

Foreword

FLUSS

This publication is a result from the Erasmus+ project +PLUSS. The acronym stands for 'LGBTQI+ Policy and Leadership in Sport and Society'. The project aimed to enhance the inclusion and participation of LGBTQI+ athletes in European grassroots sport through combatting discrimination, addressing intolerance and establishing an inclusive sport culture where all can participate.

Dear reader

As a (future) champion of inclusion, you understand that sport clubs or groups are more than just places to train and compete. They are communities where everyone should feel welcome and valued.

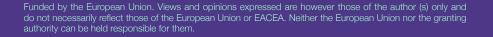
These practical guidelines are designed to support you in making a real impact when it comes to building an inclusive and sustainable club. Whether you're looking to improve your network, engage more diverse communities, or implement sustainable management, this guide offers concrete steps and hands-on practices to help your club thrive.

While these guidelines were developed in collaboration with clubs already actively working on inclusion, they are equally useful as a starting point for those just beginning. It's important to remember that this guide is in no way complete. Inclusion is an ongoing process, and when applying these general recommendations, we encourage you to stay mindful of intersectionality and cultural differences.

By building an inclusive and sustainable club, you are not only strengthening your club today but ensuring that future generations can experience the power of sport in an environment that is accessible and welcoming.

> LET'S GET STARTED!

Small steps can make a big difference.



About the guidelines

These guidelines are created through a tried and tested approach by the +PLUSS project partners. After workshops on Good Governance, Advocacy, Membership and Events ('GAME') each partner developed strategies to improve their sport clubs. Combined with a European study on the LGBTQI+ sport movement, this tried and tested approach led to a set of guidelines for other sport clubs to use.

Each chapter explains why it's beneficial to work on the GAME-topics and provides practical examples and concrete recommendations on how to work on these topics yourself.

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GOOD GOVERNANCE TO FOSTER YOUR CLUB'S DEVELOPMENT

Good governance is the framework within your club that helps you meet your purpose, achieve your goals and uphold integrity. Paying attention to it facilitates a positive culture within your club. An important part of good governance is ethical leadership, which also includes achieving (LGBTQI+) inclusion.

With a strong governance framework your club is better equipped to combat discrimination and promote equality. It also generates autonomy and legitimacy towards your stakeholders since a transparent, accountable and democratic governance encourages trust.

However, good governance also asks for professionalisation, which isn't an easy thing to do for sport clubs or groups. Therefore, the next chapters give more insight in the principles of good governance and list some practical tools.

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Erasmus+ project 'SG3' as well as the 'GReFORM' project and the Council of Europe want to inspire sport managers to become ethical leaders. They focused on the following dimensions of good governance:

- Transparency This means management and (financial) activities are done in a way that allows others to monitor these. It creates trust. Examples are publishing statutes and an overview of board members.
- Democracy This is about people being able to take part in processes and voice their opinion. Examples are procedures for the appointment and retirement of board members and a representative general assembly.
- Accountability This is to make sure members, staff and officials comply with internal rules and norms. Examples are a multi-year policy plan, a clear organisational structure and a supervising system.
- 4. Social responsibility This means having a positive effect on stakeholders and society. Examples are policies on anti-doping, social inclusion, discrimination and match-fixing. Even LGBTQI+ sport clubs that often have a strong connection to this principle should continue to pay attention to this aspect of good governance.

Being aware of these principles avoids risks like information being leaked, a negative public image and losing credibility as a club.



GET STARTED WITH GOOD GOVERNANCE

Besides knowing what to work on, it is also important to know how to work on good governance and professionalism. Luckily, there are some tools that can guide you towards more inclusion and durability.







The Sport Good Governance Game (SG3) is an interactive simulation to get familiar with good governance. You take on a role as board member and face challenges regarding good governance.

The SG3 project also helps you to create an action plan. By answering some reflective questions you can generate your own tailormade plan based on your past experience and intentions for the future.

Important! Playing the game requires a game leader. You can **request access through this form**.



The SIGGS Self-Evaluation Tool for Good Governance of sport organisations is another toolkit you can use. SIGGS is an initiative from the European Olympic Committees and stands for 'Support the Implementation of Good Governance in Sport'.

Once you fill in the self evaluation form, which takes 20 minutes, you receive a tailormade action plan to improve your good governance. The tool also shows best-practices and is available in 14 languages. It allows you to compare your situation with the average sport organisations.



