

## Part II TRUST Ireland, UNESCO Chair

1. TRUST Ireland aims to socialise sport, human rights, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among government, the sports sector, and rightsholders in Ireland. Funded by IHREC - the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, TRUST Ireland is a partnership of the UNESCO Chair Munster Technological University, the Federation of Irish Sport, Sport Against Racism Ireland, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Central Statistics Office, and Sport Ireland with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission as an advisory partner. We wish to create a society in which everyone is included and has the opportunity to participate in physical education, sport, fitness, and recreation regardless of who they are, as we know that these activities have the potential to trigger social change while empowering people with flourishing health and well-being.
2. Throughout the TRUST project, reference is made to “human rights in and through sport”. This term encapsulates three linked concepts. Firstly, everyone has the right to participate in sport. In Ireland, this right is recognised and protected through EU human rights law and the UN human rights conventions which the Irish state has ratified. Indeed, recent research in Ireland has found that Irish children consider the right to sport and play to be one of their most important human rights.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, while sport can be a source of good and an implementer of human rights, there is also the potential for human rights abuses in sport. Therefore, rights need to be protected in sport. Finally, sport also has the potential to contribute to other human rights such as health, employment, non-discrimination, and education. These are human rights through sport.
3. TRUST Ireland adopted the Kazan Action Plan definition of sport: “The term “sport” is used as a generic term, comprising sport for all, physical play, recreation, dance, organised, casual, competitive, traditional, and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout the research on inclusion in this broad scope of sport, TRUST Ireland has a comprehensive understanding of inclusion which goes beyond just getting participants onto the playing ground or into the gym to take part in an activity. Inclusion can be defined as ‘A process that helps to overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of all children, youth, and adults.’<sup>3</sup> Sport should reflect universality and inclusivity through the inclusion of people who experience barriers, exclusion, marginalisation or are underserved. The Equal Status Act<sup>4</sup> covers the following nine protected categories - gender, marital

---

<sup>1</sup> Government of Ireland (2022) What We Think: Consultation with Children and Young People on Children’s Rights 2021 UNCRC, UNCRPD and UPR

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO (2017) Kazan Action Plan

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. 2017. A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002482/248254e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ihrec.ie/guides-and-tools/human-rights-and-equality-in-the-provision-of-good-and-services/what-does-the-law-say/equal-status->

status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. Many people experience intersectional discrimination on the basis of multiple identities, or are represented outside the protected categories such as those from lower socio-economic groups or in receipt international protection in the state. Inclusion in TRUST Ireland looked across the board at participation in sporting activities, inclusion in the social activities around sport, coaching and training, leadership positions, co-design of training materials that drew from lived experiences, employment in sport and access to stadia and facilities. This fuller understanding of inclusion of sport has the potential to have greater knock-on effects for inclusion across Irish society, with greater engagement and visibility with and of members of marginalised groups.

4. In order to start creating the conditions necessary to see this inclusion in sport in Ireland, a series of workshops were held with stakeholders in December 2021 with supplementary information gathered in Spring 2022. A series of rightsholder workshops were held with groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in Irish sport including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; Travellers; the LGBTI+ community; women and girls; people with disabilities; and people with intellectual disabilities. These workshops provided a forum for discussing specific barriers and facilitators they have faced in accessing sport in Ireland. Following this, workshops with Local Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies allowed for discussion of work to date on human rights and EDI (Equality Diversity and Inclusion) in sport and reaction to issues raised by rightsholders. A summary of findings was presented to the Sports Leadership Group, chaired by Minister Chambers in June 2022. A draft report was presented to stakeholders including rightsholder representatives, IHREC, and representatives from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media in December 2022. This report is now being finalised for public launch. A summary of the rightsholder views in relation to the groups identified by the Oireachtas Committee are outlined at the end of this document.
5. Since 2015 and the adoption of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals with their underpinning human rights agenda, there has been widescale recognition of the need for transformation in sport at all levels, especially as it relates to the inclusion of underserved and marginalised populations. Most early efforts in inclusive sport in Ireland focused on the area of disability as stimulated by the 2003 Special Olympics World Games and the 2005 National Disability Authority report<sup>5</sup>. This triggered investment, legislative and policy change in disability inclusion in sport. Many of the recommendations of the 2005 NDA report reflect the outcomes of the TRUST

