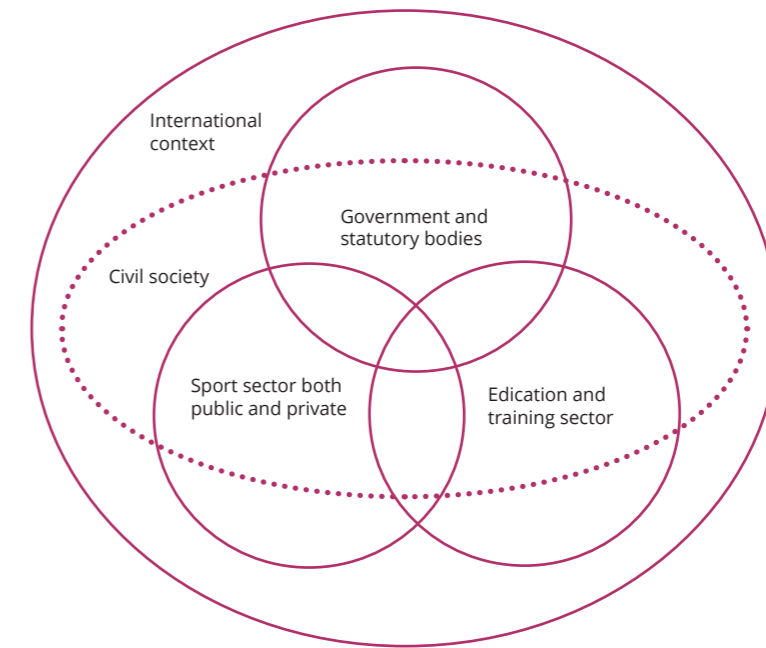


Figure 2 Modified Quintuple Helix Model used by the TRUST Ireland project

The approach highlights the roles different groups have in implementing human rights in and through sport and recognises momentum on the idea of sport as a human right and of rights in and through sport needs a multistakeholder approach. To this end the TRUST project held national dialogues with the following groups:

- Government departments with responsibilities related to sport and human rights and state bodies
- Sport Sector
- Rightsholders

The TRUST Ireland model has aimed to take a human rights-based approach by focusing on the voices of rightsholders themselves.

The TRUST Ireland partnership engaged in workshops with rightsholder groups during the week 6-10 December 2021. Due to the evolving Covid-19 situation at that time, these workshops ultimately took a hybrid form with project partners meeting the participants in person in the Croke Park Hotel in Dublin and participants joining in remotely via zoom.

<sup>16</sup>Elias G. Carayannis - Carayannis, Elias G.; Barth, Thorsten D.; Campbell, David F. J. (2012-08-08). "The Quintuple Helix innovation model: global warming as a challenge and driver for innovation". *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. 1 (1): 2. doi:10.1186/2192-5372-1-2. ISSN 2192-5372



Due to the change in Covid restrictions on December 7th and the effects of Storm Barra on travel and internet connections, unfortunately, attendance during these workshops was affected. Further views were sought online in January and February 2022.

There was a dedicated workshop for each of the following groups:

- Women and girls
- Migrants including Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- LGBTI+ community
- People with disabilities
- People with intellectual disabilities
- Travellers

Intersectionality, recognising the multiple identities and forms of discrimination that an individual can face, is of great significance in addressing inequalities and human rights. There was discussion within the TRUST partnership on the merits of holding workshops by rightsholder group versus by geographic area. Ultimately, it was felt that holding workshops based on rightsholder group would allow us to identify barriers and facilitators specific to each group while also observing common themes for an intersectional overview. In several workshops, participants were also asked questions or spoke themselves of the position of overlapping identities, such as women with disabilities.

Each workshop opened with an introduction to the TRUST Ireland project and human rights in and through sports. A general discussion followed among rightsholder on their experiences of sport in Ireland, primarily focusing on the barriers and facilitators and areas requiring improvement. The discussions were guided by the rightsholders' concerns and priorities.

On the final day of workshops, the focus moved from the rightsholders to the sport sector with a dedicated workshop held for Local Sports Partnerships and a second held for National Governing Bodies of Sport. These workshops took a more structured approach than the rightsholder workshops, beginning with a presentation from the TRUST Ireland partnership on the concepts of human rights in and through sport, an introduction to public sector duty and a summary of the findings from the week of workshops with the rightsholders. The participants were then invited to discuss the relevance and applicability of the concepts of human rights in and through sport and public sector duty to their own work and to respond to the issues raised by rightsholders and reflect on the extent to which they recognised these issues. Both groups were also invited to share areas where they felt they needed extra support. The findings of these two workshops were supplemented by an online survey which ran in February 2022.

The findings of all workshops and accompanying recommendations for both the State and the sport sectors are laid out in the following sections of this report.





## FINDINGS

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### Cross-cutting themes

While much of the feedback received was specific to the individual circumstances experienced as members of certain groups there were a number of key overarching themes or areas which all rightsholder groups felt action was needed by the sports sector and from the State.

#### Education

The first area was in relation to education. In this instance “education” is used as an umbrella term encompassing a number of related issues which were identified.

Overall, it was felt that there is generally goodwill from the sport sector concerning inclusion, but a nervousness when it comes to actually implementing inclusive programmes due to a lack of confidence among clubs and coaches in their abilities to do it “correctly”. Training and education on inclusion is needed to empower clubs to integrate inclusion throughout their work and overcome feelings of being ill-equipped.

The need for education around appropriate language also came through, especially about disability and race and ethnicity. Education is needed to ensure that everyone in the sports sector knows and is comfortable using appropriate language that isn’t discriminatory when speaking with or about people. Having a simple glossary on the websites of federations and Sport Ireland was suggested as a useful starting point.

A significant area was awareness and education for the sport sector on the realities of life for certain minority groups. The example of direct provision was given. People living in the provision centres were trying to get involved in sport but were encountering difficulties with the coaches and the trainers. The coaches were annoyed due to lateness, mixed attendance, etc. However, when the coaches became aware that many people in direct provision don’t have any reliable form of transport and the centres are often in rural areas at a distance from sporting facilities, they empathised with the participants. They even looked into arranging lifts from coaches and other teammates. Awareness-raising on life in direct provisions, situations in halting sites, lack of accessibility for people with disabilities in using public transport etc., were all highlighted as important for shifting attitudes towards rightsholders and lessening the emotional workload placed on individual rightsholders of having to explain themselves continuously. If clubs are educated on the realities of life for rightsholder groups they can proactively look at making small changes to accommodate people, rather than putting the onus on rightsholders to explain situations that may have elements of stigma attached.

#### Involvement

A second topic that was consistently raised was involvement. People want to be involved in playing sport, but involvement should go beyond that to all areas of sporting life. There was a strong sense that sport isn’t about just doing the activity and going home. Rather, the social and community dimensions of sport are integral to genuine involvement. The importance of the “clubhouse coffee” or post-training social for helping rightsholders feel genuine inclusion in a community was stressed.

There was interest in being involved at all levels of sport; as board members, club administrators, coaches, etc. There is a potential trickle-down effect of having people from under represented groups visibly involved in the clubs at all levels, which creates role models for other people from the communities to see that this is a welcoming place and an activity that they can get involved in.

There were also discussions on involvement in employment in sport. The sports sector is a significant source of employment so facilitating employment opportunities for people from minority groups was raised. It was felt that increasing employment of people from our rightsholder groups would have a big impact in terms of creating systemic change across the sport sector.

