



HANDBOOK

Inclusive, sustainable and accessible sporting events in Europe

ONLINE version:

<https://edu.fairplay.or.at/courses/inclusive-sustainable-and-accessible-sport-events-in-europe/>

A HANDBOOK for event organisers providing experiences from pilot actions, useful resources and a chart for a new model of European Sport Events

A mutual outcome of the European project “[EWSE – Empowering Women for Sport events in Europe](#)”, implemented by ASSIST (Associazione Nazionale Atlete, Italy – lead), Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA, Ireland), European Platform for Sport Innovation (EPSI, Belgium), Alice Milliat Foundation (France) and fairplay – Initiative for diversity and antidiscrimination at VIDC (Austria).

Introduction: Background, aims and EWSE project

[About the handbook](#)

Dear sporting event organisers and activists in the context of women’s sporting events!

This electronic handbook brings together experiences from four pilot actions within the EWSE project and collects resources developed over the last 2.5 years to help sport organisers enhance their events in terms of inclusion, accessibility and sustainability. The handbook is aimed at grassroots sporting events, offering practical and easy-to-adopt tips and ideas for improvements that don’t require significant resources.

In the Pilot Actions we sought to test principles we developed to make our events more inclusive, accessible and sustainable. Some things went well, while others require reconsideration. After reviewing this handbook, you can download the **EWSE Chart for a new model of European Sport Events**.

We hope you find these documents and considerations useful!

[The EWSE Project](#)

Networking among women’s sporting events and festivals in Europe can improve their social, economic and cultural impact. It can boost and enhance the presence and visibility of women in sport, as well as offer **good practices and experiences that can increase inclusion, accessibility and environmental sustainability**, representing factors of change and modernity.

Pursuing gender equality in sports leadership and promoting the visibility and representation of women’s sports means consolidating an innovative networking model that brings about real inclusion along with



along with a regeneration that can benefit the entire sporting phenomenon. Increasing practitioners, consolidating the base, and providing opportunities to everyone means creates the best and most solid foundations on which the top level can support itself.

For more information, visit the project website: <https://ewse.assistitaly.eu/en/>

The project is run in partnership by the following organisations:

- ASSIST Associazione Nazionale Atlete (Italy, coordinator)
- IWA- Sport Irish Wheelchair Association Sport (Ireland)
- EPSI The European Platform for Sport Innovation (Belgium)
- Alice Milliat Foundation (France)
- fairplay-VIDC – Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (Austria)

Background situation & status quo

To learn more about the background of the project and why we still need to advocate for women in sport, please read our Status Quo report on the situation and needs of women’s sporting events across Europe:

“(…) The structures in sport are particularly masculine. As a woman you are on special terrain, you must work hard in volunteering. It’s a different environment (…)”

– *Representative Umbrella Sport Organisation, Austria*

Our network: Map of women’s sporting events across Europe

For more information about the network of women’s sport events, check out the Events map: A map of women’s sports festivals and events in Europe of national and international relevance, in order to promote contacts and exchange experiences and good practices between organisers.

Pilot Actions: Four European women's sporting events

Profiles of the events, experiences collected in the preparation process, implementation and lessons learned for future sustainable, accessible and inclusive events.

Girls Football Festival (Vienna, Austria) | fairplay-VIDC

Event description:

Come together and break down prejudices at the Girls Football Festival in Vienna!

Junior girls' teams from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Austria meet in Vienna to celebrate football, respect and diversity for three days. The Girls Football Festival (GFF) is committed to girls and women in sport, international exchange, opposing nationalism, and advocating for respect and equality. In addition to the host club, First Vienna FC 1894, and ASV Draßburg from Burgenland, ZFK Sloga Prijedor, ZFK Spartak Banja Luka (both BiH), ZFK Ilarion Podgorica (MNE) and Red Star Belgrade (SRB) will participate in the 5th edition of the festival.

The programme includes joint training sessions, interactive workshops, a guided treasure hunt through Vienna, side events in Vienna and, of course, a big final tournament. All football sessions will take place at the First Vienna FC 1894 training campus at Spielmannngasse 8, 1220 Vienna.

