

Different jerseys, same team

**A manual for organizing
inclusive sports events**



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PUBLISHER

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT

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PRINTING

Alta Nova

EDITION 1000

Belgrade, September 2025

ISBN 978-86-82960-02-7



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Project is co-financed by the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs. The views expressed in this publication are the sole responsibility of NK Zagreb 041 and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs



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Introduction

The organizations that contributed to the creation of this guidebook have for many years been using sport as a tool for the social inclusion of marginalized groups into local communities, as well as for post-conflict reconciliation in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, which experienced wars during the 1990s and still face the consequences of those conflicts in interethnic relations today. Through years of cooperation and exchange, we have realized that the knowledge gained from organizing sports events – with special attention to identifying and removing barriers faced by certain groups in order to fully participate in their communities – should be collected, systematized, and shared further. This is how the project Sport Zajedno was born. Within this project, we identified so-called sports multipliers (coaches, educators, practitioners of sport for peace) in each participating country (Austria, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo). These multipliers received training, mentoring, and practical support, enabling them to organize inclusive sports events in their own communities. Capacity-building began with three-days of training in Belgrade in November 2024, where we used interactive methods to pass on theoretical knowledge about organizing inclusive sports events. Afterward, these multipliers, with the support of partner organizations, organized local inclusive sport events themselves. They also had the opportunity to take part in events we organized – practical examples of inclusive sports events – where we learned and collected experiences that now form the basis of this guidebook.

Theoretical and practical knowledge that we passed on to the multipliers in the training sessions in Belgrade has been systematized here. In addition, the guidebook contains examples of inclusive events that multipliers organized between May and July 2025. While this guidebook can serve as a reference for those multipliers, we also hope it will be a starting point for any coach, educator, or community worker interested in using sport as a tool to reach those who would otherwise have limited access to it. We hope that it can also serve anyone who carries out various activities with the aim of social inclusion of marginalized groups, and those who have not yet tried using sport as a tool to achieve this goal. Finally, we hope this guidebook encourages cooperation and networking among all these actors. Working together multiplies impact and effectiveness – ultimately moving us closer to the social change we want to see: building more inclusive and equal societies.



About the project

Sport zajedno



*Different jerseys, same team – A guide to organizing inclusive sports events was created as part of the project *Sport zajedno – Promoting Social Inclusion and Reconciliation through Grassroots Youth Sport*, funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ program, and co-financed in Croatia by the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs. The consortium is coordinated by the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation – fairplay Initiative (VIDC – *fairplay initiative*), and includes NGO Atina (Serbia), Football Club Zagreb 041 (Croatia), Igrajmo zajedno inicijativa (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (Montenegro), and KfV Prishtina (Kosovo).*

The project's main goal is to promote social inclusion and post-conflict reconciliation among young people in grassroots sport across the Western Balkans. To achieve this, the project combines training, education, awareness-raising activities, capacity building of local stakeholders in grassroots sport, and targeted sports interventions with young people. More specifically, the project aims to connect and strengthen the capacity of local sports stakeholders (sports clubs, civil society initiatives, schools, local governments) to harness sport's potential for bringing divided communities together. This is done particularly through youth sports interventions that encourage inter-community cooperation. Another objective is to develop educational tools and raise awareness on how to implement inclusive grassroots sports activities that empower young people – especially girls – as well as marginalized groups, including migrants, ethnic minorities, and refugees. Finally, the project trains sports multipliers (coaches, educators, sport-for-peace practitioners) to promote gender equality and equal participation of diverse groups in grassroots sports events and within sports organizations.

The challenges this project seeks to address include: lack of capacity, cooperation, and networking between sports stakeholders, civil society organizations (CSO), and vulnerable groups; the persistence of ethnic stereotypes among young people and lack of interethnic understanding; insufficient opportunities for inclusive interaction and intercultural dialogue; the gender stereotypes, prejudices, and lack of support faced by girls in sport; and finally, lack of awareness and skills among football and sports stakeholders to promote fundamental rights, gender equality, and respect for diversity.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is a process that responds to the problem of social exclusion. **Social exclusion** occurs when certain groups do not have equal access to resources, cannot fully participate in social activities, and are denied the same opportunities as the dominant group. This prevents them from exercising their human rights in full and also influences the decisions they make in their daily lives. Exclusion often goes hand in hand with a sense of inferiority compared to the dominant group. The basis for exclusion is usually linked to identity factors such as gender, age, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, migration status, socio-economic background, or place of residence. It is important to note that exclusion can happen on several levels at the same time, because people's identities are multidimensional. For example, a Roma woman with a disability is at higher risk of exclusion, as she may face barriers related to her gender, disability, and ethnicity simultaneously. Exclusion is often **the result of discrimination** rooted in stereotypes and prejudice toward certain groups. It significantly impacts not only the quality of life of excluded individuals but also the cohesion of society as a whole.