#### Communication

A significant topic that came up was that of communication. The phrase “nothing about us without us”, is a mantra that is commonly used by organisations for people with disabilities. However, this concept was raised in various terms throughout all the rightsholder workshops. It was stressed that the rightsholders know their own situation and their own abilities best.

It was felt that there are often people in the sports sector who have good intentions and want to be inclusive, but they need to talk to the people they want to include first, so that the programmes are actually designed to work for the needs of the groups. Communication is vital for this.

Communication was also identified as being very important for moving beyond stereotypes. In our workshop for people with intellectual disabilities, it was raised several times that people with intellectual disabilities are constantly underestimated. The sports sector needs to talk with people with intellectual disabilities so that they can design programmes that really work for what they can do. Another interesting example was raised in relation to Muslim girls where there was a piece of research done by SARI. A group of Muslim girls were offered shown a list of the approximately fifty sports on offer in Ireland and asked to rank their interest in these sports. The results weren’t what was expected; while football and basketball came out highly so did camogie and swimming.

Communication is vital for understanding needs and wants, which once recognised, can facilitate putting programmes in place that really respond to needs and meet a demand.



## Commitment

Commitment was a further area that was raised. It was felt that there are individuals engaged as sports volunteers or work in NGBs and LSPs, who are personally committed to inclusion, but this doesn't often translate into an institutional commitment. The result is that when this person moves on to a new role, or in the case of a volunteer whose involvement ends, the inclusive initiatives they were driving also end. Therefore, there is a need to harness the personal interest of those individuals but bring it to a more institutional level where continuity is better guaranteed. Suggestions include more training for all involved, as well as inserting articles on inclusion and human rights in club constitutions.

## Collaboration

The importance of effective collaboration was raised. This is linked with communication and involvement related to collaborating with rightsholders in the design processes and the programmes' policies. However, there was also space for exchange and collaboration between sports and regions. Many aspects of inclusion are directly transferable between sports. Therefore, if one sport has a particularly effective inclusion programme and another sport is interested in inclusion in that regard, the sporting bodies should talk to each other and share examples of good practice. This exchange should also be happening from a geographical perspective, where clubs or LSPs in one county may have good practice to share with others. The potential for developing a community of practice with all relevant stakeholders was raised. Inter-sport and inter-body collaboration is needed to coordinate access for athletes, which is as simplified and fair as possible.

## Policy implementation

Finally, regarding policy, there was a feeling that there are several very good policies in Ireland, both around sport and inclusion. However, it was felt that the results were mixed when it came to actual implementation. Many groups suggested that more concrete action plans which would include timelines, indicators and monitoring were needed to really move the policies beyond just being on the page to making a difference in everyday practice.

The following sections of the report will outline the findings from each rightsholder group.





## WOMEN AND GIRLS

### Current situation

International research has found that “Girls who play sports do better in school, suffer fewer health problems, achieve more in areas dominated by men, such as science, and hold better jobs as adults.” Moreover, this effect is magnified among minority populations who “appear to experience greater social and economic mobility, more confidence, and even more personal safety if they have participated in sports.”<sup>17</sup> Women and girls participate in sport and physical activity at significantly lower rates than men and boys. This divergence begins in childhood and becomes very pronounced during adolescence. According to Sport Ireland just 7% of girls aged 14-15 years are meeting recommended physical activity levels compared to 14% of boys. Boys are more likely to meet the Physical Education guidelines at post-primary school level than girls.<sup>18</sup> In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to increase participation in sport by women and girls. However, recent research has shown that the participant gradient between men and women in sport is in fact widening with 48% of men reporting taking part in sport while 38% of women reported taking part in sport in Q3 of 2021.<sup>19</sup>

### Participant view of barriers and facilitators

#### Non-competitive options

Some women and girls are put off by the overly competitive focus of sports and prefer to play for fun and for the social aspects of team activities. However, there is a feeling that there are not many options for those who want to play sport in this way rather than focusing narrowly on competition. As one teenager said;

**“When you’re younger it’s just friendly... nice to go out, see your friends, play and just have a kick about... but people get more competitive.”**

There is also a feeling that there are few entry-level options in sports beyond childhood. Participants expressed fears of being judged when having to join already experienced groups as teenagers or adults.

#### Safety concerns

Women often feel unsafe when travelling to and from trainings or in undertaking outdoor exercise such as running, jogging, hiking, etc., especially in winter when it is already dark by the time schools and workplaces close up.

### Women and girls in leadership

There is a lack of female coaches, instructors, and leaders in sport relative to the general population. Some women and girls feel more comfortable interacting with female coaches and trainers but often there are not enough female coaches to meet this need. The male domination of leadership positions can reinforce the idea that sport is essentially a male space not for women and girls.

#### Prioritisation of male access to facilities

Often men’s teams are given access to pitches for training and games at prime times leaving less desirable times, or poorer facilities as the only options for women’s sports to take place.



<sup>17</sup>Barbara Kotschwar (2014) Does It Pay to Let Girls Play? Peterson Institute for International Economics Policy Brief14-8

<sup>18</sup>Woods CB, Powell C, Saunders JA, O'Brien W, Murphy MH, Duff C, Farmer O, Johnston A., Connolly S., and Belton S. (2018). The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2018 (CSPPA 2018). Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland, Sport Ireland, and Healthy Ireland, Dublin, Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

<sup>19</sup>Federation of Irish Sport (2021) 2021 Irish Sports Monitor Interim Report Q3 shows participation in sport now nearing pre-pandemic levels <https://www.irishsport.ie/2021-irish-sports-monitor-interim-report-q3-shows-participation-in-sport-now-nearing-pre-pandemic-levels/>



## Exclusion in mixed settings

Women and girls felt that when trying to take part in mixed sporting activities, it is very male dominated and not welcoming to women and girls. There are fears that in mixed activities, males can be overly physical against female participants which creates an intimidating atmosphere. It can also lead to girls being left on side-lines in games and activities as boys and men play amongst each other and don't engage female teammates.

**“In PE we would play basketball and soccer because the boys wanted to. They never included us in the games. The teacher would shout at us girls to get in the game but never encouraged the boys to pass to us or let us actually take part.”Harassment and sexist language**

Women and girls have faced sexual harassment from coaches, other members of clubs and other users of facilities. They also face patronizing behaviour including unsolicited comments on form and technique especially in gym settings. Women and girls face sexist language in sport settings. They also find the use of femininity as an insult to male players e.g., “you throw like a girl”, off-putting and it reinforces the idea that sport isn't really a place for women.

## Time constraints

In general, women and girls spend significantly longer per week performing unpaid domestic and care-giving work which leaves less time for sport. Many women are juggling employment, caring duties and domestic work which leaves physical activity low on the list of priorities.

This burden of domestic work can also extend to women in sports clubs who are often responsible for unpaid and unofficial labour within clubs including providing refreshments, organising social events, clean-up days, supervising children etc., which are crucial to the clubs but often going unacknowledged, with men in leadership positions receiving all the praise and official recognition.

## What is needed - Sport sector:

### Consider women and girls wants

Efforts to increase women and girls' participation in sport can often focus on getting women and girls into existing structures rather than considering why women and girls are not participating in these structures. Work with women and girls in developing programmes to respond to their actual priorities.

### Invest in female coaches

Women should be supported in their ambitions to become coaches and trainers and supported throughout their coaching journey. Encouragement and support should be given to women to reach leadership positions.

## Acknowledge women's work

The work and dedication of women in clubs outside of official roles and duties should be acknowledged and rewarded.