A lot of clubs struggle with professionalisation at some point. Luckily, there are numerous possibilities to learn from each other. **In the next examples, some clubs share their experience with working on good governance.** **qSport Zagreb (Croatia)** recently went through a merger, resulting in a lot of governance changes and the new ngo Queer Sport Split.

qSport Zagreb was an informal group for 15 years, organising sport activities for the local community. However, their options in funding, renting facilities and organising events were limited.

As a solution, they developed a partnership with the existing ngo Queer Sport Split. As this partnership was confusing to their members and (potential) partners, they decided to formally merge.

Here's how the process went:

It took them 6 months to define the new constitution and decide on the name, mission, vision and goals. During this time all activity leaders gathered in a monthly meeting where they discussed details and divided tasks. At the end of the process they used the help of a (volunteer) lawyer to finalise the constitution.

Looking back on this decision and process, they learned that:

- 1. The merger resulted in a stronger identity, which led to members aligning with the mission and vision, more clear communication, a safer environment and a higher number of participants!
- **2.** They used this merger to introduce new elements, such as a code of conduct and further defining the concept of membership.
- **3.** The administrative process took longer than expected and cost a lot of energy but in the end benefits are multiple and reflect in everything the organisation does later on.
- **4.** Making good use of human (and financial) resources can help the process: which expertise in your club or its network could help you?

A merger is a huge process that does not often take place. A lot of the time good governance can also be achieved through smaller initiatives.

Atlasz Sportegyesület

Atlasz Sportegyesület (Hungary) discovered the importance of having a clear onboarding process for new volunteers. For a long time, there was no defined job description, overview of tasks or mentor for new volunteers.

Result? Potential volunteers had a lot of questions that could not be answered and the club struggled to recruit any new volunteers.

That's why the co-presidents started working on a standardized onboarding process through which volunteers and members are better informed when joining the club.

An onboarding process is one of the things that can be captured in a volunteer policy. Policies can be helpful to define your goals and can guide you towards achieving these goals.



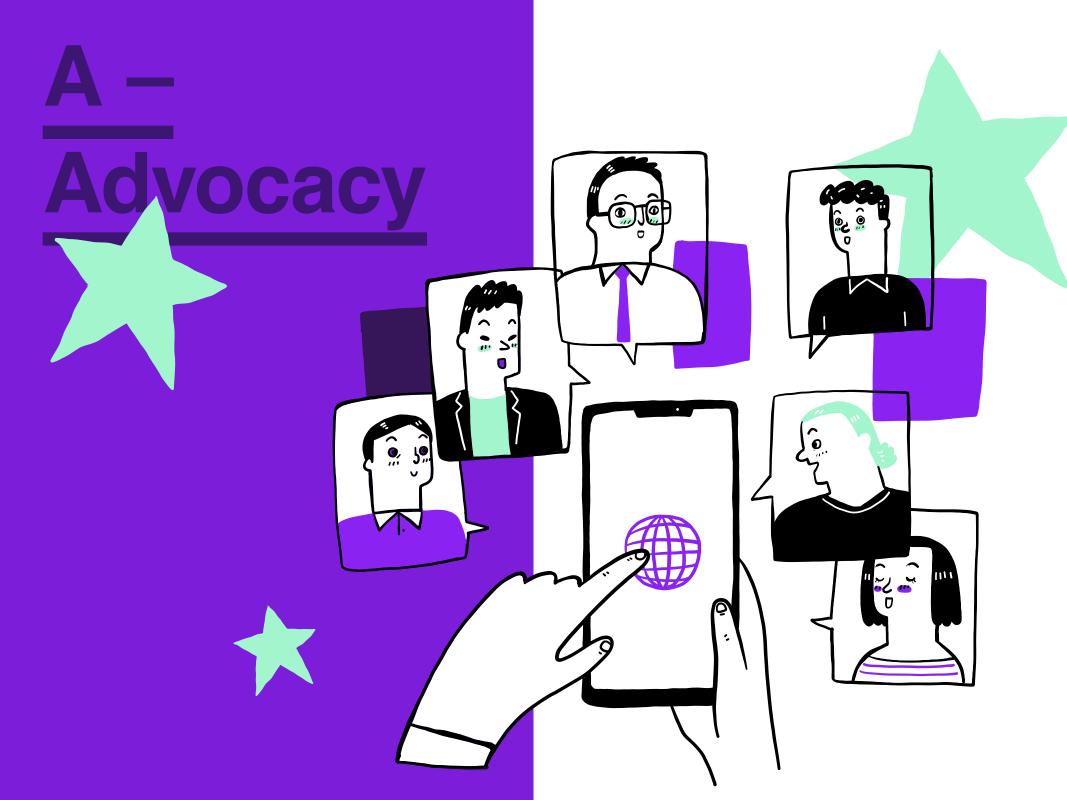
Pan Idraet (Denmark), a collective of two multidisciplinary sport clubs, has some strongly developed policies in place. Looking for inspiration on a gender or safety policy? Curious how Pan Idraet's good governance policy looks? You can find their policies on their website.