---

[acts/#:~:text=The%20Equal%20Status%20Acts%202000,membership%20of%20the%20Traveller%20community.](#)

<sup>5</sup> National Disability Authority (2005) <https://nda.ie/publications/promoting-the-participation-of-people-with-disabilities-in-physical-activity-and-sport-in-ireland>

Ireland workshops across varied stakeholders involved. This points to an urgency for transformative system-level change as called for by Agenda 2030 in addressing the underlying problems creating exclusion and discrimination in and through sport in Ireland. For measures to address inclusion to deliver these transformative outcomes, the process adopted to shift the dial (see annex 1) requires deeper understanding of and responsive solutions to the actual underlying needs and interests of each target group.

6. In line with this need TRUST Ireland recommend the following:

- A) Align the definition of sport embraced in the national sport strategy and Irish Sports Council Act with governance, structures and funding, and the expressed need of the entire population. This may involve diversifying the current pivoting of sport predominately orientated around NGBs to policy-oriented priorities reflecting the expansive definition of sport. This approach may deliver the bold and transformative change called for in Agenda 2030 and across the global sport sector.
- B) Expand the understanding of what inclusion in sport looks like and requires. Inclusion means having people from marginalised groups participating in playing sports themselves but also included in leadership structures, and as officials, coaches, players, and spectators/audiences (e.g. Access Earth<sup>6</sup>). Inclusion of all groups needs to be mainstreamed as an approach in Irish sport.
- C) Prioritise #FurthestBehindFirst in all sports related planning, including the National Sports Policy, its action plans, and all other policy areas that use sport from now to 2030. Ensure rights-based and outcomes-driven approaches to sport provision at all levels in line with Public Sector Duty and Equality legislation.
- D) Prioritise retrofitting existing structures to establish participatory approaches to cross-sector sports policy and planning at all levels and functions of sport. Ensure broad representation of underserved groups (consider quota systems) and diversify stakeholders involved in the process to reflect the diverse impact of sport across the SDGs.
- E) Prioritise capacity building and workforce development and call on the Department of Further and Higher Education and education and training providers to deliver a skilled workforce for equality and social outcome-based approaches to sport delivery.
- F) Increase engagement with volunteers on understanding of the priorities of inclusion and participation in sport in Ireland, in recognition of the significance of the contribution of volunteers to sport in Ireland. Consider mechanisms (e.g. codes of practice, regional/ local trainings in partnerships with LSPs/ NGBs/ HEIs) to support volunteers to fulfil expectations of inclusion in sport in Ireland.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.accessearth.com/>

- G) Expand cross-sectoral funding access and allocations (beyond capital and equipment emphasis) to support the elimination of barriers for marginalised and underserved groups. Examine social outcomes contracts to access capital, accelerate action, and grow necessary capacity in the sector to deliver broader grassroots opportunities to diverse stakeholder groups.
- H) Invest in a public awareness and education campaign on the TRUST Ireland strapline “Sport As It Should Be Fun Fair Clean, Safe and Accessible to All” to increase public awareness on the value and role of sport in society.
- I) Invest in robust, outcome oriented disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policymaking, advocacy, and impact assessment across the multiple policies in Ireland that focus on or use sport, physical activity, health, education, and inclusion of specific groups. This will help orient sports investments as an enabler of sustainable development. Convergence with cross-cutting data developments on SDGs, Well-being Index and Equality should be examined.
7. These recommendations are informed by the main concerns of rightsholder groups identified during TRUST Ireland workshops regarding the issues they face in accessing sport in Ireland and the changes needed from the sport sector and the State. Issues spanned the following themes: governance, finances, environment, education, attitudes, and programmes. Within the TRUST Ireland report, these issues are presented as they relate to each rightsholder group, followed by overarching recommendations for the state and sport sector presented thematically. The following paragraphs highlight information from the report on each of the requested topics.
8. **Sport and women:** Women and girls participate in sport and physical activity at significantly lower rates than men and boys. Boys are more likely to meet recommended physical activity levels compared to girls. In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to increase participation in sport by women and girls in Ireland.<sup>7</sup> However, recent research has shown that the participant gradient between men and women in sport is in fact widening with 48% of men reporting taking part in sport while 38% of women reported taking part in sport in Q3 of 2021.<sup>8</sup> TRUST Ireland found the following were the primary barriers to participation for women and girls:
- Strong focus on competition at the expense of fun and social aspects of team activities.