Focus, Venue & Date

Focus 2022 on: Sustainability

Venue: First Vienna Football Campus, Spielmannngasse 8, 1200 Vienna

Date: 24th – 26th June 2022

Preparation

Sustainability was a concern for the main organisers, fairplay VIDC, during the preparation process. Unfortunately, we started too late, so we ended up focusing on waste reduction and separation, social sustainability in the venue area, and food allocation.

Over 20 individuals are involved in organising the Girls Football Festival each year, assisting in preparation and primarily during the event weekend itself as team managers, first aid responders, referees, food providers, venue personnel, and check-in assistants. A week before the event we held a briefing session with them. In addition to going through the programme and clarifying any questions, we provided them with sustainability guidelines and ways to make the GFF a more sustainable event.

An information sheet for the GFF participants at both venues (reception & sports pitch) was prepared in three languages: German, English and BKS.

Implementation

Mainly the reception venue and the sport venue needed preparation. Two assistants started two hours before the event, which proved quite demanding. It was a very windy day in Vienna, causing the inscriptions and waste bags we prepared to be constantly dispersed by the wind. We had to replace them constantly, which confused the participants.

We had a significant amount of leftover food after lunch and dinner, which we had not anticipated. Therefore, we had to find a place to donate the food on very short notice to avoid wastage. We reached out to the “Wiener Tafel”, who were happy to receive the 40 pizzas.

Lessons learned?

We started too late to make a significant change. In the end, we were satisfied with the small steps we took, but if we had started planning earlier, we could have involved the Vienna waste management department (MA 48), rented proper garbage cans, and avoided stressful situations.

Aside from realising the importance of early planning for more sustainable events, we identified two areas that require improvement:

- Transportation: we didn't find a solution for transporting heavy items other than by car (see photo)
- Plastic bottles: it was a hot day, and there were long queues in front of the few water taps. The canisters we prepared were not sufficient. In the end, we had to purchase 50 plastic bottles as a quick solution.

Her Moves (Clontarf, Ireland) | Irish Wheelchair Association

Event description

Irish Wheelchair Association Sport hosts first Her Moves event in celebration of International Women's Day.

The day was filled with female-focused events and celebrated the talent within the disability community, highlighting abilities rather than disabilities. Females of all ages, including members, parents, volunteers, athletes, coaches, and officials participated in this inclusive event, where females of all abilities came together to learn more about strength and conditioning and try sports like wheelchair basketball and rugby.

The Her Moves event aligns with Sport Ireland's recent launch of their national Her Moves campaign, which aims to inspire teenage girls to explore more opportunities and embrace sport and physical activity while sharing their experiences with friends.

Focus, Venue & Date

Focus 2023 on: Accessibility, Inclusion and Sustainability

Venue: Áras Chúchulainn, Blackheath Dr, Clontarf East, Dublin 3, Ireland

Date: 11th March 2023

Preparation

Accessibility: We conducted a venue check to ensure accessibility, including access, toilets, spacing, and catering set-up considerations (e.g., height of food/drinks).

Inclusion: We extended an open invitation to female members, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, individuals with disabilities, juniors, and seniors. All activities were chosen to be easily adaptable and accessible for individuals with physical disabilities.

Sustainability: We avoided the use of single-use plastics and used generic logos on branded items without specific years listed to ensure their usability in future events.

Implementation

Accessibility: We utilised a fully accessible venue at Irish Wheelchair Association headquarters, which includes a sports hall, meeting rooms, kitchen, and canteen among other facilities. We also designed our courses and sports offerings to be accessible for people with physical disabilities, the general public, and staff members.

Inclusion: Activity leaders made sure to include all participants during their sessions. For example, an interactive movement workshop and an educational talk on menstrual cycles actively encouraged participation from both men and women.

Sustainability: Upon arrival, all participants received a filled, reusable water bottle. Catering on the day used recyclable materials, and participants were encouraged to take any leftovers home. The apparel provided to participants did not include dates, allowing for distribution at future events.

Lessons learned?

We gathered feedback informally, with individuals communicating their experiences to staff members. Following the event, our staff had a formal debrief where we reviewed each activity, the layout of the day, and considerations for future events. This documentation will aid us in planning next year's event.