In contrast, social inclusion is defined as “the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights”¹ or “the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society”.² In other words, inclusion means **creating conditions that allow people who are at risk of exclusion to participate fully and with dignity in society**, by removing the barriers that prevent this participation. Because exclusion is multidimensional, inclusion also requires a range of approaches – from removing systemic causes of exclusion, to challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviors and intentionally and actively involving people in social activities. Of course, organizing an inclusive sports event cannot address all the needs of an excluded group, nor can it remove all barriers to their participation. But it can open doors, break down prejudices, and shift some of the forces that drive exclusion towards greater inclusion. It is particularly important that events and activities are not one-off, but that the community is worked with continuously and over a longer period of time.

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (2016) *Report on the World Social Situation 2016. Leaving no one Behind: The Imperative of Inclusive Development*. New York: United Nations, p. 20.

² World Bank (2013) *Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity*. Washington, DC: World Bank, p. 4.

At a policy level, social inclusion is recognized as a conscious social and political choice. For example, the European Commission's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 states:

The European way of life is an inclusive one. Integration and inclusion are key for people coming to Europe, for local communities, and for the long-term well-being of our societies and the stability of our economies. If we want to help our societies and economies thrive, we need to support everyone who is part of society, with integration being both a right and a duty for all.³

Social inclusion is also embedded across the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*). It is visible, for instance, in Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), Goal 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries), Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), and Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels), as well as in a number of subgoals,⁴ with the overarching message: no one should be left behind.

³ European Commission (2020) *Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027*. Bruxelles: European Commission.

⁴ United Nation General Assembly (2015) *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. New York: United Nations.

Process of Organizing an Inclusive Sports Event



Organizing an inclusive sports event is a structured yet flexible **process**, with the goal of creating a space where everyone has the right to participate – regardless of gender, origin, physical ability, or social status. An inclusive sports event is not only about play or competition, but about fostering equality, togetherness, and breaking down social barriers through sport.

The general aim of every inclusive sports event is **to make sure that all participants have the opportunity to join in**, play, learn, and enjoy the game in a safe, fun, and welcoming environment. However, it is important to recognize that different groups – migrants and refugees, ethnic and national minorities, women, socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, and people from rural areas – do not all start from the same position when it comes to access to sport. Each of these groups faces specific barriers that need to be identified and removed to ensure

meaningful and equal participation. This means that the specific goals of each sports event will depend on the target group and the local context.

There is no universal formula for organizing such events. Every community and every target group require a tailored approach. That is why this guidebook does not provide ready-made solutions, but rather offers guidelines, questions to ask, and practical lessons from experience – including mistakes we ourselves have made and learned from.

What we can provide is a framework – a set of steps to help you make the sports event you are planning truly inclusive. These steps include setting the goals, mapping community resources, designing and planning activities, budgeting and fundraising, scheduling and task allocation, event implementation, evaluation, and refining the event concept. Because inclusion is a process, the work does not end when the event is over – it continues through sustained engagement and building on the relationships created. At every stage, it is essential to listen to the needs of participants and involve them directly in shaping the event. Including members of the target group in the planning process helps organizers better understand real needs (which outsiders can never fully know) and empowers participants to be active contributors rather than passive beneficiaries. In this way, an inclusive sports event becomes more than a one-time gathering – it becomes a step toward lasting social change.



Defining the Event Objective

Guiding questions: Why are we doing this? What do we want to achieve?

Defining the event goal or objective is the first and most important step in the process of organizing an inclusive sports event. A clearly defined goal guides all the steps that follow and ensures that the event has real meaning and impact for those it is intended to serve.

To define a quality goal, we must first understand **the barriers** faced by the target group we want to include, and then identify which of those barriers our event can realistically address. We should remain aware that removing these barriers is a long-term process – one event cannot solve everything. But every contribution matters, and even small changes are significant steps toward inclusion. A good goal should be realistic and achievable, but also specific enough to inform the design of the program.

Example: Girls Football Festival

The Girls Football Festival gathered girls under the age of 12 from Austria, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Greece. The aim was not only to empower young girls in football, but also to foster interaction among youth from different ethnic communities that had a history of conflict. One team from each country participated. Although the festival emphasized its non-competitive nature and included many activities beyond football, the girls still approached the tournament at the end of the festival with a strong sense of competitiveness. In addition, some girls stayed mostly within their own teams during the three-day event.

At the next edition of the festival, we decided to mix the teams so that girls from different countries and communities played together. This change encouraged interaction, cooperation, and a shift away from the “national team” mindset. It created more opportunities for connection and friendship beyond borders.



Mapping Community Resources

Guiding questions: Who needs to be included in order to achieve the objective of the event? What resources does the community already have, and which ones need to be activated or supplemented? Which barriers can this event realistically reduce (language, transportation, space accessibility, safety, costs, privacy in taking photos)? How do we avoid “importing solutions” and instead build on what already exists?