---

<sup>7</sup> Woods CB, Powell C, Saunders JA, O’Brien W, Murphy MH, Duff C, Farmer O, Johnston A., Connolly S., and Belton S. (2018). *The Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2018 (CSPPA 2018)*. Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland, Sport Ireland, and Healthy Ireland, Dublin, Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

<sup>8</sup> Federation of Irish Sport (2021) *2021 Irish Sports Monitor Interim Report Q3 shows participation in sport now nearing pre-pandemic levels* <https://www.irishsport.ie/2021-irish-sports-monitor-interim-report-q3-shows-participation-in-sport-now-nearing-pre-pandemic-levels/>

- Safety concerns with regards to travelling to and from trainings or in undertaking outdoor exercise, especially in dark winter evenings.
- The lack of female coaches, instructors, and leaders in sport relative to the general population.
- Prioritisation of male and men's team access to facilities at prime times.
- Exclusion in mixed settings with male participants refusing to engage with women and girls on teams or in activities.
- Harassment and sexist language
- Time constraints due to disproportionate caring and domestic work undertaken by women.

To include women and girls the sport sector needs to seriously consider why women are not participating and consider the actual priorities of women and girls rather than focus just on getting women and girls into existing structures. Investment in women coaches, trainers and leaders is needed. The work and dedication of women in clubs outside of official roles and duties should be acknowledged and rewarded. At least equal consideration should be given to female teams needs when allocating facilities and training times. Women and girls' safety considerations regarding travelling to facilities should be taken into consideration when allocating time slots, in tandem to a focus on creating safe environments for women and girls. Zero tolerance policies on sexist language and harassment should be adopted. When considering women and girls in sport a gender conscious rather than gender neutral approach to policy, planning and funding in sport and physical education in order to redress existing gender imbalances.

9. **Sport and disability:** In Ireland, 13.5% or 1 in 7 people have a disability.<sup>9</sup> The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 committed to “foster disability awareness and competence in voluntary, sporting, cultural and other organisations”.<sup>10</sup> However, people with disabilities in Ireland are much more likely to be sedentary and less likely to participate in sports than those without disabilities. The below issues were raised as primary barriers for people with disabilities accessing sport:

- Lack of understanding of the spectrum covered by disability and the individual experience of disability.

---

<sup>9</sup> National Disability Authority (2018) *NDA Factsheet 1: Disability Statistics*  
<https://www.nda.ie/resources/factsheets/nda-factsheet-1-disability-statistics-briefing-information.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Department of Justice and Equality (2017) *National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021*  
<https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-strategy-booklet.pdf/Files/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-strategy-booklet.pdf> pg. 34-35

- The lived experience of those with disability is not considered in programme design.
- Where sport is used as part of a treatment this often does not move beyond the therapy aspect to a continuous involvement in the sport at a community level.
- People with disabilities are not visibly involved in all areas of sport, from player, to coaches, people in administrative roles etc.
- Social and spectator accessibility is not prioritised.
- Opportunities and supports for employment of people with disabilities are lacking.