## Access to facilities

At least equal consideration should be given to female teams needs when allocating facilities and training times. Women and girl's safety considerations regarding travelling to facilities should be taken into consideration when allocating time slots.

## Language and gender sensitivity

Education on gender sensitivity should be provided to people involved in sport at all levels. Zero tolerance policies on sexist language and harassment should be adopted.

## More varied options

A wider variety of types of sport should be offered with options to participate in the sports in a variety of ways from competition focused to fun and social focused.

## What is needed - State:

### Safety

There needs to be a greater focus on women's safety in public places, for example through awareness campaigns for the public targeting men and boys in particular. Also, in collaboration with local authorities, focus on creating safer environments for women and girls through ensuring adequate street lighting, providing regular public transport in the evenings, etc.

### Gender conscious vs gender neutral

Take a gender conscious rather than gender neutral approach to policy, planning and funding in sport and physical education. In the State's combined 5th and 6th report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, it was noted that in Ireland “(t)he Physical Education (PE) curriculum in schools is gender-neutral”<sup>20</sup>. Given the known disparities between boys and girls in participation levels in the current physical education system and in sport more generally, the curriculum and sports' policies more broadly need to go beyond a “gender neutral” approach to embrace an approach that actively acknowledges and attempts to redress the existing gender imbalances.

<sup>20</sup>Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2022) The combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Ireland under article 44 of the Convention pursuant to the simplified reporting procedure para. 294



# REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS

## Current situation

The number of people living in Ireland who are not born in Ireland is increasing. Immigration to Ireland comes through many channels and individuals can have very different experiences, from EU citizens relocating under freedom of movement, to those arriving seeking asylum from conflict zones. While the term migrant encapsulates many people who move within or between countries in a broad umbrella sense,<sup>21</sup> in this research, we primarily focused on those from minority ethnic backgrounds, refugees and asylum seekers who are at highest risk of exclusion. In this respect, 17.8% of people identified as something other than “White Irish” in the 2016 census.<sup>22</sup> Not all of these are migrants, as some will have been born in Ireland; however, many are. As of April 2020, there were around 7,400 people in Direct Provision, including over 3,000 children.<sup>23</sup>

It should be noted that while the rightsholder group has a broader focus, the bulk of this conversation focused on issues relating to direct provision.

## Participant view of barriers and facilitators

### Obstacles in direct provision

Direct provision poses a number of obstacles to participation in sport. The combination of a lack of opportunities for exercise and play combined with the limited dietary offerings have negative effects on overall health. People in direct provision centres are traumatised by what they have fled and by the system itself. Sport can be an outlet for trauma but is not well supported. Examples of lack of prioritisation of sport and play by direct provision centres include Mosney centre dismantling the existing playground and emptying of the swimming pools as the former holiday camp was converted to a direct provision centre.

There were concerns for people in the centres between now and 2025 implementation of the White Paper.

Shame and stigma around living in a direct provision centre and/or disclosing asylum status mean that people don't feel comfortable asking friends, teammates, or coaches for lifts to sporting activities. Centre residents can face criticism from coaches and clubs for being late, missing sessions etc., as the coaches aren't aware of the difficulties with accessing playing spaces.

<sup>21</sup>UN Migration, Who is a migrant? <https://www.iom.int/who-migrant-0>

<sup>22</sup><https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8e/>

<sup>23</sup><https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/listing/category/direct-provision>

### Ghettoization

Access to sport varies by centre. Residents don't want options that are only in the centres as this creates a sense of “ghettoization”. They want to mix with the local teams and classes.

### Infrastructure/ Transport

Transport is an issue as many centres are remote. Where there are bus services for the centre, they tend to stop early in the day which means children can't stay and participate in after school activities. The changes with regards to drivers' licenses are welcome but they are insufficient to address this barrier as most direct provision residents do not have access to a car.

### Racism

People experience overt racist bullying both on and off the pitch. They also encounter less overt but still difficult stereotypes about the types of sport they want to participate in, e.g., being sent to basketball when they want to play GAA. Coaches and adults are using inappropriate and stereotyping language when engaging with children from refugee and migrant backgrounds e.g., talking about rap music to open conversations etc.

### Cultural accommodation

Inflexible rules regarding sports uniform, including banning of head coverings, by some NGBs, create cultural barriers to participation for some.

### Parental pressure

Many teenagers from migrant and refugee backgrounds face significant pressure from parents to focus on their studies at the expense of sports.

### Choice

Taking a rights-based approach which focuses on voluntary participation and choice can increase participation. An example was given of SARI research with Muslim girls which presented the girls with a list of all Sports Council funded sports in Ireland and asked about preferences. The choices of were not what was expected with swimming and camogie rated very highly.

### Role-models

Role-models and relatability can have a favourable impact. Referencing sports figures who are relatable and serve as role models that the group can strive to emulate.

### The business case

There is significant potential for fresh recruitment and increasing numbers through inclusive practices. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers account for a substantial proportion of the Irish population.



## Cultural appeal

Consider what sports are culturally significant for different groups. While Association Football is widely popular, for some cultures such as South Asian, other sports such as cricket are a better opening point.

## What is needed - Sport sector:

### Education for coaches

Education needs to cover anti-racism concepts (not just non-racism), non-discriminatory language, the realities of direct provision, and the barriers it places on residents.

### Constitutions

National Governing Bodies should all have an article on equity, equality, diversity, cultural integration, social inclusion and non-discrimination using a rights-based framework in their constitutions.

### Local awareness

LSPs and NGBs should encourage local clubs to increase their own awareness of what is happening locally. In particular, they should investigate whether there are direct provision centres they could engage with.

### Offer

Engage multiple sports and increase the variety on offer.

### Discretion

If subsidised fees or equipment or second-hand equipment is being arranged, ensure this is provided discreetly to avoid embarrassment.

## What is needed - State:

### State Funding

Government funding should be contingent on an NGB having the above article in their constitutions.

### End direct provision

Prioritise ending the direct provision system, ensuring the safety and rights of those

still in the system as it is phased out.

### Public transport

Improve public transport options, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that those still in direct provision can access facilities.

### Hate crime legislation

Develop and adopt hate crime legislation to protect refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in sport and society more broadly. The National Anti-Racism Committee should hold a symposium on sport and racism in Ireland.





## LGBTI+ COMMUNITY

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### Current situation

Irish society has become significantly more inclusive towards the LGBTI+ community in recent years. The legalisation of same sex marriage in 2014 following a referendum showed broad cross society support for the LGBTI+ community. Further initiatives such as the 2015 Gender Recognition Law were hailed as progressive nationally and internationally. The visible presence of members of the LGBTI+ community in public life, including up to the level of Taoiseach, are signs of a more open and accepting society. However, discrimination does persist, with hate speech and even physical attacks not uncommon.

The National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021 makes several references to the inclusion and promotion of the LGBTI+ community in sport in Ireland, including a dedicated commitment in the Action Plan to “Implement [Action 6 of] the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 in a manner that is inclusive of LGBTI+ people.”<sup>24</sup>

### Participant view of barriers and facilitators

#### Non-engagement at policy level

There is a strong feeling that there is a lack of outreach from the policy level to LGBTI+ organisations.

#### Poor diversity at the governance level

Boards and governing bodies remain dominated by middle-aged, white, straight men. There have been recent attempts to diversify in terms of gender, which is welcome, but greater diversity is needed if there is going to be any top-down change.