For an inclusive event to truly serve the people it is intended for, we need to understand the ground: who the community actors are, which spaces and networks already exist, what the real barriers are, and which small but decisive actions make a difference. “Mapping” is therefore not just a contact list, but a short collective process – conversations with people and institutions, a quick walk through the space, a look at existing communication channels – after which we know exactly what we can rely on and what needs to be added. This approach starts from community assets (asset-based), rather than “deficiencies,” and relies on the participation of those taking part in the event, not only the opinions of the organizers.

First, we set the **framework**: which target group we are inviting, which part of the city/route we are moving through, and which barriers we want to reduce (language, transportation, space accessibility, safety, costs, privacy in taking photos, etc.). This framework helps keep the mapping focused – we are not “looking for everything,” but only what will concretely ease participation.

Example: Mini Van Tour

The Mini Van Tour is a series of sports events held in different locations, with the goal of building peace in divided societies. The tour stops are organized in places with divided communities, so each stop requires thoughtful planning, local collaboration, and a deep understanding of the local context. That is why local partners play a key role. In addition, the events on the tour are not organized in stadiums or sports halls, but in public, neutral spaces, since stadiums and halls are often perceived as exclusive venues, associated with certain groups or formal teams. By organizing activities in neutral, visible, and public places, we ensure that no child or family feels excluded due to ethnic background or financial limitations. People passing by and local residents who may not have planned to participate are also included and encouraged to join or observe, turning the entire event into a celebration at the heart of the community, rather than being hidden behind the walls of a stadium.

Next we move to **quick insight gathering**: brief desk research (Is there an accessible hall nearby? Who holds the keys to the school playground? Can local transportation help?), as well as a few semi-structured conversations with those who “hold” the community – a PE teacher, a coach from a local club, a translator at the community center, a parent who brings other parents together, or an activist who knows where girls from mixed groups feel safe. It’s also important to hear from **experienced members** of the target group themselves: what hindered them in past activities, what helped, and are they willing to be co-organizers (not just “participants”)?



The third step is a **short “community map” workshop**. This can be done on paper or on a digital map by marking key spatial points (step-free entrances, the nearest restroom, rest area, shade, shortest path from the bus stop), but also “blind spots” (narrow doors, slippery tiles, areas to avoid). This part rarely lasts more than an hour but often crucially influences the day’s plan: sometimes one extra ramp or a slight shift of the registration table makes it possible for everyone to enter and spend time at the chosen location.

In parallel, we conduct an **accessibility and risk assessment**. This is a calm walk-through of the space with a short checklist: entrance, signage and labels, changing rooms and toilets, quiet room,⁵ water and food (with allergens noted), first aid, language support, policy for taking photos, Plan B in case of bad weather or too many people. We’re not seeking perfection, but a “good enough” solution with clear responsibility: who does what and by when.

Finally, we **prioritize and make agreements**. From all the available options, we choose those that are both important and feasible before the event. With partners, we make short agreements (who covers what, contact person, deadline), and with volunteers we distribute tasks. The goal is that after mapping we have a clear picture: *who we’re calling, which space we’re using, which barriers we’ve addressed, and how we’ll measure whether it worked.*

⁵ **A quiet room** is a specially marked room or corner where participants can retreat for a short time when they need a break from noise, crowds, or sensory overload. It can contain a couple of chairs, a soft support or a rug, and a clear indication that this is a place to rest without photos being taken or distractions. This kind of room is especially important for children, people with anxiety, autism, or sensory difficulties, but it also benefits others because it gives the feeling that they have a “safe zone” where they can remain part of the event.



Table 1. Short Resource Inventory (example for team use)

Actor / Organization	Contribution / Role (specific)	Contact Person	Agreement (what + by when)	Risks / Notes
School Gym “X”	Hall 9–13h, accessible restroom	Name, phone	Confirmation of slot by 5.9.	Keyholder needed at entrance
Club “Y” (coaches)	Two coaching pairs, warm-up	Name, phone	Briefing 4.9. at 18h	Coordinate with Team B schedule
Community Center	Translation in 2 languages	Name, phone	Language list by 3.9.	Check translators’ availability
Volunteer Network	8 volunteers, info desk and escort	Name, phone	Zone schedule by 6.9.	Pair volunteers properly

How to use the table: fill it out during conversations and visits; update it once (maximum twice) before the event. We don’t collect all contacts, only those directly tied to specific agreements.

Table 2. Influence–Interest Matrix (for a quick priority decision)

	Low Interest	High Interest
High Influence	Keep informed, offer short, clear roles	Key partner(s): include in planning and communication
Low Influence	Maintain polite contact, open invitation	Engage with targeted tasks (e.g., managing one station)

How to use the table: place names from the “Short Resource Inventory” into this matrix. Top-right (high influence, high interest) gets the most time and clear agreements; bottom-right (low influence, high interest) are included through simple, visible tasks.

