



Research

Sport and Disability

2025

Created under the project F.E.I.B –
Fencing: Equity, Inclusion and Belonging



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1. SUMMARY

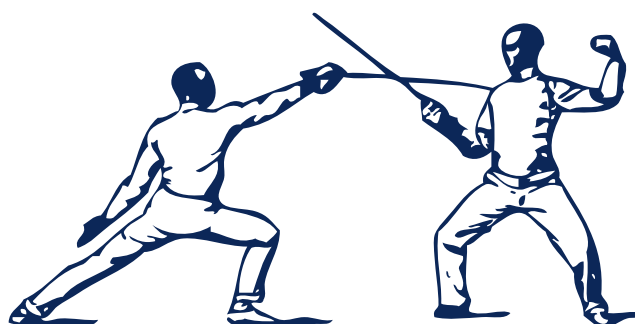
This report presents the results of a transnational research process carried out within the framework of the F.E.I.B. project – Fencing: Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. The project aims to foster inclusive sport practices for persons with disabilities (PwD), by understanding real barriers, motivations, and opportunities from three key perspectives: individuals with disabilities, organizations active in sport, and coaches working in inclusive or adaptive sport settings.

The study involved 270 respondents with disabilities, 73 sport organizations, and 61 coaches from five countries: Romania, Spain, Italy, France, and Ukraine. These actors shared their views through surveys tailored to their specific roles in the inclusive sport ecosystem.

Findings reveal a clear willingness to participate in or support inclusive sport. However, persistent challenges were identified: limited financial and human resources, inaccessible infrastructure, lack of trained coaches, logistical difficulties, and social stigma. Importantly, the data shows a gap between the perceived efforts of organizations and the lived experiences of people with disabilities, underlining the need for closer dialogue and more inclusive planning.

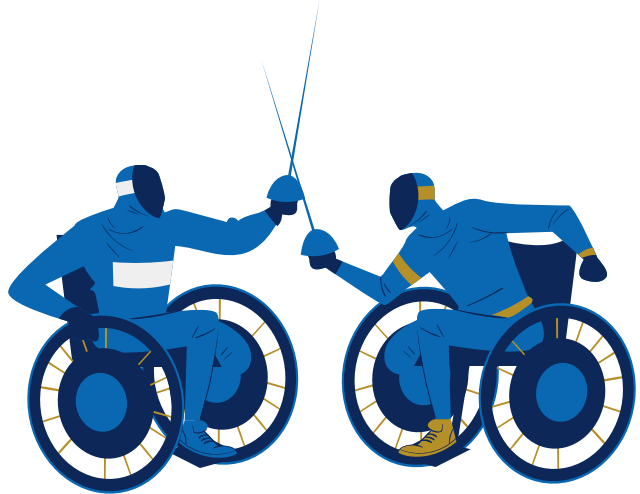
The information gathered serves as the foundation for the development of the V.A.P.E.P. methodology, which will be elaborated later in the project. This new framework will aim to train and empower coaches to provide better, more inclusive sport opportunities, grounded in the realities uncovered through this research.

The F.E.I.B. study highlights the urgent need for coordinated, practical solutions at both local and transnational levels. It calls for stronger partnerships between civil society, public institutions, and professionals in sport to ensure equity, inclusion, and belonging for all athletes.



2. INTRODUCTION

Sport is a powerful vehicle for inclusion, empowerment, and social transformation. For people with disabilities, participating in sport can enhance physical well-being, build confidence, and foster a sense of belonging. Yet, despite the clear benefits, access to inclusive sport remains uneven and limited. Many structural, cultural, and practical barriers prevent equal participation across Europe, particularly in grassroots contexts. It is in this space—where potential meets inequality—that the F.E.I.B. project (Fencing: Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) was born.



F.E.I.B. is a transnational initiative aiming to build more inclusive sport pathways for persons with disabilities. While fencing is the anchor sport for this project, the core mission extends beyond any single discipline. It focuses on identifying systemic challenges, highlighting good practices, and developing tailored methodologies that address the real needs of athletes, coaches, and organizations engaged in inclusive sport.