#### Spectrum of inclusion choices

The issue of integration vs safe spaces was raised. Where there is an interest from sports bodies in LGBTI+ inclusion it is very focused on integration into existing clubs. There is little understanding of the important role that LGBTI+ clubs play in creating a safe space and entry point into the gay community. People who join these LGBTI+ specific clubs don't necessarily want to integrate into other clubs but want their LGBTI+ clubs to be recognised by the relevant NGB.

#### Access issues

LGBTI+ clubs face difficulties in accessing facilities. As LGBTI+ clubs tend to be new, they tend to have difficulties securing slots on grounds' schedules.

### Homophobia and Transphobia

Homophobic and transphobic hate speech remains a prevalent problem. Every club needs better visibility and language around LGBTI+ inclusion.

#### Visibility

Visibility of inclusion of LGBTI+ people in sport has increased in recent years, especially through high profile sports people. However, this is much more so the case for women with very few gay men visible.

#### Lag in sports provision

While Ireland has made significant improvements with regards to LGBTI+ inclusion in recent years, sport remains further behind compared to other areas of Irish society. The LGBTI+ community is not prioritised in diversity and inclusion strategies. It is often not addressed in NGBs policies and no LSP has ever run an LGBTI+ inclusion campaign.

#### Transgender gaps

The lack of national guidance on the inclusion of transgender athletes poses barriers to participation. Some clubs want to be inclusive but can't find guidance nationally. They often have to look to US or UK policies in such cases.

#### Poor understanding

There is a lack of knowledge of the nuances of the LGBTI+ acronym and the different groups included. NGBs often only think of the issue of transgender athletes, which they see as very complicated, and do not want to engage with any aspect of the LGBTI+ community as a result. Or, if they do engage, they are not aware that the different groups can have different needs.

#### The business case

Focusing on the “business case” has been successful in the private sector. This needs to expand to the sports sector. Ireland has an increasingly diverse population in terms of LGBTI+ representation; therefore, inclusion brings in a significant market share. There is also potential for more sponsorship.

<sup>24</sup>Government of Ireland (2019) National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021 [https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/LGBTI+Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_2019-2021.pdf/Files/LGBTI+Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_2019-2021.pdf](https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/LGBTI+Inclusion_Strategy_2019-2021.pdf/Files/LGBTI+Inclusion_Strategy_2019-2021.pdf)



## What is needed- Sport sector:

### LGBTI+ clubs

NGBs should recognise the LGBTI+ clubs operating in their sport and accept them as members of the Body.

### Facilities

LSPs and NGBs need to support LGBTI+ clubs to facilitate training grounds and facilities access.

### LGBTI+ inclusion body

An official structure should be created within Sport Ireland or LSPs specific to LGBTI+ inclusion. This could be equivalent to the space which Cara holds with disability. There is the potential for an official role for Sporting Pride, currently a volunteer-run LGBTI+ community organisation that focuses on developing inclusivity in sport, and sports clubs.<sup>25</sup>

### Guidance on gender identity

National guidance on the inclusion of transgender and non-binary people in sport should be developed, with training provided to NGBs and their members.

## What is needed- State:

### Dedicated funding

More streamlined funding is needed for specific LGBTI+ inclusion. There is a need for dedicated funding to prevent all minority groups from competing for one pot of inclusion and diversity funding. Application processes should provide templates for NGBs to apply for funding for LGBTI+ inclusion.

### International engagement

The State should engage with and promote the thriving international scene of LGBTI+ sport, including the international Gay Games. This is a chance for athletes to represent Ireland internationally and should be celebrated.

<sup>25</sup>Sporting Pride <https://www.sportingpride.ie/>





## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



### Current situation

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines people with disabilities as “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.”<sup>26</sup> Ireland ratified the Convention in 2018.

In Ireland, 13.5% or 1 in 7 people have a disability.<sup>27</sup> Incidence is increasing over time a pattern projected to continue.<sup>28</sup>

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 committed to ensuring that “that new buildings and facilities for arts, sport or leisure are based on universal design principles” and to “foster disability awareness and competence in voluntary, sporting, cultural and other organisations”.<sup>29</sup> However, research shows that people with disabilities in Ireland are much more likely to be sedentary and much less likely to participate in sports than those without disabilities.<sup>30</sup>



<sup>26</sup> UN General Assembly (2007) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities> article 1

<sup>27</sup> National Disability Authority (2018) NDA Factsheet 1: Disability Statistics <https://www.nda.ie/resources/factsheets/nda-factsheet-1-disability-statistics-briefing-information.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Department of Justice and Equality (2017) National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-strategy-booklet.pdf/Files/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-strategy-booklet.pdf> pg. 34-35

<sup>30</sup> Sport Ireland (2017) Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-12/sport-ireland-policy-on-participation-in-sport-by-people-with-disabilities.pdf> pg. 5



## Participant view of barriers and facilitators

### User Experience

There is not enough opportunity for people with disabilities to input into the design of initiatives intended to reach them. One participant stated, “the whole disability sector is created by able-bodied people to tell disabled people how to have a disability.” However, the lived experience of having a disability is needed throughout programme design and implementation for real relevance.

### Understanding Disability

More education on disability and the individualisation of disability is needed. The vast spectrum disability encompasses means that accessibility and inclusion are not always one size fits all. Clubs need to talk to the individual on their strengths, needs and interests.

### Sport as treatment

Sport can play a very important role in health and well-being for people with disabilities. If there is an interest, sport can be integrated into treatment and physiotherapy plans, turning the treatment from a chore into a source of enjoyment. However, this often does not move beyond the therapy aspect to a continuous involvement in the sport at a community level.

### Ubiquitous Visibility

People with disabilities need to be visibly involved in all areas of sport, from player, to coaches, people in administrative roles etc.

### Social Accessibility

Accessibility is often understood purely in terms of being able to play the sport. However, it needs to go beyond this to include the social and spectator aspects. It was felt that physical barriers can be quick fixes, but social barriers persist because people are afraid to have conversations and say the wrong thing.

### Employment

Employment in sport was raised as an important area. Where people with disabilities are employed in sport it is very often for a disability specific role, e.g., Disability Officer. However, people with disabilities should have the option and be supported to apply for all roles within sport.

### Adaptation of rules

Often sport has quite rigid rules around categorisation, who can compete and how. More flexibility, particularly at grassroots level is needed so that people can harness their skills and strengths and focus on participation more than elite competition.

## What is needed - Sport sector:

### Inclusion officers

All NGBs should have an inclusion officer. This role would provide support to individuals who wish to engage with the sport.

### Visibility campaigns

The possibility of a disability-focused equivalent to the 20x20 campaign that ran in 2020 and aimed to promote the visibility of women and girls in sport should be considered to encourage the visibility and participation of people with disabilities in sport at all levels.

### Uptake of educational resources

Where educational resources, such as Cara’s, exist, all sports clubs and organisations should be strongly encouraged to avail of them.

## What is needed - State:

### Implementation of CRPD

Participants stressed the need for full implementation of the CRPD. The delay in ratifying has meant that Ireland now lags behind European partners in full implementation and integration of the Convention into national policies.

### Official qualifications for people with Disabilities

Systems should be put in place to facilitate the training and qualifications of people with disabilities as coaches and sports professionals.



## PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

### Current situation

People with intellectual disabilities fall within the definition of people with disabilities. In Ireland, there are about 66,000 people with an intellectual disability.<sup>31</sup>

Following consultation with a self-advocate with an intellectual disability, it was decided to hold a separate dedicated workshop for those with intellectual disabilities in acknowledgement that the needs, barriers and facilitators of people with intellectual disabilities can be discreet from those with physical disabilities.