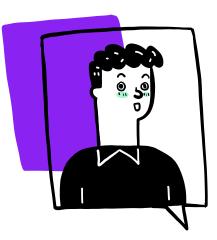
Once in place, it is also important to enforce policies. This can be done in different ways, for example by adding a quick 'control question' in register forms or by regular evaluations to identify potential gaps in and updates of existing policies.

Policies should always be put into practice!

Policies

od governance policy





MAKING YOUR VOICE MATTER: THE POWER OF ADVOCACY

Advocacy means actively standing up for an idea or cause, using different strategies to influence how people think, decide and act, whether they're individuals, organisations or policymakers. It's about making your voice heard, defending what matters to you and creating the right conditions for your club or group to grow and stay strong.

As an organisation working on LGBTQI+ inclusion in sport, advocacy is essential. Not only to fight for more rights, but because advocacy is a way to gain access to resources, recognition and a solid place in the mainstream sport world. Without this, your work can remain vulnerable and disconnected.

That's why **networking** is one of the most important tools in advocacy. Strong connections with people, organisations and institutions can spread your message further and build the trust that helps you move forward. Whether you are looking for funding, access to facilities or recognition in the broader sport world, your network often makes the difference and opens doors for you.

THE THREE PILLARS OF AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

To make a real and lasting impact as a club, it's important to see everything you do as part of a bigger picture. Whether you're organising events, reaching out to new members or advocating for more inclusive sport spaces, it all becomes more impactful when it fits within a clear, long-term strategy.

Such strategy helps you to stay focused, make better decisions and it shows others what your club stands for and where you're heading. Within that bigger plan, three elements are essential to build a strong foundation:

- 1. Your network
- 2. Your internal organisation
- 3. Your stakeholders



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1 / Network

Your network is the backbone of any advocacy strategy. As a sport club, you will try to look for people and organisations that can support, strengthen or advance your work. These can include:

- · Sport federations and mainstream sport clubs,
- Local or regional governments,
- Institutions working on health or well-being,
- Universities or research centers,
- Other LGBTQI+ or inclusive organisations.

When building a network, trust, mutual benefits and clear communication are key. This means that what you share is equally important as who you know. You can only build trust within your network if you communicate transparently and honestly about things like finances, leadership structures, and so on. Not doing so can lead to frustration and misunderstanding.

A few examples:

- Leadership: Clearly outline who is responsible for what, who has decision-making authority, and how those decisions are made.
- Finances: When collaborating with other organizations, be upfront about the available budget, how it will be allocated, and which costs each partner will cover.
- Shared resources: When sharing equipment like banners, technical gear or event materials, agree in advance on who is responsible for maintenance, repairs and replacement costs.

2 / Internal organisation

Advocacy starts from within. A club that wants to spread a message needs to know what it stands for. But you also need to radiate stability, reliability and professionalism to gain trust. Key internal factors for successful advocacy include:

- A clear mission and vision: What is your goal? What do you want to change or protect?
- Consistent communication: Is your message clear and does it align with your actions and public image?
- Internal support: Are your team members or volunteers on board with the message? Do they see themselves as ambassadors of your work?
- Solid internal structures: Administration, planning, impact documentation, ... to make you more credible and trustworthy to external partners.

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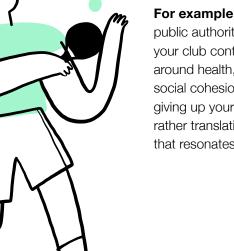
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3 / Understanding and addressing stakeholders

Stakeholders are the people or organisations that have a (direct or indirect) interest in your work or that can influence your impact. The better you understand who is essential to your mission and how to engage them, the more intentional and strategic your network becomes, based on shared interests, mutual benefits and trust. These can include:

- Local sport departments that manage access to facilities,
- Sponsors who value inclusion,
- · Policymakers deciding on funding,
- Organisations working towards similar goals.