Lessons:

- Provide a sensory room for participants

- Advise participants of noise levels through advertising
- Review the allocated time for activities on the day
- Distribute a formal feedback form for participants
- Organise gift items that specifically relate to the activity offerings, such as a journal to track menstrual cycles to follow the session

Queens Rugby 7 Festival (Paris, France) | Alice Milliat Foundation

Event description

The Queens Rugby 7 Festival is the first European festival dedicated to women practicing rugby sevens. It is a vibrant week featuring **three tournaments** (school, university, federal), **debates and conferences** about women and sport, exhibitions, as well as workshops and animations.

Focus, Venue & Date

Focus: **Inclusion of women** and the **sustainable aspect** of the event

Venue: **Leon Bonvoisin stadium – Bois de Vincennes, PARIS**

Date: 13th – 15th May 2022

Preparation

The **inclusion of women** in sports is our main subject and therefore we decided to organise a women-only event. Our aim was to create an environment where women could feel empowered to express themselves both on and off the pitch, fostering a strong spirit of sisterhood throughout the event. We sought advice from the **Green World Team association**, which guided us on organising an eco-responsible event. However, we fell short in terms of accessibility since the outdoor rugby pitches don't allow disabled people to play. Thanks to the work of the Irish Wheelchair Association, we now have a clear understanding of the factors we need to consider, and we will strive to improve in future events.

Implementation

Accessibility: The event venue was made accessible, and accessible bus transport was provided (located outside Paris in the Bois de Vincennes).

Inclusion and gender equity: The festival was organised exclusively for women, making it the first 100% women's rugby sevens festival in Europe. Educational activities were conducted to boost girls' self-confidence, discuss leadership, and inspire them to pursue careers in sport (in partnership with ENGSO).

Sustainability: Measures implemented included the use of dry toilets, glass gourds instead of plastic water bottles, water fountains, eco cups, meals served in 100% recyclable containers, and uneaten meals being donated to the humanitarian association "La Chorba", which has been fighting hunger and social exclusion since 1998

Ragazze Nel Pallone (Padua, Italy) | Assist Associazione Nazionale Atlete (ASSIST)

Event description

Ragazze nel Pallone is Italy's biggest women's sports festival. The new edition will be held in Padua in July 2023. It aims to enhance the skills and abilities of women, increase the visibility of women's sport and to provide space for new talents.

Ragazze nel pallone is a non-profit sports association founded in 2009 with the goal of promoting access to all sports from childhood onwards without gender discrimination.

The association organises Italy's largest women's sports festival, which is now in its thirteenth year.

Our events also prioritise social commitment by raising awareness of important social issues. We support initiatives of particular interest through financial contributions.

Each edition of Ragazze Nel Pallone has been a challenge, with months of uncertainty (many of the women worry about limitations and that they are not good enough), but this is always followed by the satisfaction of success. This victory is personal, not only for other women but for women's sport as a whole.

Focus, Venue & Date

Focus: Accessibility, Inclusion and Sustainability

Venue:

Impianto Polifunzionale Filippo Raciti, Str. Pelosa, 74C, 35136 Padova PD, Italy

Date: 7th -9th July 2024

Preparation

We held team meetings with volunteers to analyse how accessible, inclusive, and sustainable our event is. We discussed and defined the concepts of accessibility, inclusion, and sustainability using the project's resources like the analysis report and good practices. Following these discussions, we decided to focus on improving the three key areas:

- **Accessibility:** We made contact with parasport clubs (CUS) and connected with para-athletes to assess their needs to effectively participate in the event. Due to limited resources in 2023, we won't have the possibility to host a disabled sport tournament, which will be an objective for the 2024 edition, in cooperation with CUS Padova wheelchair basketball team and Vicenza disability football team.
- **Inclusion:** The festival is already inclusive in terms of gender neutrality and LGBTQI minorities. However, we need to reach out to vulnerable groups with less access to sport, such as migrants and