What is the result of mapping?

After this short cycle we have: (1) **a resource inventory** with contacts and micro-agreements, (2) **a space sketch** with clearly marked accessibility points and a quiet room, and (3) **a list of priorities** – three to five actions we take immediately because they most improve the participation experience. All of this directly feeds into the event's run-of-show, role distribution, and safety protocols, and makes later evaluation easier: we know what we planned to improve and can check if it was indeed improved.

Designing and Planning Activities

We ask ourselves: How can we achieve what we want to achieve? What are the risks?

Once we have defined the objective of the event and identified the people, organizations, and institutions in the community that can help us reach that goal, the next step is to design and plan the specific activities that will take place during the event. **It is crucial to keep in mind both the objective** we have set and the diversity of participants who will be involved in the event. This means continuously considering the barriers faced by the selected target group, which might otherwise prevent their equal participation.

Even though we are organizing a sports event, it is important to also include additional activities that enable encounters, communication, and exchange, and through which we can address stereotypes and prejudices or barriers that would otherwise prevent all participants from taking part equally in this type of activity.

Example: Girls Football Festival

One of the goals of the festival is to empower girls in football. This goal is achieved by holding an international festival where female football players can meet and connect with one another. However, the impact can be further strengthened if one of the festival activities includes a workshop where the girls have the opportunity to speak about what it means to be a woman in football, the challenges they face, how women's football is portrayed in the media and public discourse, etc. Such discussion-based activities often simultaneously contribute to other goals as well, such as post-conflict reconciliation or breaking down ethnic prejudices, since participants connect through a shared aspect of their identity.

Activity planning involves considering logistics: where the event will take place, whether the venue has everything needed for each activity, whether there is space for rest and refreshment, and so on. It is also important to think about the flow of the program – ensuring a balance between structured activities and breaks, so that the schedule is not overcrowded, but also that participants are not inactive for too long. Throughout, **potential risks must be kept in mind**, and activities planned in a way that allows enough flexibility to adapt to problems identified as risks.

When designing the content, it is essential to always keep inclusion goals in focus: breaking down prejudices, promoting equality, and creating a safe space for everyone. Activities should contribute to a sense of belonging, empower participants, and strengthen mutual connections. Planning does not happen in isolation – it is useful to involve as many of the people who will actually implement the program as possible, especially members of the target group. This not only increases the relevance of the content but also further empowers their role in the community.



Budgeting and Fundraising

Guiding questions: How much money do we have? How much do we need? Are there financial challenges for participants? Who could financially support such an event? When are the calls for applications open?

Regardless of the scale of the event, budgeting is a crucial step that enables realistic planning. The first step is to define all potential costs, which is best done by starting from the planned activities and listing everything required for them. The most common costs in organizing sports events include venue rental, sports equipment, refreshments and food, promotional materials, accommodation, etc. When drafting the budget, it is important to **think from the perspective of participants** – does everyone have what they need to take part? Is it necessary to cover travel expenses or reduce participation fees for those from rural or socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, since that may be the very barrier preventing them from engaging in sports activities? Inclusivity begins at the stage of financial planning, because social exclusion is often closely tied to material deprivation. If we want the sports event we are organizing to truly be inclusive, we must keep in mind that the budget will likely need to be larger in order to enable participation for all.

Once we have a clear picture of the costs, we move on to identifying sources of funding. This can include applying for local, national, or international grants, but the first step should be to seek support from local authorities and sports associations. It is important to ensure that donor requirements do not conflict with the fundamental values and goals of the event – financial support must not compromise the inclusive nature of the event, nor should participants be turned into tokens for donor promotion.

Table 3. Budget and Coverage (simplified)

Cost Category	Estimate (EUR)	Inclusive Measure (short)	Source of Coverage
Venue	xxx	Accessible entrance/ramps	City / Sports Association / own funds
Equipment	xxx	Borrowing instead of purchasing	Club / partner
Food and Water	xxx	Labeled allergens; halal/vegetarian options	Sponsor / own funds
Participant Transport	xxx	Vouchers/routes for distant areas	Municipality / CSR / own funds
Language Support	xxx	Interpreter; pictograms	Community Center / volunteers
On-site Accessibility	xxx	Quiet corner; signage	Partner / own funds
Safety and First Aid	xxx	On-duty staff + kit	Red Cross / own funds
Promotion and Materials	xxx	Policy for taking photos	Local media / own funds
TOTAL COSTS	€		TOTAL COVERAGE: €

Schedule and Assignment of Tasks

Guiding questions: What are the operational steps, when must they happen by, and who is responsible? Who in the team has which skills, and where can they be best applied? Are tasks evenly distributed within the team? What are the risks? What if...?