To increase inclusion of people with disabilities, sport clubs and organisation need to be strongly encouraged to avail of existing educational resources. NGBs should have an inclusion officer to provide support to individuals who wish to engage with the sport. Systems should be put in place to facilitate the training and qualifications of people with disabilities as coaches and sports professionals. A disability-focused equivalent to the 20x20 campaign that promoted visibility of women and girls in sport should be considered to encourage the visibility and participation of people with disabilities in sport at all levels. Participants also stressed the need for full implementation of the CRPD. The delay in ratifying has meant that Ireland lags behind European partners in full implementation and integration of the Convention into national policies.

10. In Ireland, there are about 66,000 people with an intellectual disability.<sup>11</sup> On the advice of a rightsholder advocate with an intellectual disability, a second workshop for people with intellectual disabilities, distinct from the session for people with disabilities, was held. This recognised that people with intellectual disabilities can face specific discriminations and have specific inclusion needs. Participants with intellectual disabilities identified the following difficulties in accessing sport:

- A lack of understanding and fear from the sport sector meant despite good intentions many would prefer to do nothing rather than do inclusion “wrong”.
- People with intellectual disabilities regularly felt underestimated and patronised by the sport sector.
- There are a number of positive initiatives for children with intellectual disabilities. However, there is a sharp drop off in provision for adults.
- Over-reliance on volunteerism.
- Lack of understanding of access needs as they relate to intellectual disability.

---

<sup>11</sup> Central Statistics Office (2016) *Census of Population 2016 – Profile 9 Health, Disability and Carers* <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/p9tod/#:~:text=In%20Census%202016%2C%2066%2C611%20persons,a%2015.4%20per%20cent%20increase>  
REF: JCM-I-1229 TRUST Ireland

- Ignorance or discrimination when participating in social aspects of sport.

The sport sector needs to engage in co-production of activities and initiatives with people with intellectual disabilities to ensure genuine accessibility and relevance to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. A community of practice for inter-sport exchange for sharing good practice between sports could also be developed. Guidance is needed on language to avoid outdated and offensive terminology. A glossary could be provided on the website of Sport Ireland or the Federation of Irish Sport and shared with media. Greater consideration should be given to what funding for accessibility means beyond capital funding for physical changes to broader accessibility requirements such as the production of easy read materials and having a dedicated LSP staff to support people with intellectual disabilities. Support is needed to retain volunteer numbers through linking with initiatives such as the Gaisce Award or the integration of volunteering into placements for students. The expertise of people with intellectual disabilities on their lived experience should be utilised in developing training materials for the sector. Support for training programmes and apprenticeship models preparing people with intellectual disabilities to take up employment within the sport sector are needed.

**11. Sport and LGBTQIA+ communities:** The National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021 makes several references to the inclusion and promotion of the LGBTI+ community in sport in Ireland, including a dedicated commitment in the Action Plan to “Implement [Action 6 of] the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 in a manner that is inclusive of LGBTI+ people.”<sup>12</sup> The TRUST workshops identified the following issues regarding inclusion:

- Homophobic and transphobic hate speech remains a prevalent problem.
- Poor diversity at governance level.
- Poor understanding of the nuances of the LGBTI+ acronym and the different groups and different needs included.
- Non-engagement with LGBTI+ organisations at policy level.
- Pressure to always integrate into existing clubs and spaces, with poor recognition of the important role that LGBTI+ clubs play in creating a safe space and entry point into the gay community.
- While visibility of inclusion of LGBTI+ people in sport has increased in recent years, it still lags behind.
- Lack of national guidance on the inclusion of transgender athletes poses barriers to participation.