### Participants view of barriers and facilitators

#### Fear

Participants felt that there was often a theoretical willingness to include people with intellectual disabilities in sport, however, due to a lack of understanding and fear of getting it wrong most sports coaches and clubs held back. There was a sense the sport sector would prefer to do nothing rather than do inclusion “wrong”.

#### Patronised

People with intellectual disabilities regularly felt underestimated and patronised by the sport sector. In some cases, sports for people with intellectual disabilities have measures such not being allowed to go faster than a certain time which discourages athletes with intellectual disabilities from excelling at sports.

#### Child focused

It was noted that there are a number of positive initiatives for children with intellectual disabilities. However, there is a sharp drop off in provision for adults with intellectual disabilities. One participant who is the parent of a teenager with an intellectual disability noted **“club members have actually said to me, what are you going to do when they’re 18? You know, basically the impression is that they should stop being active, which is crazy”**.

#### Volunteer driven

Linked to this is the area of human resources with provision of sport for people with intellectual disabilities being largely volunteer based. Often volunteers are parents and family members of a child with intellectual disabilities who will move away from volunteering as their own child progresses to adulthood. Retention of volunteers and attracting new volunteers for provision to adults is a challenge.



<sup>31</sup>Central Statistics Office (2016) Census of Population 2016 – Profile 9 Health, Disability and Carers <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/p9tod/#:~:text=In%20Census%202016%2C%2066%2C611%20persons,a%2015.4%20per%20cent%20increase.>



## Intellectual access

There is a need for genuine accessibility. Often people only think in terms of physical access such as ramps. However, accessibility for people with intellectual disability can mean things like providing easy to read timetables or having a gym worker take a new member through the machines for the first few weeks instead of just on the first visit.

## Social inclusion

The social element of sport was stressed with participants discussing the importance of being able to join supporters' clubs and attend games as spectators. The desire to be included in the social fabric of the clubs was sometimes met with ignorance from other members who mock those with intellectual disabilities.

## What is needed - Sport sector:

### Co-production

The sport sector needs to engage in co-production of activities and initiatives with people with intellectual disabilities to ensure that any plans are genuinely responding to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities.

### Multisport NGB

Consider the possibility of a multisport NGB for people with intellectual disabilities which would run parallel to and engage with all other NGBs to coordinate involvement of people with intellectual disabilities across all sports.

### Community of practice

Develop a community of practice for inter-sport exchange where coaches and NGBs can share good practice from their own sports with others.

### Education at all levels

Education of coaches and club members is needed. Coaches need training to build confidence to work with people with intellectual disabilities. There is also more general awareness raising on people with intellectual disabilities needed throughout club membership in order to combat prejudices and create a welcoming environment.

## Guide on language

Guidance is needed on language to avoid including outdated and offensive terminology including medical terminology and phrases such as "suffering from". A glossary could be provided on the website of Sport Ireland or the Federation of Irish Sport. Such guidance should also be provided to media covering events such as the Special Olympics, Virtus Games, and Paralympics. This can be very influential on how the general public perceives people with intellectual disabilities.

## What is needed - State:

### Funding for multiple forms of accessibility

Greater consideration should be given to what funding for accessibility really means. Most funding for accessibility grants is dedicated capital funding to make physical changes to a building or outdoor sports space. However, funding and consideration also need to be given towards non-capital requirements, such as the production of easy read materials and having a dedicated person within LSPs to support people with intellectual disabilities.

### Increasing volunteers

The drop off in volunteers in sports for adults with intellectual disabilities was noted several times. State support could be given to increase volunteer numbers through linking with initiatives such as the Gaisce Award, or through the integration of volunteering into placements for students in relevant fields for example, teacher training, SNA training, social care students, etc.

### Co-production of training

Recognise the expertise of people with intellectual disabilities on their lived experience and establish mechanisms for the co-production of training and guidelines on inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities. Training and apprenticeships: Provide support for training programmes and apprenticeship models preparing people with intellectual disabilities to take up employment within the sport sector, such as the Learning Network programme in Tralee and Aura Leisure Centre.

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# TRAVELLERS

## Current situation

There are just over 30,000 Travellers living in Ireland.<sup>32</sup> Officially recognised as a unique ethnic group in Ireland in 2017, Travellers face widespread discrimination. According to a 2019 report by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, Irish Travellers experience some of the worst discrimination of minority groups across Europe, with 65% of Travellers reporting having experienced discrimination in seeking employment, at work, in education, health, housing and other public or private services.<sup>33</sup> These high levels of discrimination have led to unequal health and education outcomes for Travellers, with life expectancy for male Travellers in 2010 at 61.7 years, compared to 76.8 among the general population; life expectancy for female Travellers was 70.1 years, compared to 81.6 among the general population.<sup>34</sup>

While there are no nationwide studies on Traveller participation in sports, the significant discrimination against Travellers present throughout other aspects of life likely translates into a sports setting.

## Participants view of barriers and facilitators

### Discrimination

Given the realities and extent of discrimination that Travellers face throughout Irish society, Travellers experience an expectation of discrimination when accessing services. This can create a lot of anxiety around approaching a sports club or facilities for fear of experiencing it again.

### Racism

Where Travellers do overcome the initial fear of discrimination, they will often experience racism both within the club and from opposition teams. This will cause many to drop out regardless of their talent or enjoyment of the game.

### Conditions on halting sites

Traveller halting sites are often situated on the outside of the cities or towns away from where the sport infrastructure is based. This means they will have to commute, which is often difficult.

<sup>32</sup>Central Statistics Office (2016) Census of Population 2016 – Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8itd/>

<sup>34</sup>European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2019) Travellers in Ireland—Key Results From the Roma and Travellers Survey 2019 [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-roma-and-travellers-survey-country-sheet-ireland\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-roma-and-travellers-survey-country-sheet-ireland_en.pdf)

<sup>34</sup>Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (2018) Developing Indicators of Positive Ageing for Irish Travellers. <https://www.pavepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Final-traveller-report.pdf> pg.3

## Membership nominations

Many clubs require new members to be nominated by existing members. This is especially true of positions at governance levels. Given the history of exclusion of Travellers, many Travellers will not know anyone to nominate them.

## Affordability

Affordability of club membership is also an issue, especially where there are a few children in a family who all want to participate.

## What is needed – Sport sector:

**Build trust and relationships:** Given the anxiety and lived experience of discrimination that Travellers have, sports organisations need take the initiative and reach out to Travellers. It was suggested that coaches could come to the local halting sites to establish relationships and show an understanding of Travellers.

As one participant noted; **“we need more people on the ground and in clubs who understand cultural differences, maybe clubs won’t have this in house, but they could work with Traveller support organisations like ours to make things happen.”**

**Consider dedicated to integrated options:** It may well be that the spectrum of choice called for by other groups (disability, LGBTQ+) from dedicated to integrated sport options applies to Travellers. Further research is needed to fully quantify needs.

## What is needed – State:

**Hate crime legislation:** Adopt robust hate crime legislation to protect Travellers from racist abuse.

**Training for service providers:** Provide training on Traveller inclusion and human rights duty to policymakers and county councillors to reduce discrimination in service provision.

**Improve living conditions:** Work to improve living conditions for Travellers, including through service provision, which will enable Travellers to participate in sport.