A good timeline is crucial for the successful execution of an inclusive sports event, especially if you have been successful in mobilizing community resources, as all steps then need to be coordinated among multiple people involved in the event's implementation. Proper planning ensures that all preparations happen on time, tasks are evenly distributed, and everyone involved is informed and ready.

Table 4. Chronological Plan (Run of Show)

Time	Activity	Responsible Person	Support/Equipment	Notes
09:00–09:30	Arrival and Registration	Registration Coordinator	Info desk, signage, wristbands (photo), water	Accessible entrance opened
09:30–09:40	Welcome and Rules	Host + Safety	Microphone, pictograms	Provide contact for assistance
09:40–10:00	Group Warm-up	Coaching Pair	Music, obstacle-free space	Mixed groups
10:00–12:00	Main Activities (Rotations)	Zone Leaders	Equipment at stations, water	Break every 45 min
12:00–12:15	Short Reflection	Host	Microphone, QR survey	Announce next steps
12:15–12:30	Closing and Thank-You	Coordinator	Info about “lost & found”	Remind about online survey

The schedule must consider the **specific characteristics of the target group** – for example, if school children are included, the event should align with school hours, holidays, and sports obligations, and must be announced well in advance.

Task assignment is equally important. Every member of the organizing team should have clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and deadlines. It is crucial to have one person responsible for overall coordination who has an overview of all tasks and can respond promptly if something goes wrong. Volunteers should be organized into teams (e.g., logistics team, safety team, zone/station team, communications team – social media and press, etc.). Each team should have a leader for ease of coordination.

The simplest way to manage this is to create a table showing activities, responsible persons, and deadlines (a so-called RACI⁶ table). Additionally, regular team meetings are useful to review completed tasks and upcoming responsibilities, to avoid misunderstandings, keep everyone updated on progress, and boost motivation – teamwork in which something is created collectively is always highly motivating and inspiring.

⁶ **RACI** is an acronym for a project responsibility assignment model: **Responsible** (the person executing the task), **Accountable** (the one ultimately responsible), **Consulted** (those whose input is sought), and **Informed** (those kept updated).

Table 5. RACI (Roles and Responsibilities)

Task	R (Responsible)	A (Accountable)	C (Consulted)	I (Informed)	Deadline
Registration & Info Desk	Volunteer pair	Event Coordinator	Safety Lead	Media, partners	Ready by 09:00
Photo/Consent – Supervision	Inclusion Lead	Safety Lead	Communications Lead	Zone Leaders	Continuous
Water & Breaks	Logistics Team	Event Coordinator	Zone Leaders	All teams	As scheduled
Plan B/C (bad weather)	Logistics Team + Coordinator	Event Coordinator	Safety Lead	All leaders	As needed

Before the actual implementation of the event – ideally a few days beforehand, once everything is agreed upon and conditions (such as weather, which can significantly affect the event) are clearer – it is useful to hold a joint meeting with all volunteers and activity leaders. During this briefing, the pre-prepared event program is reviewed, with the tasks of each person clearly outlined, so that everyone feels ready for the event and any final uncertainties can be resolved.

Table 6. Volunteer Briefing Agenda

Item	Content	Duration	Led by	Materials
1.	Purpose and tone of the event (for whom, what we are changing...)	5 min	Coordinator	Objective summary
2.	Walkthrough of the day's schedule (timeline + stations)	10 min	Zone Leaders	"Run of Show" table
3.	Accessibility and safety (routes, quiet room, etc.)	10 min	Safety Lead	Pictograms, forms
4.	Roles and communication (RACI + quick decisions)	5 min	Coordinator	RACI table
5.	Q&A and mini-simulations ("what if...")	10 min	Everyone	Short role-play

Event Implementation

Guiding questions: How can inclusion be visible at every stage on site – from entry to closing? What do participants need in order to feel welcome, safe, and informed? Who records on the ground what we need to improve for next time, and how?

Event implementation is the moment when mapping and agreements turn into a concrete experience for participants. On site we maintain a clear rhythm and take care of the dignity of each participant. Inclusion is communicated through “small things”: readable signs, accessible language support, a quiet room, water, and the attentive attitude of staff and volunteers. A detailed timetable, task division, RACI, and pre-event briefing are in the previous chapter; here the focus is on inclusion standards during the event day itself.



Arrival and Registration without Barriers

Registration takes place at an accessible entrance; the desk is at the appropriate height, and signage uses pictograms and language variants of the most common instructions. A recognizable pair of volunteers greets people before the desk and, if needed, provides accompaniment to the ramp, changing room, or quiet room. If photo consent was not collected in advance, we assign **photo-consent markers** at registration and note specific needs (e.g., allergies, language).