---

<sup>12</sup> Government of Ireland (2019) *National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021* [https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/LGBTI+Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_2019-2021.pdf/Files/LGBTI+Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_2019-2021.pdf](https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/LGBTI+Inclusion_Strategy_2019-2021.pdf/Files/LGBTI+Inclusion_Strategy_2019-2021.pdf)

NGBs should recognise the LGBTI+ clubs operating in their sport and accept them as members of the Body. LSPs and NGBs need to support LGBTI+ clubs to access training grounds and facilities. Consideration should be given to creating a national LGBTI+ inclusion in advisory sport body. Rights-based national guidance on the inclusion of transgender and non-binary people in sport should be developed, with training provided to NGBs and their members. More streamlined funding is needed for specific LGBTI+ inclusion. The State should engage with international scene of LGBTI+ sport, including the international Gay Games which is a chance for athletes to represent Ireland internationally.

**12. Sport and ethnic minorities.** TRUST Ireland held two sessions relevant to ethnic minorities; one for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, and one for Travellers. According to a 2019 report by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, Irish Travellers experience some of the worst discrimination of minority groups across Europe, with 65% of Travellers reporting having experienced discrimination.<sup>13</sup> In March 2023 there were 20,140 people living in direct provision and emergency international protection accommodation.<sup>14</sup> The following common issues were raised:

- Racism including overt racist language in sport settings and denial of access to use facilities or attend matches. These experiences can create an expectation of discrimination when accessing services which can lead to an avoid of approaching a sports club or facilities for fear of experiencing it again.
- Stereotyping whereby only certain sports were offered to ethnic minorities based on preconceptions of what members of these groups should participate in. L
- Living conditions in both direct provision and halting sites which generally are confined, lack play spaces and are located at a remove from urban centres and sports facilities.
- Lack of understanding from coaches and organisers of the impact of living conditions and in many cases potential trauma can have on punctuality and consistency.

Education to cover anti-racism concepts, non- discriminatory language, and the realities living conditions is needed at all levels in the sports sector. NGBs should all have an article on equity, equality, diversity, cultural integration, social inclusion, and non-discrimination using a rights-based framework in their constitutions. To tackle community anxieties regarding the assumption of discrimination, LSPs

---

<sup>13</sup> European Union Fundamental Rights Union (2019) *Travellers in Ireland—Key Results From the Roma and Travellers Survey 2019* [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-roma-and-travellers-survey-country-sheet-ireland\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-roma-and-travellers-survey-country-sheet-ireland_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Cianan Brennan (2023) *Almost two thirds of adults in direct provision with status to remain here are currently working*, Irish Examiner <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41095219.html#:~:text=A%20total%20of%2020%2C140%20people,various%20types%20of%20emergency%20accommodation.>



and NGBs should encourage local clubs to increase their own awareness of local groups and conduct outreach. Taking a rights-based approach which focuses on voluntary participation and choice can increase participation. Some sports may be particularly popular among specific ethnic groups, and these should be offered but it should not be presumed they are the only sport wanted.