The project brings together five partner countries—Romania, Spain, Italy, France, and Ukraine—each contributing unique perspectives shaped by their national contexts. While some partners are embedded in well-established sport systems with adaptive programs in place, others are navigating new pathways for inclusion amidst infrastructural or policy limitations. This diversity enriches the research and strengthens the relevance of the findings across different socio-economic and institutional realities.

The present report corresponds to Work Package 2 (WP2) of the project: a comprehensive needs assessment designed to map the current state of inclusive sport and identify gaps in practice, knowledge, and policy. By collecting and analyzing responses from people with disabilities, sport organizations, and coaches, this research sets the foundation for the next phase of the project—the development of the V.A.P.E.P. methodology, a practical training and support tool aimed at equipping coaches with the skills and mindset to promote inclusive participation in sport.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The research carried out in Work Package 2 (WP2) aimed to explore the relationship between people with disabilities and sport, with a specific focus on fencing.

The Objectives of this WP are:

- Promoting greater awareness and understanding of disability and the importance of inclusion in sport, particularly fencing
- Improving knowledge about the state of the art on the inclusion of people with disabilities in sports activities.



The research was designed as a transnational study across five countries – Italy, France, Spain, Romania, and Ukraine – and served as the evidence base for developing the V.A.P.E.P. methodology: an inclusive sport model promoting equity, participation, and integration.

3.1. Research Objectives

The research pursued three core goals related to the WP2 objectives:

- 1.To map existing sports organisations offering activities for people with disabilities across the five countries.
- 2.To understand the experiences and perceptions of people with disabilities regarding participation in sport.
- 3.To collect perspectives from coaches and sports professionals on inclusion practices, challenges, and opportunities.

The data collected was intended not only to describe the current landscape but also to inform the practical design of training tools, awareness-raising materials, and inclusive fencing programmes.

3.2. Research Design

The research approach combined both quantitative and qualitative methods, targeting three key groups: people with disabilities, sports organisations, and coaches.

Data collection was built around three complementary components.



First, a desk research phase was conducted in each partner country to map inclusive sport programmes, key actors, and national frameworks.

Second, customised surveys were distributed across Romania, Spain, Italy, France, and Ukraine. These surveys helped identify motivations, barriers, and needs from both institutional and personal perspectives, offering a broad view of how inclusion is practiced in grassroots sport. The surveys were developed by the partners, coordinated by the WP leader, and were first validated internally, then translated and distributed to each partner's network of stakeholders.

Each partner undertook to disseminate them and encourage their completion in their member state. The complete text of the surveys, in English and the various languages of the partners, is available in the attachment (please note that Italy and Romania have decided not to translate the questionnaires but to use the English version directly).

The **third** component, initially planned to run in parallel, involves focus groups with athletes with disabilities. Following internal discussions, the decision was made to carry out these focus groups after the main survey analysis. This allows the findings to be used as a starting point, with the focus groups offering deeper validation and country-balanced insights. Their input will be directly integrated into developing the V.A.P.E.P. methodology, strengthening its practical relevance and cross-national applicability. This sequential and transnational design ensures that the results are grounded in both broad trends and lived realities.

3.3. Target Groups and Tools

The research initially targeted three main groups, of which 2 were originally planned in the project and one was added by decision of the partners:

- **Sports Organisations:** to assess current practices, barriers, and inclusion strategies. Target: at least 100 sports organisations.
- **People with Disabilities:** to understand motivations, accessibility issues, and participation experiences. Target: at least 200 disabled people.
- **Coaches:** from the initial stages of the project, the consortium decided to design a specific questionnaire for coaches who can enrich the data provided by organizations with their perspective. They are, in fact, “spokespersons” for the organizations themselves, but at the same time they are also able to express the added value of their professional expertise. It focused specifically on the level of training received by coaches, the duration and quality of such training, and the challenges they encountered when working with athletes with disabilities. This helped enrich the overall analysis and contributed valuable input for shaping the V.A.P.E.P. methodology.

This multi-layered approach aimed to refine the understanding of inclusive sports ecosystems by capturing perspectives from all key stakeholders.