Table 7. Marking – photo consent (example)

Marker	Permission	Note
Green bracelet	Photography and video allowed	Respect dignity; no sensationalism
Yellow bracelet	Group photos only	No close-ups of faces
Red bracelet	No photography allowed	Direct media/photographers to respect markers

Welcome and Clear Rules

A short address (up to 5 minutes) explains the purpose of the event, rules of conduct, and who participants can turn to if something goes wrong (name + location, e.g., volunteer Ivana at the info desk). Rules are visible in the space (on a poster with pictograms). The tone is inviting and avoids a “rescuer” narrative.⁷

⁷ “Rescuer narrative” refers to a tone in which the organizer(s) act as saviors, while participants are portrayed as passive victims who are being “given a chance.” Instead, we use a partnership-based tone – “we work together,” “we listen to needs,” “everyone contributes.” For example, instead of “*We made an effort to finally give these children the opportunity to participate,*” it is more appropriate to say “*The event is organized together with partners and the neighborhood; throughout the day we listen to participants’ needs and adjust the pace so that everyone can contribute and take part.*”

Activity Flow and Accessibility “On the Go”

The rhythm is: activity – break – activity, with sufficient water and space for rest. Coach pairs and zone facilitators encourage mixed teams and rotations, to foster connections and break barriers. Plans B/C (e.g., rain, heat, or too many people) exist in advance but are applied only if they improve participant safety and experience. Language support and assistance are “visible but unobtrusive” – we offer help while respecting privacy.

Parallel Support and Care for Participants

Throughout the day the following are available: a quiet room (clearly marked and near the main space), a corner for parents/guardians, a menstrual hygiene space, chargers, shade/shelter or heating, as well as water at multiple points. If food is provided, allergens are clearly labeled.

Safety and Dignity: Protocols in Practice

Photography rules are consistently enforced. In case of injury or conflict, the team knows who to report to and how to discreetly ensure care/space for recovery. Incidents are recorded briefly and clearly (time, place, what happened, action, responsible person).

Table 8. Incident Log (sample form)

Date/Time	Place	Short Description	Action Taken	Responsible Person	Note
10:45	Playground – north	Fall while running	First aid; quiet room	Name, function	Returned 11:15

On-Site Communication

Signage is legible (pictogram + language). Announcements are short and inclusive (“water break in 5 minutes,” “rotation to station 2”). The info desk receives quick feedback from participants (what is unclear, where crowding is, who needs assistance) and solves problems or directs to the person who can resolve them.

Table 9. Info Signs and Messages (template)

Message (base language)	Language variant 2	Pictogram	Location
Quiet room	Quiet room	“silence” icon	Entrance + map
Water	Water	water drop	All zones
Group photos only	Only group photos	camera + group	Entrance + stations

Closing and Transition to Evaluation

A brief shared reflection (1–2 minutes), clear information on next steps (content posting on social media respecting consent, registration for the next event), and a quick survey (QR code/ paper) create a bridge to evaluation and iteration. The team stays briefly on site to record “what to keep/what to improve.”

Evaluation of the Entire Event

Evaluation helps us check what the event truly brought to the participants – the very reason we organize it – and what we should change for next time. We keep it participatory and proportionate: participants and partners are included in the process, but we make sure it is as simple and concise as possible. We combine a short survey at the end, a few quick conversations with different participant profiles, and discreet observation notes by the team on site. We look at both numbers (who attended, which support services were used) and stories (where participants felt welcome, what helped them stay), while ensuring privacy and collecting data only with consent. Findings are summarized in a **simple one-pager** with three clear recommendations, and turned into small, actionable changes for the next time – directly feeding into concept refinement. For easier work on site, we will use pre-prepared templates (survey, observation checklist, AAR log, improvement backlog).

Worksheet (example): Short Participant Survey – End of Event

Question	Answer (circle/check)	Note (optional)
I felt welcome and safe.	1 2 3 4 5	
I understood the rules and flow of activities.	1 2 3 4 5	
I met a new person/group.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Which support helped you most to participate?	Open answer	
What could we improve for next time?	Open answer	

How to use: Print on one page or adapt into an online form; if needed, add fields for age range, gender, language support, accessibility (optional), but only with consent and without collecting unnecessary personal data.

Refining the Event Concept

Refining the concept is a short, focused iteration where evaluation findings are turned into small, actionable changes for the next event. We do this **within 72 hours**, while experiences are still fresh, with the presence of key team members, at least one partner, and, if possible, a participant representative. The goal is simple: what do we keep, what do we change immediately, and who is responsible. The operational introduction of changes (deadlines, tasks) is then entered into the timeline and RACI table, without repeating it in this chapter.

Worksheet (example): AAR – 45 minutes (After Action Review)

Guiding Question	Key Insight (1–2 sentences)	Evidence (number/example)	Decided Change (yes/no)	Note
1) What was our goal and to what extent was it achieved (for whom)?				
2) What went well (what to keep)?				
3) What did not go well (what to stop or improve)?				
4) What surprised us (risks/ opportunities we did not anticipate)?				
5) Which 3 changes do we introduce immediately (responsible person + deadline)?				