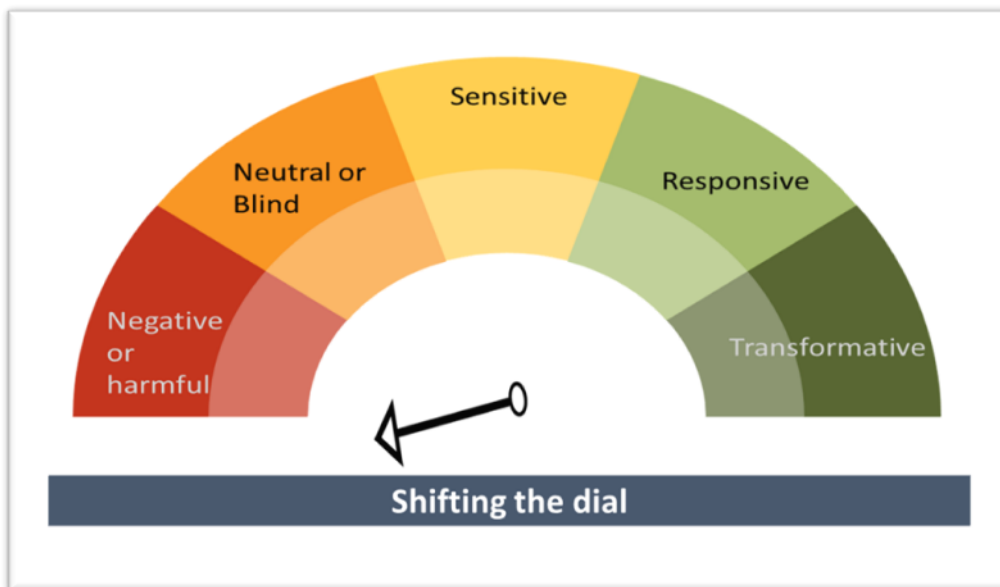
13. **Grassroots sport and socioeconomic diversity:** A specific workshop on socioeconomic diversity was not held. However, relevant issues were raised particularly by concerned NGBs. A central consideration during discussions with NGBs was how to make inclusion sustainable given the associated costs of participation within current funding structures. At present, much funding is dedicated to short term projects and capital grants. With most funding going towards projects which run over months. When there is no guarantee that the funding will be available to continue a programme beyond this, it is difficult to build genuine, long-term engagement in a sport. NGBs had conflicting feelings about bringing people in for a short-term initiative that may spark a genuine passion for the sport from participants, which will be cut off when the funding ends and participants cannot afford to continue. The ethics of starting people in a programme when they know they will not be able to support long term membership or engagement within current funding models was questioned. Longer term funding cycles which spread over years rather than months would help with this. Income related concerns were also raised by a number of rightsholders with affordability of club membership mentioned as an issue, especially where there are a few children in a family who all want to participate. The costs of equipment and gears were also a deterrent to trying new sports. It was stressed that if subsidised fees or equipment or second-hand equipment is being arranged for people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, this should be provided discreetly to avoid any stigma. However, there is also an opportunity in this regard to explore circular usage and sustainability. Initiatives that gather unused sports equipment and gear from clubs, community groups and individuals for redistribution can normalise sharing and second-hand materials while reducing waste.
14. **Sport and older people:** The TRUST project did not undertake any specific on inclusion in sport and older people. However, we recognise the importance of increasing participation of the group. Valuable work has been done in this regard by [Age & Opportunity](#), a national development organisation working to enable the best possible quality of life for people as they age. Age & Opportunity Active is their National Programme for Sport and Physical Activity for Older People. The programme is designed to get older more active and participating in recreational sport and physical activity. The programme initiatives include:

- PALs (Physical Activity Leaders) training – suitable for anyone interested in leading physical activity initiatives in their community;
- CarePALs training – for those working or volunteering in care settings to lead suitable physical activities with people in their care;
- FitLine – a telephone mentoring service that encourages participants to get more active.

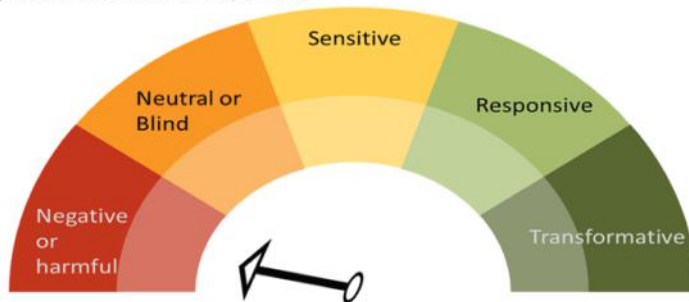
Age and Opportunity also run Go For Life Games, a national day of sport when teams from all over the country come together for one day in June to take part in a festival of physical activity and a celebration of sport.