**Spend budgeted funds:** Ensure budgets earmarked for provision for Travellers is spent at the local level.



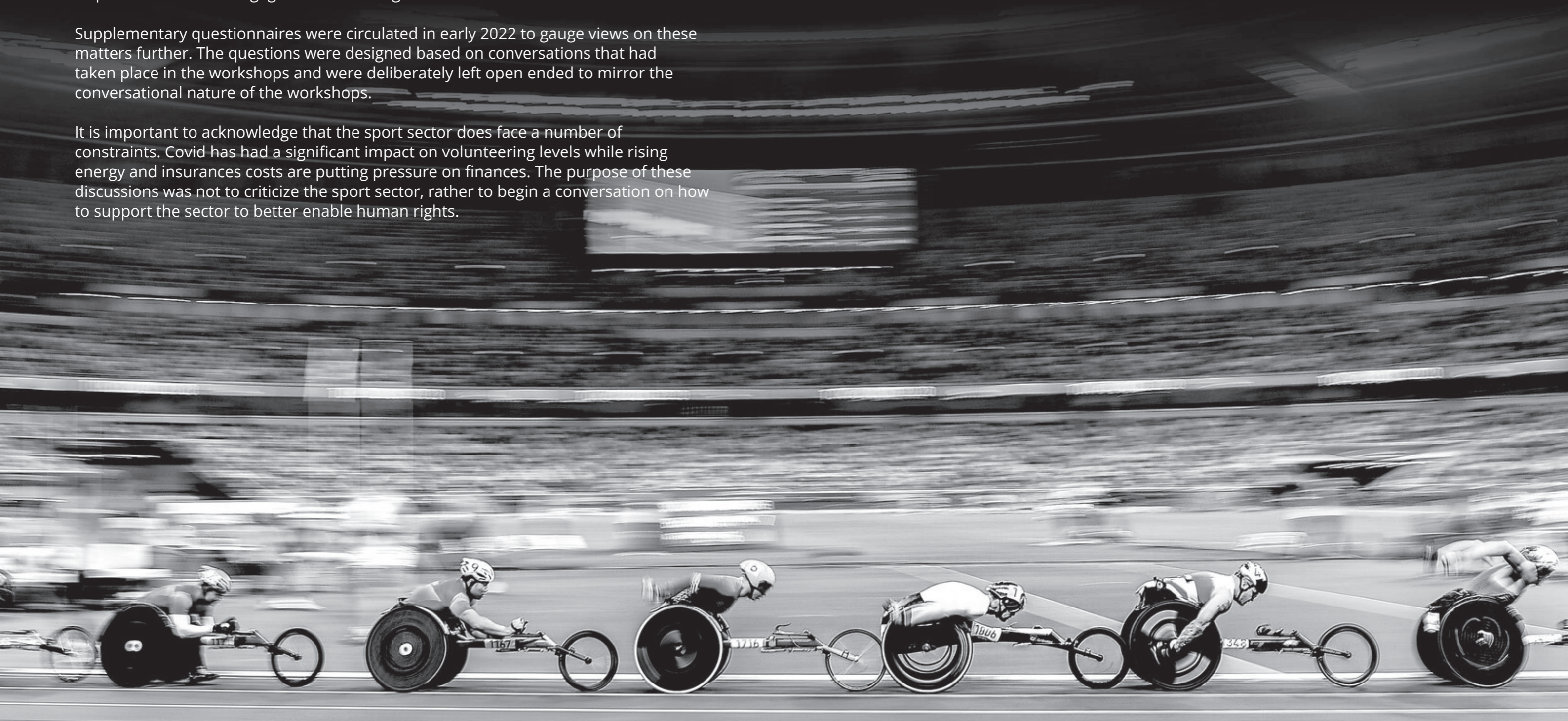
## THE SPORT SECTOR REACTS AND IDENTIFIES NEEDS

Following our workshops with the rightsholder groups, workshops for the sport sector were held. These were an opportunity to introduce the concept of human rights in and through sport and the notion of public sector human rights duty. A summary of the findings from the rightsholder workshops were also presented.

The workshops provided an opportunity to reflect on the concepts introduced and the rightsholders' views. Discussions focused on work being undertaken in the space, the extent to which the sport sector recognised, agreed or empathised with rightsholders' needs, and on supports needed for the sport sector to respond to rightsholders' requests and further engage with human rights.

Supplementary questionnaires were circulated in early 2022 to gauge views on these matters further. The questions were designed based on conversations that had taken place in the workshops and were deliberately left open ended to mirror the conversational nature of the workshops.

It is important to acknowledge that the sport sector does face a number of constraints. Covid has had a significant impact on volunteering levels while rising energy and insurances costs are putting pressure on finances. The purpose of these discussions was not to criticize the sport sector, rather to begin a conversation on how to support the sector to better enable human rights.





## Local Sports Partnerships

In general, LSPs had previously encountered ideas of human rights in and through sport and associated equality, diversity, and inclusion with human rights. LSPs reported some experience of working with a selection of our target rightsholder groups, rather than inclusion across all groups. Engagement varied from one-off initiatives and dedicated programmes to engagement with representatives through county council mechanisms.

The training needs identified during the rightsholder workshops were presented to the LSPs who generally agreed more was needed both for themselves and the sport sector more broadly. The extent of training that LSPs had undergone varied significantly from generic diversity training, to dedicated modules on specific rightsholder groups. It was acknowledged that there are some good existing resources for specific groups such as the Cara resources on disability, but no integrated and overarching framework on inclusion of all groups or anything on human rights. Where training exists and is available, it tends to be optional, unlike child protection training which is mandatory. The possibility of developing dedicated Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or a QQI level 5 or above training specifically for the sports sector was raised.

The need for training on methods for monitoring the participation of people in sports in a disaggregated manner that would allow for proper assessment of inclusion needs and effectiveness was raised. This could be either a general training on data collection that could be adopted as each organisation sees fit, or a centralised template designed and training provided on working with the template. Training on using data to monitor outcomes of programmes is also needed. This will allow LSPs to go beyond running programmes and initiatives to seeing which programmes, and which aspects of programmes, have the best outcomes for those from rightsholder groups. If programmes do not have outcomes which bring about inclusion and promotion of rights, they need to be redesigned to do so.

Many LSPs, particularly those with a more rural catchment, stressed the need for training on LGBTI+ inclusion. There was a sense that these communities are more visible and therefore easier to engage with in urban settings. Guidance on ensuring LGBTI+ people are included in rural settings is needed to ensure harder to reach individuals are included.

The need for guidance on community outreach was also raised. LSPs had concerns about where to start when engaging with a community and reaching everyone. Suggested supports included a directory of rightsholder organisations and advocates at national and regional/ county level, which could be hosted on the Federation of Irish Sport or Sport Ireland website. The idea of developing a best practice document on developing and maintaining relationships with rightsholders was also raised.

Providing sustainable inclusion was a concern for LSPs. Questions were raised on how to go beyond programmes that last a few weeks and one-off initiatives to long-term inclusion. It was noted that children from minority backgrounds who were

involved in school sports were much less likely than their peers to go on and join club sports. Parental involvement in inclusion initiatives was deemed necessary for longer-term impact. Financial solutions need to be put in place for equipment, gear and membership fees. A community of practice sharing forum for LSPs and NGBs to discuss sustainable inclusion practices was suggested.

Some LSPs had experienced difficulties in cooperating with various NGBs. An instance was recounted where an LSP witnessed racial discrimination against a child at a sport event and lodged a complaint with the relevant NGB only to be told a complaint could only be looked at if made by the child or their parents. Clear guidance is needed for NGBs on their obligations and from NGBs, similar to with child safeguarding, about how complaints can be made.