Mini-Backlog of Improvements (turning decisions into actions)

Change (concrete)	Why (insight from AAR/ survey)	Steps (short)	Responsible Person	Deadline	Status
					☐ / ☒
					☐ / ☒
					☐ / ☒

How to use: Fill in the AAR during a short meeting (45–60 minutes), then copy each “decided change” into the Mini-Backlog with clearly assigned responsibility and deadline. Avoid “big reforms”; the focus is on the 3 strongest changes that most quickly improve participant experience. Afterwards, changes are entered into the Run of Show and RACI for the next event.

Examples of Inclusive Sports Events

To conclude this manual, we present six inclusive sports events organized by partner organizations between May and July 2025. Each example illustrates how the principles from the handbook were “translated” into practice: who led the initiative, which community partners were involved, who the program was designed for, how the activities unfolded, and what was measurably achieved – along with one participant’s voice and the most relevant media coverage. Together, these provide readable “mini case studies” that can be easily adapted to different contexts.

Ball Across the Bridge – Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina (31/05–01/06/2025)

The event brought together girls and boys (12–14 years old) from different sides of Mostar to build bridges of trust through play and football in a city still marked by division. On the first day, fair-play workshops were held at four city locations; on the second day, a non-competitive tournament was organized, with equal participation from all. A total of 27 children took part (55% girls; 14% from vulnerable groups). The focus was on safety, joint goal celebrations, and equal opportunities. The organizer recorded positive feedback and new friendships among peers.

Facts in 20 Seconds

Lead organization	Igrajmo Zajedno Inicijativa
Community partners/resources	ŽF/NK Emina Mostar; SA Mali Most
Target group	Girls and boys aged 12–14 from Mostar
Participants	27 total • 55% girls • 14% from vulnerable groups
Program (summary)	4 fair-play stations (Dompes, Musala, Old Bridge, Zrinjevac) + non-competitive tournament
Media	Večernji list BiH; Bljesak.info; Hercegovina.info
Evaluation (summary)	Positive experience, new friendships; recommendation: stronger cooperation with schools

“Usually when we play with boys, they don’t notice us, but today we were all the same.” – event participant.



Zagreb Fusion – Zagreb, Croatia (07/06/2025)

A one-day program at the football pitch in Jakuševac gathered children aged 6 to 14 from the football club Zagreb 041 and children under international protection/asylum seekers, with the goal of empowering them for regular participation in sports and connecting peers. The program went through the following phases: introduction and teamwork at stations, introduction to football and fairplay, preparation, and a mini-tournament, followed by a closing ceremony. 21 children participated (24% girls; 43% from vulnerable groups), and participants expressed high satisfaction and a sense of inclusion.

Facts in 20 Seconds

Lead organization	NK Zagreb 041
Community partners/resources	Are You Syrious (AYS); NK Savica CC; Centre for Peace Studies (CPS)
Target group	Asylum seekers and children under international protection
Participants	21 • 24% girls • 43% vulnerable groups
Program (summary)	Phased program (introduction → teamwork → introduction to football → preparation → tournament)
Evaluation (summary)	Participants “very satisfied”; emphasized the effort of coaches/volunteers
Media	CPS; NK Zagreb 041 news; FB & IG posts

“Today was so cool. This is the first medal I ever received.” – event participant.



Sportfest – Vienna, Austria (17/05/2025)

An open multi-sports day was led by Login & fairplay, with the support of the City of Vienna, partner clubs, and civil society organizations. The event gathered around 300 participants (40% girls; 80% from vulnerable groups). The program included men’s and women’s football tournaments, mixed volleyball, Catch’n’Serve demo, karate session, kids’ corner, as well as a fairplay corner with an info point. Mixed teams and positive participant experiences were recorded.

Facts in 20 Seconds

Lead organization	Login & fairplay Initiative
Community partners/resources	City of Vienna; Catch’n Serve Austria; clubs (Kicken ohne Grenzen, Streetfootball Wien, Union Latina), + other civil society organizations
Target group	Socially vulnerable people, migrants, women and children
Participants	300 • 40% girls • 80% vulnerable groups
Program (summary)	Multi-sport format + info/fair-play corner
Media	IG posts (2)

“It didn’t matter who scored a goal – we cheered for everyone... Winning wasn’t the goal.” – from participants feedback.



Inclusion & Equality Through Football: AC Milan Junior Camp – Prishtina, Kosovo (09-13/07/2025)

KFV Prishtina and AC Milan Academy implemented an inclusive football camp with over 200 children (ages 6 to 17), with mixed teams and guided discussions on empathy, gender equality, and fair play. Additionally, Erasmus+ multipliers were engaged in the role of young leaders. About 15% were girls and 20% were children from vulnerable groups; evaluation using cards (green/yellow/red) showed 92% “green.”