Final target groups:

- Sports Organisations
- Coaches, Trainers, and Fencing Masters
- People with Disabilities
- Disabled Athletes in Focus Groups

The research tools included:

- Three multilingual survey forms (organizations, coaches, people with disabilities) are attached.
- Models for national mapping and partner reporting: During online meetings, the partners established the criteria for the associations to be involved. These criteria were: associations active at the local, regional, or national level that had carried out at least one project/experience related to disability or associated with a Paralympic Sports Promotion Body. Online tools were used to collect responses and for partner reporting.

The focus group discussion guide, intended as a project tool for this qualitative survey phase, is currently being finalized as the partners have decided to move the focus groups after the analysis of the questionnaires.

3.4. Language and Distribution

To ensure accessibility and increase response rates, surveys were made available in English and in the national language of each partner.

All surveys were distributed through direct contact, mailing lists, federations, local clubs, and partner networks from March 2025 until June 6, 2025. In some cases, NGOs and disability support organisations also assisted with outreach.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Each survey included a data protection statement and informed consent section. No personal identifying information was collected, and participants could withdraw at any time. For focus groups, oral or written consent was obtained in accordance with local legislation and ethical standards.

3.6. Response Summary

The final dataset includes over 73 sports organisations, 64 coaches, and 270 individuals with disabilities.

The target number of questionnaires for people with disabilities (200) has been reached and far exceeded, while the target for questionnaires for associations has not yet been fully achieved (73 out of 100). This was probably because spring is the busiest season for the clubs and associations, which are involved in various institutional activities and competitions at various levels (local, national, and international). Considering the summer break for most clubs and the difficulty in obtaining further responses, the partners during the monthly meeting on the 6th of June unanimously decided not to extend the collection period but to proceed instead by integrating the 64 responses obtained from clubs/organizations with those obtained from the questionnaires for coaches. Given the October 2025 conference for the presentation of the V.A.P.E.P. research and methodology, it will then be possible to continue collecting responses from clubs to expand the quantitative analysis database, together with the qualitative analysis that will emerge from the focus groups.

These contributions provide a strong foundation for comparative insight, and the feedback from coaches enriches the research by highlighting the real-world implementation of inclusive sport.

4. PARTNERS' FINDINGS

This chapter presents the main findings from the survey conducted among people with disabilities, sports organisations and trainers-Coaches, in the five partner countries of the F.E.I.B. project (Italy, Romania, Spain, France, and Ukraine).

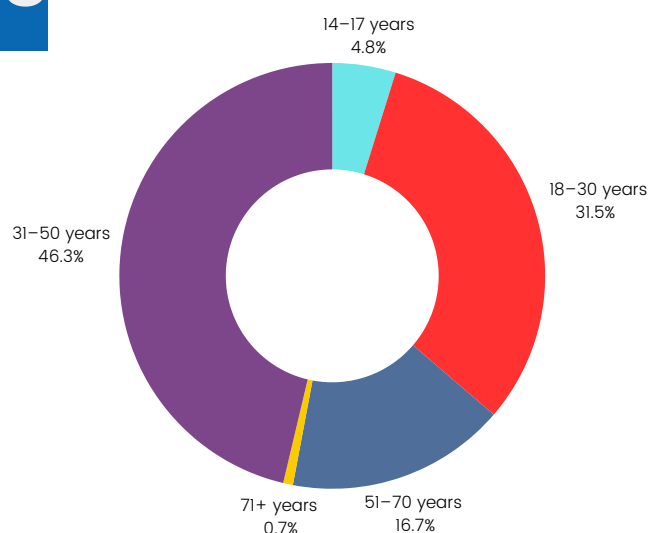
The results are aggregated across countries to provide a general overview, with national highlights mentioned only when relevant to underline cultural or systemic differences.

4.1. PwD Perspective

This section presents insights gathered from people with disabilities (PwD) across the five partner countries, focusing on their experiences, motivations, and expectations regarding sport. The aim was to better understand what drives their participation, what barriers they encounter, and what support they need to remain active. These findings provide a valuable foundation for shaping inclusive sports practices and ensuring that future interventions, including the V.A.P.E.P. methodology, are grounded in the real needs of the individuals they are meant to serve.