For successful advocacy it is important to identify your stakeholders and understand what matters to them, so you can adapt your message to their language and interests.



For example, when speaking to a public authority, it's useful to show how your club contributes to policy goals around health, youth engagement or social cohesion. This doesn't mean giving up your core message, but rather translating it into a language that resonates with your audience.



GET STARTED WITH ADVOCACY

Advocacy is a journey where you don't need to do everything at once. Advocacy can go from doing the smallest thing or conversation to protests or press conferences.

With these four concrete tips, you can start building your own advocacy plan. Feel free to choose the guide, ideas and tools that fits your club best. Only you know what's best and doable for your club.

- A great starting point is the use of inclusive language. Visibility tells your members, visitors and community that your club is a safe and affirming space for LGBTQI+ people. You can also share international awareness days online and amplify why inclusivity is important.
- Are you working with limited time and resources? Give advocacy just one hour a week. Write a letter, make a phone call, attend an event. You'll be surprised how much impact you can make in that short time.



N SLOVEAL

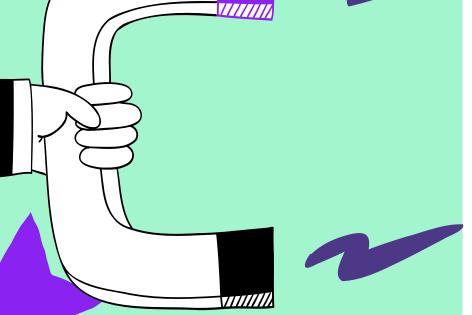
Out in Slovenija (Slovenia) is a small queer sport association that never set out to become a public-facing advocacy powerhouse. Instead, their focus was on creating safe, inclusive spaces and not making noise. But over time, they started contributing to bigger conversations: connecting with other LGBTQI+ organisations, building alliances and eventually becoming part of a national effort to push for an inclusive LGBT+ strategy.

How did they do it? Mostly with time and energy because like everyone else, they had limited financial resources. They started step by step, with some research here, a phone call there, writing an email to a potential partner and reaching out to a fellow organisation. Slowly, their network grew and so did their impact.

So no, you don't need a big team or a huge campaign budget. You just need to start and keep going. One hour at a time.

- At some point, you might want to start conversations with public authorities or decision makers. Building these relationships takes ongoing, intentional and strategic effort. <u>These five practical steps</u> can help you approach them.
- Ready to take your advocacy to the next level and make it a central aspect of your club? Starting with formulating a goal, the <u>Advocacy Action Guide</u> offers extensive guidance, templates and examples to eventually develop concrete actions.

M – Membership





WHAT IS MEMBERSHIP AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Membership refers to **everyone involved in and with your club or group:** athletes, volunteers, allies, friends, supporters. This can be formal through registration and/or membership fees, but it doesn't have to be. Either way, the goal is engagement: the more people interact with and feel supported by your club, the more likely they are to stay, contribute, and bring others in. A diverse and connected membership ensures visibility, growth, and impact.

KNOW YOUR MEMBERS TO KEEP THEM ENGAGED

LGBTQI+ sport associations are sought after by people who tend to feel excluded from mainstream sport, often due to homonegativity in mainstream clubs. While most clubs were founded by and for LGB people, today's members are increasingly diverse. Clubs report growing numbers of trans, intersex, non-binary and other gender and sex diverse (TIN+) members.

TIN+ people face unique and structural barriers in mainstream sport, such as gendered competitions, limited locker room options, or a lack of understanding from coaches and peers. A strong membership framework recognises different needs and adapts accordingly.

Additionally, many clubs naturally reflect the humour, traditions and norms from the more represented subcultures (e.g. from gay or lesbian subcultures).

While this feels familiar for some, it can unintentionally exclude others, such as bisexual people and TIN+ people. Clubs that question roles, broaden representation and welcome diverse expressions are more inclusive.

Ask yourself:

- Do we rely on insider social codes?
- Do we hold space for different queer expressions?
- Are identities across the spectrum visible and included?

Team Munich (Germany) hosts their meetings and monthly get-togethers in a known safe(r) space – a local lesbian bar. This familiar setting helps new members feel comfortable and welcomed. These gatherings encourage connection not just within the football group, but also across different disciplines in the club. By facilitating casual, cross-sport interaction in a trusted space, the club strengthens the overall sense of community and belonging – key to keeping members engaged over time.