refugees. Advertisements and signs should be in multiple languages during the festival to engage girls from other countries. We also aim to partner with two clubs in Padua that specifically work with women refugees and football. Nevertheless, the team feels that being inclusive to women and girls with refugee status or migrant backgrounds requires specific competencies and networks that the current volunteer team doesn't possess. Strengthening collaboration with these two clubs may help us improve in this respect, as well as promoting specific collaboration with local associations/NGOs for the 2024 edition.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability is a topic close to the hearts of our volunteers, and we all feel the need to do more in this area. The group reviewed the good practices outlined by the project and discussed the sustainability issues identified in the report, focusing on practical solutions that the event could implement. Transportation with a low environmental impact was a big concern, especially since the festival takes place in an urban area with limited public transportation. One proposal that the volunteers agreed on is to request more cooperation from the Municipality, including additional bus services during the event, and promotion of car-pooling options. We also want to push for the development of better cycle paths in the area. When it comes to using biodegradable materials for food and beverages, there is the challenge of the higher cost compared to disposable options. One option proposed is partnering with another festival in the city – a music festival with a sports area – that follows a fully biodegradable approach. Joining forces with them could potentially lead to discounts from producers/companies. Partnering with other sporting events to lower the prices of sustainable materials also emerged as an interesting approach for the 2024 edition.

Implementation

+++ The event is upcoming! +++

The event will take place in July 2023 and the measures mentioned earlier are planned for both the upcoming event and the 2024 edition.

Lessons learned:

1. We realised that we had taken inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability for granted, without fully understanding the depth of knowledge required. This was an important lesson that highlighted the need for more discussions with our volunteer team.
2. We had a lively debate about sponsors for the first time, their integrity, and their commitment to inclusivity and sustainability. We will keep these aspects in mind right from the start when looking for sponsors for future events.
3. We recognised the importance of improving our networking and partnership capabilities with other events. Our mapping of events across Europe taught us this valuable lesson.
4. Funding is an area that still requires improvement. Although we set up a crowdfunding campaign for the 2023 edition, we recognise that more action is necessary to diversify our funding channels. (www.gofundme). But we're struggling to reach our target. This shows that we need more training and capacity building in this area, along with increased funding capacity. We also need to attract

more donors outside our current network that supports the festival. While the project was helpful in introducing the topic, giving examples, and setting up a crowdfunding tool, it didn't quite give us the boost we needed to secure the necessary funding for improvement and expansion.

EWSE Chart: Principles to organise inclusive, accessible and sustainable women sporting events

If you are starting to re-plan your events to foster social and environmental impact, you should consider two things in advance:


- First: **timing is key!** Starting early with preparations helps avoid stress, achieve good results, and prevent frustration.
- Second: take **one step after the other** and be pragmatic! You won't be able to change everything at once, especially in grassroots sports where resources are limited.
- Within the EWSE project, we have developed a lot of good material to support you in making your event more sustainable, accessible, and inclusive. For example, we have created an extensive **GUIDING TOOLKIT FOR SPORTS EVENT ORGANISERS**, where you can find background information and practical tips (checklists) in areas such as fundraising, media coverage, leadership, and, of course, inclusion, sustainability, accessibility, and gender equality. Find this resource here:

EWSE Chart: Principles to organise inclusive, accessible and sustainable sporting events


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 **Raising awareness of anti-discrimination, inclusion and gender inequality within the organisation and the organisation committee**


 **Representation: Promoting (gender) equality among staff and participants, choosing a diverse project team**


 Supporting marginalised groups (women, migrants, BPoC, persons with disabilities etc.) to empower and develop skills in all areas (including leadership positions)


 Making your event accessible: For many people with disabilities, access is restricted by more than just physical barriers. Barriers can be cultural, economic, attitudinal or organisational. For details and concrete steps to create an accessible event, refer to the infographic


 Making your event sustainable: For details and concrete steps to create a sustainable event, refer to the infographic


 Creating role models to empower, to motivate, and showcase the achievements of athletes and leaders, as well as sharing positive stories and offering counter-narratives to challenge stereotypes

 Utilising existing resources or borrowing equipment from other events and organisations

 Creating a list before purchasing or printing items: determine which drinks, food, and equipment you truly need. Rethink the number of copies you require or if you need them at all


 Utilising your network: create a database of media and journalists as well as companies you know, and reach out to your club's network (parents, trainers, friends, colleagues, schools)

 Engaging with local media and press – they are more interested in local events than national media

 Ensure clear communication about the event: have a slogan, a visual identity, an online platform (social media or website), accessible contacts and templates for social media

 Find sponsors – don't be afraid to ask!

 Consider collaborations with organisations experienced in hosting green events etc.

 Being informed about available public funds: city council, county council, call for projects (at the national or European level)

 Emphasise the specificities of your events and the cultural/social dimensions of the event