4.1.1 Demographics

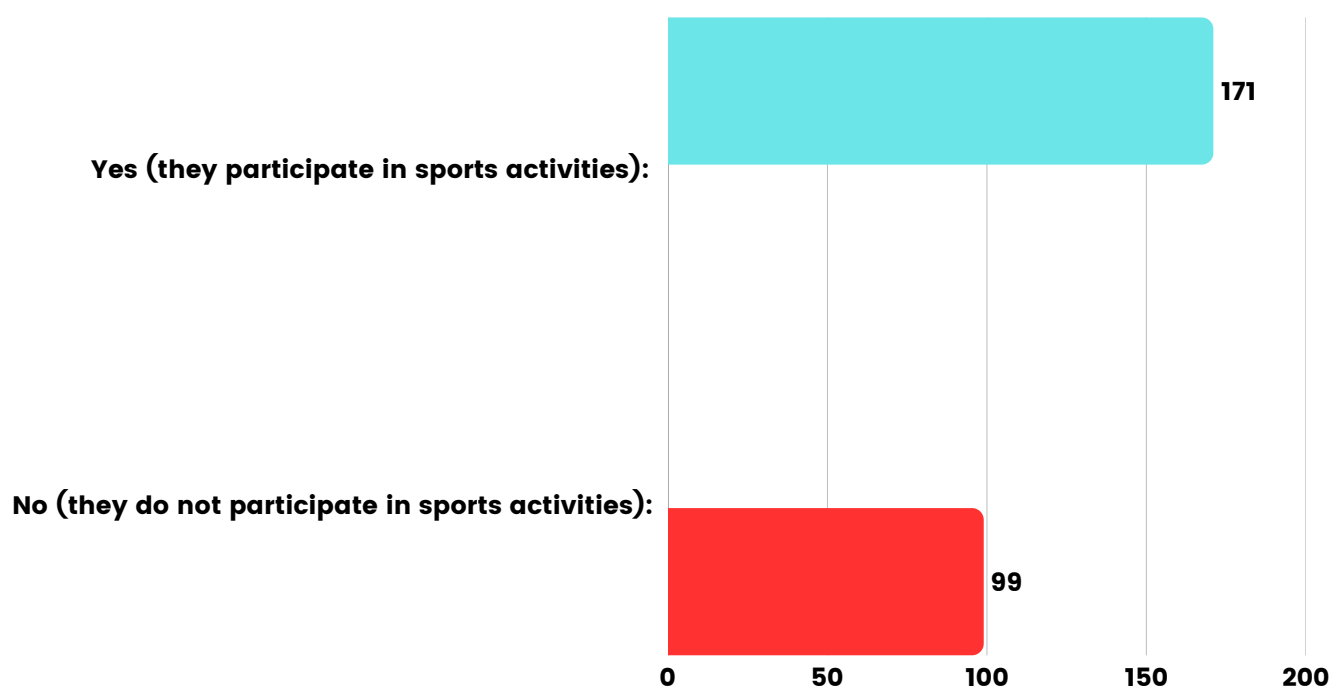
A total of 270 responses were collected from individuals with disabilities across the five partner countries (Italy, France, Spain, Romania, and Ukraine). The analysis begins by examining the age distribution and gender composition of the respondents, which provides valuable context for interpreting the attitudes and experiences described in the later sections.



This distribution shows that nearly half of respondents (46.3%) are adults aged 31-50, followed by a significant share of young adults between 18-30 years old (31.5%). Smaller proportions were recorded for older adults (51-70 years: 16.7%) and youth under 18 (4.8%), with very few respondents over 70 (0.7%). This makes the dataset especially relevant for shaping inclusive sports strategies aimed at active and working-age adults, while also capturing the voices of younger participants entering the sport environment.

4.1.2 Participation in Sport

The data shows that a clear majority (63%) of respondents stated they do participate in sports activities, while 37% reported that they do not. This result is encouraging, suggesting a significant level of engagement of people with disabilities in sports within the surveyed countries.



However, the 37% non-participation rate also reveals that more than a third of the respondents are still not involved in sports activities, indicating the existence of barriers such as lack of accessibility, insufficient infrastructure, low motivation, or limited opportunities. These barriers will be further explored in the following sections.