Their takeaway? Meet people where they are. Start in places where safety and community are already present. Facilitate peer bonding beyond sport and use those social bridges to build engagement across the club.



LGBTQI+ clubs often rely on volunteers, but attracting and keeping them engaged can be challenging. A thoughtful, structured approach can make the difference. **A helpful framework is the ABC Model for Sustainable Work,** based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan. The SDT states that the fulfillment of these three core psychological needs are key to develop intrinsic motivation and lasting relationships.



The ABC model includes three building blocks of engagement and motivation:

- A Autonomy: Volunteers feel ownership over their tasks and roles.
 E.g. "I can make my own choices.", "I get a say in how we do things.", "They trust me to run this or that."
- **B Belonging**: They feel a sense of belonging to the club and its mission.

E.g. "I feel like I belong and I'm valued.", "I feel listened to.", "I have a community in this club."

 C – Competence: They receive the training and support needed to feel confident.
 E.g. "I feel capable in what I do.", "I know what to do and how to do it.", "This club supports me in learning new skills that help my work in the club."

When your volunteers feel good in these three areas, they are more likely to develop a healthy and lasting connection to your club, showing initiative, and contributing to a positive environment. At **Casa Rosa (Belgium)**, the rainbow house of East Flanders, volunteer engagement went through several phases – each with different impacts on motivation.

- Phase 1 Full Autonomy, but lacking structure: Volunteers brought in their own ideas and ran several projects freely. While this boosted autonomy, it lacked structure – leading to limited team bonds and insufficient support.
- Phase 2 Structured Teams, but lower freedom: The organisation introduced fixed teams (bar, talks, events, podcast etc.), strengthening collaboration and clarity. But some volunteers felt restricted, missing the freedom to shape their roles.

- Phase 3 A flexible model rooted in listening: Today, the volunteer structure is both organised and adaptive. Casa Rosa sat down with all their volunteers to hear what they valued, missed and needed. The result is a hybrid system where:
 - Teams and support structures remain, to sustain connection and competence.
 - Autonomy is restored through active listening and flexible role design. For instance, if a volunteer wants to help with the bar for the social element but lacks the skills or interest in actually serving drinks, they might now coordinate the monthly volunteer hangouts for that team instead. They're still involved, still visible, and play a role tailored to them.
 - Support is multifaceted: practical (clear instructions, buddy systems), emotional (peer check-ins, coordinator availability), and developmental (learning opportunities, creative freedom in projects).

Casa Rosa learned to **engage their volunteers as individuals.** They build systems that support them, but they let them shape those systems as well.

Sustainable, meaningful engagement comes from creating roles that fit people – not forcing people to fit the roles.

THE ROLE OF ALLIES

Cis-heterosexual allies also play a valuable

role in fostering inclusive environments and advocating for equality beyond the club. Underneath we explore three models to help your club make an informed decision on the involvement of allies, aligning with your goals and the local, social and political context.

MODEL 1: LGBTQI+ only		
Pro (+)	Con (-)	
Safety is prioritised	Smaller pool of participants/potential members/volunteers	
Higher chance of a more diverse queer audience	Limited external visibility F.e. depending on geo-political region it's more difficult to spread the word about your club, make yourself known,	
Higher sense of belonging to the club	Higher risk of social or political resistance to the club, which might close off different types of support (f.e. Funding or collaborations with other clubs)	

	MODEL 2: LGBTQI+ & Friends		
	Pro (+)	Con (-)	
	Opens space for allies while maintaining LGBTQI+ focus (target group)	Potential ambiguity on who qualifies as a 'friend'	
	Easier to enforce expectations from members via the enforcement of a clear code of conduct (see good governance)	There's a trade-off in the sense of security and safety in opening the demographic. The learning environment for allies might not always feel safe for queer people. TIN+ people are often the most vulnerable to this trade-off.	
	Encourages meaningful allyship & fosters under- standing between people		

MODEL 3: Open to everyone & LGBTQI+ friendly

Pro (+)	Con (-)
Wider audience and reach	Risk the safety of LGBTQI+ people in the club, resulting in the self-exclusion of queer people.
More potential volunteers, members	Risk the sense of belonging of LGBTQI+ people to the club
Less social or political re- sistance to the club, which can aid in securing differ- ent types of support (e.g. funding or collaborations with other clubs)	



GET STARTED WITH CREATING A SAFE(R) SPACE

A safe(r) space is an environment where people can freely be themselves without fear of judgment, discrimination or any type of exclusionary mechanism. In practice, creating a safe(r) space is an ongoing process that involves everyone in the club, making it a shared responsibility.