15. **Intersectionality in sport.** With regards to intersectionality, the TRUST project carefully considered the best approach to the rightsholder workshops design. Acknowledging that everyone has multiple identities and that many people would identify as a member of more than one of our rightsholder groups, it was finally decided to hold the workshops on a single identity-basis so that issues specific to each group could be identified. Rightsholders were welcome to participate in more than one workshop. Questions on intersectional identities were also raised, such as women with disabilities. The TRUST research found many common themes across the rightsholder groups. In the full report the common recommendations are based on these intersecting themes. While there are specific needs for certain groups, overarching values of inclusion can be applied to all groups and settings. Intersectionality in sport inclusion is vital to truly reach everyone, especially the furthest behind first in line with Agenda 2030.

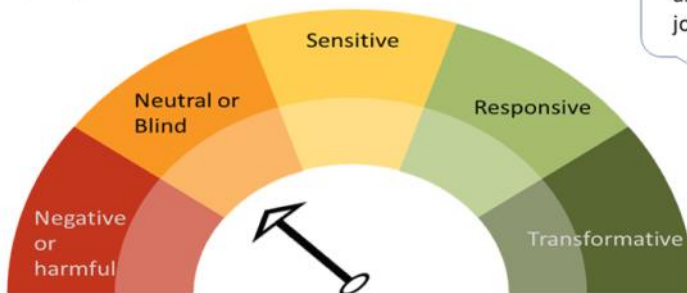
## Annex 1: Shifting the Dial



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

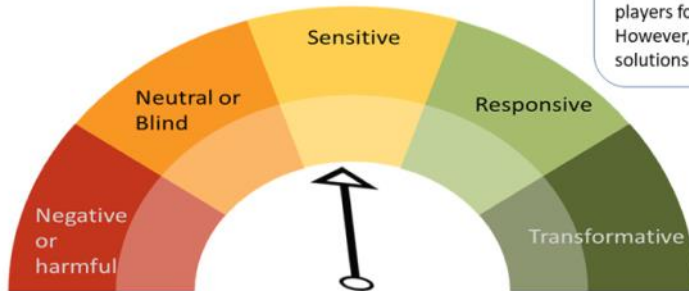


Policies and programmes that ignore discrimination altogether. Designed without analysis of the economic, social and cultural roles, rights, obligations and power relations. Understands "fair" as treating everyone the same.



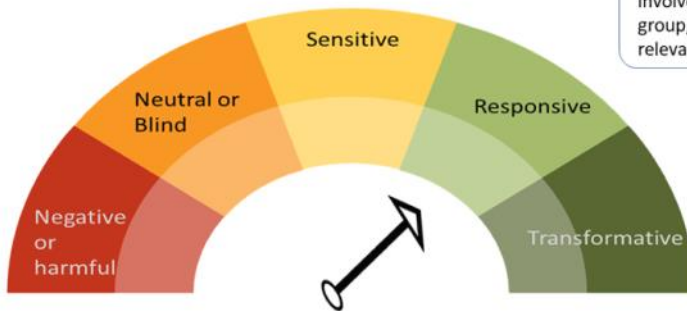
"We don't stop anybody from joining our club"

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



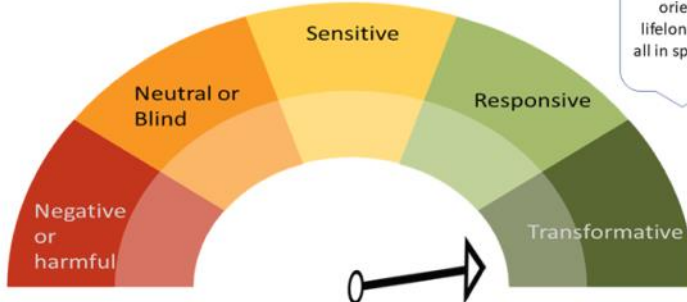
e.g. Coaches are aware of transportation difficulties for participants in direct provision centres and do not sanction players for being late to training. However, they also do not seek solutions to the transport issue.

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



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

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



The sport sector is orientated around lifelong participation of all in sport in its broadest sense