Regarding policy alignment and implementation, the vast majority of LSPs indicated that they aim to align to national rather than international policies. Support on adapting the national strategies to local levels and training on the inclusion aspects were mentioned as being potentially helpful in ensuring greater alignment.

## National Governing Bodies

NGBs were slightly less likely than LSPs to have encountered ideas of human rights in and through sport. However, those who had not previously encountered the ideas were generally receptive to and interested in the concept.

Generally, the NGBs do not have a dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion or Human Rights staff member. In some cases, it was part of a person's brief without being their entire role, in others, it was incorporated throughout everyone's work. Some NGBs do have a dedicated disability and inclusion officer.

Many NGBs had worked with one or some of the rightsholder groups identified by the TRUST project. The NGBs who engaged with our research were most likely to have worked with people with disabilities in some format. Many had also targeted inclusion for women and girls. Travellers, the LGBTI+ community and refugees, asylum seekers and migrants were targeted explicitly by some NGBs but less frequently. Some NGBs also acknowledged that while they are theoretically open to all, they have not engaged in any specific outreach to rightsholder groups. Many NGBs stated they have not specifically collaborated with rightsholder groups to develop inclusive initiatives but they would be open to this, or they have done a small amount and wish to scale this up.

Over half of NGBs reported having undertaken some form of training on inclusion. Cara's resources on disability inclusion were the most common form of training undertaken. Sporting Pride had also delivered training to many NGBs on LGBTI+ inclusion. Several training gaps were identified. Much inclusion and diversity training is relatively generic, while tailored resources for the sporting sector, with practical examples are needed.

Several NGBs raised the need for training and support on the management aspects of inclusion. Guidance on dealing with resistance from members to engaging with



inclusion, handling internal conflicts on the topic, and ensuring training goes beyond the NGBs to reach coaches and volunteers on the ground is needed. Similarly, many times the operational workers of the NGBs will need the endorsement of a board of directors to progress with a new policy or initiative. Therefore, guidance on making the business case for inclusion would be helpful.

In general, NGBs follow and implement national policies, while also following regulations from their international bodies. It was felt that national policies should be clearer of their ask of NGBs and more effort is needed to ensure that the sport sector understands the practical implications of policies. As one respondent stated:

**“Sometimes policies are heavy on theory of ‘why’ to do something but don’t assist with the how to. It would be useful to have a ‘living’ toolkit of ideas, a live document that’s updated as more projects are tried and implemented, so learning from practices - both good and bad - can be shared among organisations. A short policy that can be easily incorporated into core business but with more scope for practical application of principles that are sport specific and can be openly shared (would also be helpful).”**

The need for guidance and support in dealing with their International Bodies that are slow to update guidelines and regulations in line with human rights and equality standards was also identified.

Workshop participants highlighted that one area of concern is balancing their inclusion efforts with their international obligations regarding inclusion of transgender people. NGBs face the requirement to follow strict entry criteria set down by the international governing bodies of their sport regarding performance and elite sport. However, NGBs have some flexibility regarding participation at the local and domestic level. The NGBs and coaches on the ground voiced the need for some national guidance to ensure that they are respecting rights and being as inclusive as possible in line with Ireland’s LGBTI+ inclusion strategies and Ireland’s human rights commitments. Guidance on accommodating non-binary people in systems that often have a strict male and female breakdown was also highlighted.

Similarly to the LSPs, the notion of having a directory of education and training resources as well as rightsholder organisations that provide training sessions was raised by several participants. Having a well-advertised centrally organised hub hosted by the Federation of Irish Sport or Sport Ireland could help with the uptake of training and reduce confusion about how to begin upskilling journeys. In addition, the need for data on minority groups in Ireland was raised. NGBs want access to data for programme design and evaluation to see who they should be reaching and where. They also want training on evaluating outcomes of policies and programmes to measure their impact and value.

Participants welcomed the idea of facilitating more networking opportunities between NGBs and with rightsholder organisations where connections for training and programme design could be made. Regular networking events both in person and

practice among NGBs.

Discussions were held on the importance of funding for inclusion. At present, much funding is dedicated to short term projects and capital grants. NGBs and clubs need to be trusted with longer project run times for genuine and sustainable inclusion. Most funding is for projects which run over months. When there is no guarantee that the funding will be available to continue a programme beyond this, it is difficult to build genuine, long-term engagement in a sport. NGBs had conflicting feelings about bringing rightsholder groups in for a short-term initiative that may spark a genuine passion for the sport from participants, which will be cut off when the funding ends. The ethics of starting people in a programme when they know they won’t be able to support long term membership or engagement within current funding models was questioned. Longer term funding cycles which spread over years rather than months would help with this. Funding for staff dedicated to human rights and diversity and inclusion was also mentioned.





## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the discussion held, we have identified the following overarching recommendations.

### Recognise rights and duties

TRUST Ireland's research has found that while there is a positive and open reaction to the idea of human rights in and through sport, the concepts are not widely understood by the sport and sport policy sectors. For real impetus towards genuine and dignified inclusion in sport, the right to sport and the implications must be better understood. The human rights duties towards rightsholders in sport are varied. Each level of duty bearer, from state and policy actors, leaders of the sports sector, LSPs, and NGBs, down to the local service providers and coaches, needs to be made aware that they have duties. Secondly, they need to be aware of their duties and how to implement them. While the ultimate duty does lie with the State, consideration should be given to the educational and awareness-raising resources needed to ensure that all duty bearers can fulfil their duties. The higher education and training sector should also equip sport and policy graduates with the knowledge and competence required to implement their human rights duty.

### Expand inclusion

The TRUST Ireland discussions raised questions about what genuine inclusion in sports means. Rightsholders have a strong appetite to be more included in Irish sports. However, this has a more expansive meaning than is often applied in policy and practice. It encompasses the human right to participate in sports as a player and a spectator. Moreover, in order for sport to have its truly transformative effect, inclusion in sport needs to go further and embrace human rights through sport, working towards employment in sport, living independently and being a part of the community through sport and ending discrimination in and through sport. Adopting a rights-based approach to inclusion, particularly bearing in mind the principle of "nothing about us without us" will allow policymakers, sporting organisations and local coaches to begin working towards this broader understanding of inclusion.

### Educate

Fear of the unknown and fear of making mistakes hold sports bodies and service providers back from embracing a rights-based approach to sport. There are a range of educational and training needs, from introductory courses on human rights in and through sport and inclusion and diversity training. The **TRUST modules** and resources can be used in this space. Further training needs to focus on aspects of inclusion of particular groups of rightsholders such as anti-racist training, education on gender and sexual identities, training on adapted physical activity and education on language and terminology. Further training to assist inclusion and human rights is needed and requires change management in their own organisations to bring about the necessary shifts. Consideration should be given to making some level of training a requirement in the same vein as mandatory child safeguarding training. Those already within the

sport sector will need to train through CPD and other initiatives retroactively, while the higher education and training sector needs to address their human rights duty and begin to integrate human rights and equality training throughout their curricula. If all graduates in sport science, physical education and related fields entered the workforce having already received training on human rights this would quickly have a significant impact on the sport sector's capacity to engage with these topics.

### Diversify funding

A more ambitious approach to funding for inclusion in sport needs to be taken to make meaningful changes. Diversification away from the focus on capital grants to consider a broader remit of accessibility needs such as easy read materials, support staff, or membership fee waivers should be considered. Extending the time periods of programmatic funding to allow for more extended immersion periods and impact tracking would be welcome. Consideration should be given to dedicated funding per rightsholder group for inclusive initiatives, currently rightsholder organisations compete against each other for one pot of "inclusion" or "diversity" funding. Human rights assessments should be considered in the allocation of funding. Finally, funding needs to be made available for dedicated personnel within LSPs and NGBs to work on the human rights agenda in and through sport, with rightsholder engagement as part of their brief.