This shared responsibility means that everyone follows the guidelines and/or code of conduct, speaks up when needed, models respectful behavior and is encouraged to grow and learn in a respectful manner.

Below you can find some tips to work on a safe(r) space. Creating a safe(r) space is a continuous effort, and while absolute safety can never be guaranteed, your commitment makes a meaningful difference. Make your values known – Share your values widely so people can take on that responsibility. Introduce new members to your club's values and expectations.

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Use inclusive language in all communication, both internally and externally – The European Institute for Gender Equality created an extensive toolkit on gender sensitive communication. In chapter 6, you can find practical steps, checklists, easy-to-use examples and more. There are many online resources to help with this goal. Each language has their specific hurdles and the guidelines change with the local LGBTQI+ culture. For this reason it is important to keep in touch with queer life in the region of your club.

Normalise the use of "name + pronoun" introductions

Be open about your own blind spots and invite people to question, educate or correct you – You might include a sentence like: "If you notice anything that could be said better or something we could do better, please let us know. We welcome respectful feedback." It's equally important to act on feedback. For example, change a date if an event overlaps with a cultural/religious holiday.

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Provide safe(r) changing options – Binary locker rooms often present in sport facilities may pose challenges for TIN+ members. Use available facilities creatively: offer multiple or individual changing options based on experienced safety of your members.

Facilitate learning and awareness – This could mean hosting an annual "Inclusivity in Sport" workshop. Or maintaining a shared digital folder with resources (videos, guides, etc.) for members to explore and contribute to.

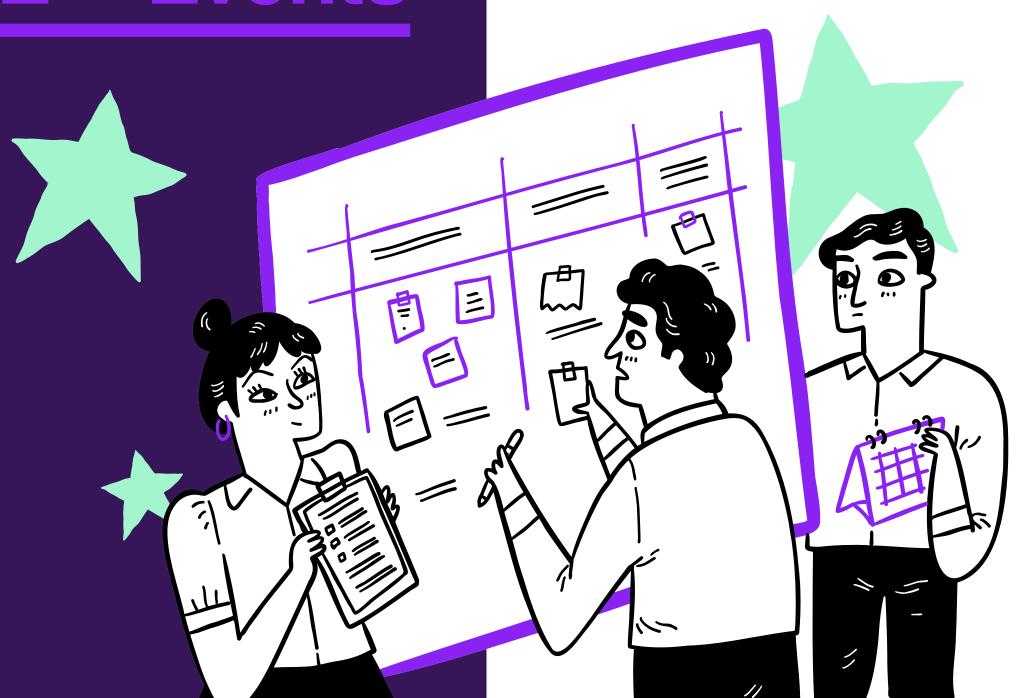
Assigning peer support roles – Designate clear contact people for confidential support. Share their names and contact info widely in the club. It should be as easy as possible to get in touch with them. Consider buddy systems for new members.