Facts in 20 Seconds

Lead organization	KFV Prishtina (with technical partnership of AC Milan Academy)
Community partners/resources	City of Pristina; schools and local civil society organizations
Target group	Girls and boys aged 6–17 from all communities
Participants	200+ • 15% girls • 20% vulnerable groups
Program (summary)	Icebreakers; mixed matches; stories by female players; “Inclusion Champions” ceremony
Media	AC Milan announcement; TV/portals; video
Evaluation (summary)	Cards: green 92% / yellow 6% / red 2%

“The camp became a living example of inclusive top-level sport... Boys and girls trained side by side, with respect and joy.” – from the report.



Sport festival – Bujanovac, Serbia (26/05/2025)

NGO Atina gathered over 100 children from Serbian, Albanian, Roma, refugee, and migrant communities at the football field of FK BSK Bujanovac, with five thematic stations combining play and social learning (tolerance, teamwork, fair play, communication, empathy). 55 boys and 44 girls participated, along with 20 volunteers and coaches; participation included 44.44% girls and 22.22% children from vulnerable groups. The format generated free communication and support among children of different backgrounds, but also pointed out the need for longer-term work in a divided environment.

Facts in 20 Seconds

Lead organization	NGO Atina
Community partners/resources	FK Meraki Niš; ŽFK Dinamo Vranje; Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia; Elementary School “Branko Radičević”; Elementary School “Naim Frashëri”; FK BSK Bujanovac
Target group	Serbs, Albanians, Roma, refugees and migrants; girls and boys
Participants	55 boys + 44 girls; 20 volunteers/coaches; 44.44% girls; 22.22% from vulnerable groups
Program (summary)	5 stations: blindfold game with focus on equality; relay race (inclusion); “curling” with balls (fair play); tic-tac-toe (communication); penalty kicks with “spin” (empathy)
Media	Bujanovačke; NGO Atina news

“During the day, children played in mixed teams, communicated and cheered for each other – clear proof that inclusive sport breaks barriers.” – from the report



Žabljak plays: All to the North – Žabljak, Montenegro (26/07/2025)

A one-day inclusive sports event on the football field in Žabljak gathered about 40 girls and boys (aged 6 to 13) from northern towns of Montenegro, in mixed teams and with five stations that combined football, creativity, and “get to know each other” games. The goal was to connect children of different backgrounds through fair play, cooperation, and team spirit; according to the organizer’s report, the goal was achieved – children actively participated and stayed with smiles and positive energy.

Facts in 20 Seconds

Lead organization	YIHR Montenegro
Community partners/resources	Municipality of Žabljak; FK “Borac” Bijelo Polje
Target group	Girls and boys from northern towns of Montenegro (ages 6–13)
Participants	About 40 children + 4 volunteers/coaches • 40% girls
Program (summary)	5 stations: mini-football (quick shots and ball control), painting/creativity, “get to know me” game (communication), refreshment corner, technical skills and teamwork; mixed teams
Media	Instagram posts YIHR Montenegro
Evaluation (summary)	Participants very satisfied; active participation and positive atmosphere

“Every step counts – even a smaller event can create understanding, break barriers, and spark positive change in the community.” – event organizers.



Photography

Photo 1 - Josip Miličević, NK Zagreb 041

Photo 2 - Zorana Parezanović, CSO ATINA

Photos 3 - 6, 9 - Selma Memović, IZI

Photos 7- 8 - Mirna Hrapović, IZI

Photo 10 - Valentino Munić, NK Zagreb 041

Photo 11 - LOGIN - Verein zur Gesundheitsförderung und sozialen Integration

Photo 12 - Egzon Dili

Photo 13 - Dragan Spasov

Photo 14 - Ivana Čadenović

CIP - Каталогизacija y публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

796.07:37(035)
37.015.3:792(035)
316.61(035)

РАДОВИЋ, Tea, 1995-

Različiti dresovi, ista ekipa : priručnik za organizovanje inkluzivnih sportskih događaja / [autorke Tea Radović, Zorana Parezanović]. - Beograd : Udruženje građana za borbu protiv trgovine ljudima i svih oblika nasilja nad ženama - "Atina", 2025 (Beograd : Alta Nova). - 32, 32 str. : graf. prikazi, tabele ; 24 cm

Kor. nasl. - Nasl. str. prištampanog teksta: Different jerseys, same team : a manual for organizing inclusive sports events/ [authors Tea Radović, Zorana Parezanović]. - Oba teksta štampana u međusobno obrnutim smerovima. - Podaci o autorkama preuzeti iz kolofona. - Tiraž 100. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz tekst.

ISBN 978-86-82960-02-7

1. Парезановић, Зорана, 1993- [аутор]
а) Спорт -- Васпитна улога -- Приручници
б) Социјална интеракција -- Приручници

COBISS.SR-ID 176404489