**A regional pilot group could be supported under the Innovation Fund to bring together cross-sectoral actors to implement the suggestions in this report. This could include an LSP, provincial or county level members of NGBs, local clubs and local rightsholder groups. Together they could look at the suggestions put forward under the "what is needed" sections of this report and develop a plan of action for implementation in their region.**

### Collaborate in policy

Rightsholders expressed a clear need for policy collaboration. Rightsholders need to be at the heart of any policy which concerns them. Involving rightsholders throughout the policy lifecycle from design to implementation and evaluation can help ensure that policies respond to rightsholders' genuine needs and concerns. As the experts on their own lived experience, rightsholders are best placed to say what does and does not work for them and have a firm grasp of their limitations and capabilities. Likewise, to ensure that national policies are implemented as intended, the sport sector and service providers need to be included and considered in the process. As they are the actual implementers on the ground, policies need to be clear and understandable to the sector. While they may not need to know all the detail of every policy, short explanatory documents which explain the concrete asks of the policies and provide practical examples of implementation should be provided. Policies also need to include concrete indicators, milestones and timelines so that progress can be tracked and measured.



## Generate and publish data

To design policies and programmes which respond to the needs of rightsholders, it is important to understand just who it is that is being targeted. Robust data available to policy makers and the sport sector is needed to ensure that policies and programmes respond to needs. Availability of data can also help make the business case for inclusion by showcasing the significant numbers referred to. Strong data collection is also needed to assess the impact of policies and programmes on their effectiveness. Data needs to be disaggregated across several characteristics and geographical areas. It should be freely available in a clear format so that the sport sector can widely use it. Ongoing well-being index and equality data initiatives should consider the potential uses and synergies with the sport sector. Similarly, critical moments for reporting on Ireland's progress in relation to human rights treaty obligations and the SDGs should be seized as key opportunities for data sharing between policymakers and the sport sector. Data should be harnessed to assess not just who is being reached but what outcomes programmes and policies are having on those they reach.

## Create fora and resources

In theory, there is a good willingness from rightsholders and the sport sector to work together. However, in many cases, opportunities to do so have not been created. There is an appetite and a gap for creating a forum or fora to regularly bring rightsholders and the sport sector together to establish collaborative relationships. There is further appetite within the sport sector for creating a community of practice forum between NGBs and LSPs to learn from each other on how to implement inclusion and human rights, identify common obstacles and co-create solutions. A centralised online hub of resources is also called for to compliment these networking fora. Such a hub could include a directory of rightsholder and training organisations open to working with the sport sector, a glossary of terms and guides on language, and a library of existing online training resources. By putting in place easily accessible resources and forging relationships, integrating human rights and inclusion into the daily operations of the sport sector can be made straightforward and a natural way of operating the sport sector.

On the basis of these overarching themes, TRUST Ireland have developed the following recommendations for the Irish state and sports ecosystem. We have also identified the primary actors needed to progress this agenda and shift the dial towards full inclusion in Irish sport.

	Recommendation	Actors needed
1.	Align the definition of sport embraced in the national sport strategy and Irish Sports Council Act with governance, structures and funding, and the expressed need of the entire population. This may involve culture and system change, diversifying the current pivoting of sport predominately orientated around NGBs to policy-oriented priorities reflecting the expansive definition of sport. This approach may deliver the bold and transformative change called for in Agenda 2030 and across the global sport sector.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Sport Ireland
2.	Expand the understanding of what inclusion in sport looks like and requires. Inclusion means having people from marginalised groups participating in playing sports themselves but also included in leadership structures, and as officials, coaches, players, and spectators/audiences. Inclusion of all groups needs to be mainstreamed and resourced as part of a balanced, participatory approach in Irish sport.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Sport Ireland
3.	Prioritise #FurthestBehindFirst in all sports related planning, including the National Sports Policy, its action plans, and all other policy areas that use sport from now to 2030. Ensure rights-based and outcomes-driven approaches to sport provision at all levels in line with Public Sector Duty and Equality legislation. We suggest that the TRUST Ireland partnership with an independent human rights consultant should be resourced to support this recommendation.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. All other departments with sports-related policies. Support from IHREC on Public Sector duty.
4.	Prioritise retrofitting existing structures to establish participatory approaches to cross-sector sports policy and planning at all levels and functions of sport. Ensure broad representation of underserved groups (consider quota systems) and diversify stakeholders involved in the process to reflect the diverse impact of sport across the SDGs.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Sport Ireland Rightsholder stakeholders groups e.g. Sporting Pride, Access Earth
5.	Consider the creation of an independent monitoring body to receive and oversee complaints and concerns in relation to conduct in sport in Ireland. Such a body should operate in a rights-based and trauma informed manner in line with legal processes.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Justice.
6.	Prioritise capacity building and workforce development and call on education and training providers to deliver a skilled workforce for human rights-based approaches to sport delivery.	Department of Further and Higher Education
7.	Increase volunteer understanding of the priorities of inclusion and participation in sport in Ireland, in recognition of the significance of the contribution of volunteers to sport in Ireland. Consider mechanisms (e.g. codes of practice, regional/ local trainings) and staffing to support volunteers to fulfil expectations of inclusion in sport in Ireland.	National Governing bodies, Local Sports Partnerships, Higher education and further training bodies; Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
8.	Expand cross-sectoral funding access and allocations (beyond capital and equipment emphasis) to support the elimination of barriers for marginalised and underserved groups. Examine social outcomes contracts to access capital, accelerate action, and grow necessary capacity in the sector to deliver broader grassroots opportunities to diverse stakeholder groups.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Department of Finance; Department of Public expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform
9.	Invest in a public awareness and education campaign on the TRUST Ireland strapline "Sport As It Should Be Fun Fair Clean, Safe and Accessible to All" to increase public awareness on the value and role of sport in society.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Sport Ireland
10.	Invest in robust, outcome-oriented disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policymaking, advocacy, and impact assessment across the multiple policies in Ireland that focus on or use sport, physical activity, health, education, and inclusion of specific groups. This will help orient sports investments as an enabler of sustainable development. Convergence with cross-cutting data developments on SDGs, Well-being Index and Equality should be examined. As part of this process add sexual orientation, ethnicity, and disability data to the Irish sport Monitor research.	Central Statistics Office, Sport Ireland



## FURTHER RESOURCES

For more information on the TRUST Ireland project, see <https://trustirl.ie/>  
For educational resources on human rights in and through sport, see <https://trustsport.net/>

For guidance on engaging in reporting to the UN human rights monitoring bodies as either State, civil society, or National Human Rights Institution <http://www.sportandhumanrights.unescoitralee.com/index.php/homepage>

For more information on public sector duty <https://elearning.ihrec.ie/>

### Organisation websites:

Sport Against Racism Ireland <https://www.sari.ie/>

Gaelic Athletic Association Diversity and Inclusion resources <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/social-inclusion/diversity>

Federation of Irish Sport <https://www.irishsport.ie/>

Sport Ireland <https://www.sportireland.ie/>

Central Statistics Office <https://www.cso.ie/en/index.html>

Northern Ireland Sport and Human Rights Forum <https://nihrc.org/our-work/other-sites/sport-human-rights>

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