Make space for feedback (anonymous or not) – It's important to welcome respectful feedback. It's equally important to act on it. **Out For The Win (Belgium)** has two official channels to provide feedback, an anonymous form that every member has access to and a person of contact for each division of the organization. If a member has an issue with this person of contact, there's always the possibility of approaching a specific person. Both the channels and people of contact are communicated clearly to newcomers and repeated every



General Assembly.

E – Events



EVENTS AS A SHOWCASE FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Every organisation hosts events/activities or participates in them. When done right, an event can be a perfect showcase for your organisation and what you stand for. This way, **events can also be the ideal place to recruit new members and volunteers.**

However, events or activities are not always a success for your organisation. That's why the other chapters can be helpful. When applied effectively, good governance, advocacy and member engagement enhance the quality, reach and impact of your events and activities.





GET STARTED WITH PLANNING INCLUSIVE EVENTS

Here are some things you can do to create inclusive events:

- Think of policies that enforce an inclusive space, such as an anti-discrimination policy, a clear code of conduct and a safeguarding protocol. You could highlight your existing policies or create some event-specific guidelines.
 - Be aware that the choice of partnerships and sponsorships can influence the safe and welcoming environment you want to create. You can use the tools from the chapter of advocacy to help you with building a strong network.
 - Pay attention to different needs within the LGBTQI+ community. As many organisations are seeking to diversify their volunteers and members, it can be important to pay special attention to TIN+ inclusion.
- Consider using existing platforms for the promotion of your events. For example, the EGLSF, the European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation which gathers together 180 LGBTQI+ sport clubs and associations as members,

representing around 25,000 European athletes, offers its monthly Newsletter and International sport Calendar in its website to display members and non members' sport events.

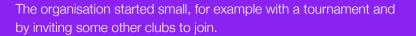
Use existing guidelines and checklists on inclusive events and event planning as an inspiration. For example, the <u>Accessibility</u> <u>Guidelines from ENGSO</u> can be a helpful starting point for an overview and checklist when planning and organising events and further support inclusion in the broadest sense.



Out For The Win (Belgium) has a code of conduct that they adapt to be event-specific (workshops, weekends, sport activities...). This code of conduct is applied in two ways: proactively and retroactively. It is included in every registration tool - for trainers and participants alike and is communicated about widely during an event. Retroactively, Out For The Win also appoints a safeguarding officer, who can be approached during and after an activity about anything that feels uncomfortable or unsafe. Because the code of conduct has been such an integral part of their communication, it is more accessible for participants

to report if there is an issue.

The Danish multidisciplinary sport organisation **Pan Idraet** became an expert in organising big scale events throughout the years.



While gaining experience, you can start introducing new elements, such as introducing new sports in the tournament, spreading it over multiple days, and adding some extra sportive activities.

Successful events help you build confidence, but it also gets you a better name and economical success.



Some practical tips from their experience:

- For every event both the board and the different sport departments are involved. Each of them brings different knowledge and experience to the table.
- Planning starts very early, sometimes even multiple years prior to the event, with booking the necessary venues as priority.
- A 'need to have' and 'nice to have' list can be a helpful tool in keeping costs low. Merchandise for example, is very nice to have but also raises the costs very quickly.
- Think about possibilities to scale your event up or down, depending on the amount of participants.

Need to report an issue?

Need to talk or share something? Find someone with a lanyard — we're here for you.



or scan the QR code to send a message.



Queer Sport Split (Croatia) has introduced a code of conduct or code of care at tournaments and sport camps to create safer and more inclusive spaces for everyone.

At the start of each event, they discuss key principles such as consent, respecting pronouns, and fair play. This code is also shared on their social media and is visible

> at the venue itself. An awareness team is available for participants to contact in case of harmful behavior.

> > This awareness team can be applied to training and social activities as well. They have also established a dedicated committee to support anyone experiencing harm during our activities.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As mentioned throughout the guidelines, building an inclusive and sustainable sport club is **an ongoing journey.** While it is important to set priorities, it is equally important to realise that the GAME-topics are interconnected and influence each other. **Each topic covered in this guide plays a vital role in shaping a club where everyone feels seen, valued, and safe.**

No matter where your club is starting from, every step toward inclusion counts. By committing to this work, you're not only creating a better environment for your current members but you're also **ensuring the future of your club.**

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CHAMPIONS OF INCLUSION

A 'GAME' plan to boost your organisation

2025

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