The diversity of languages in the survey (including Romanian, Italian, French, Spanish, and Ukrainian) required careful translation and interpretation, but the results reflect a coherent transnational overview of sport participation among people with disabilities in the partner countries.

4.1.3 Frequency of Sports Activity

Respondents were asked how often they participate in sport or physical activity. A total of 104 individuals provided clear and structured answers such as “daily,” “twice a week,” or “once a week.” Among them, the most common response was “twice a week” (45 responses), followed by “daily” (28 responses) and “once a week” (19 responses). Fewer respondents selected less frequent options such as “once a month” or “rarely.”

However, 166 other respondents either left the question blank, gave unclear answers, or responded in free text that could not be categorized directly into frequency brackets. This limits the ability to generate a full participation rate across all 270 individuals but still allows us to identify a strong trend among those who answered precisely.

The available data suggests that many people with disabilities do engage in sport regularly when opportunities are accessible, and that consistent weekly routines (once or twice a week) are common. This reinforces the importance of sustaining accessible, reliable programmes that support continuity of participation.

4.1.4 Sports Practiced by PwD

As part of the quantitative survey, participants with disabilities were asked which sport(s) they currently practice. The question was open-ended, allowing respondents to name any type of sport without being limited to predefined options. This approach offered a clearer view of actual preferences, diversity, and accessibility of sports across the five partner countries.

The collected responses revealed a strong inclination toward fencing, mentioned either directly or through its local language equivalent (“escrime”) in a total of 49 responses, making it the most frequently reported sport among participants. This is not surprising, given the context of the project and the dissemination channels likely reaching individuals already involved in inclusive fencing initiatives.

Other types of sports reported include:

- Team sports (e.g., basketball, football): 17 responses
- Showdown or table tennis (specifically designed or adapted for visual impairment): 9 responses
- Athletic disciplines (e.g., running, track events): 9 responses

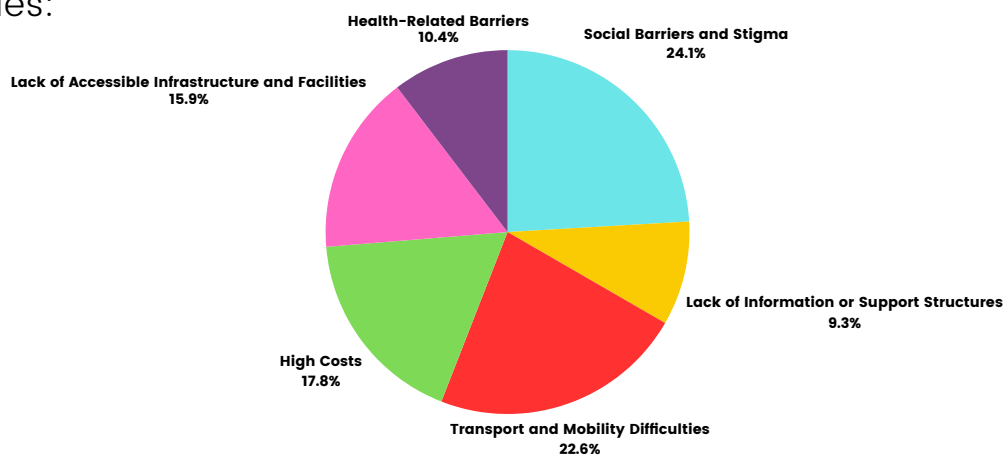
While the diversity of sports mentioned was limited, this may reflect either real access constraints or the characteristics of the respondent group. The strong emphasis on fencing highlights both the existing engagement with this sport and its perceived accessibility or attractiveness for people with disabilities.

It is important to note that some sports mentioned may have required adaptations for accessibility, though this was not directly captured in the responses. Future qualitative interviews or focus groups may explore this aspect further.

These findings support the project's focus on fencing as a tool for inclusion and validate the relevance of the forthcoming V.A.P.E.P. methodology that promotes integration between disabled and non-disabled individuals through this sport.

4.1.5 Barriers in Sport

Participants with disabilities were asked to describe the main obstacles they face when trying to engage in sports or physical activities. This open-ended question generated a wide variety of responses across the five participating countries. To provide clarity, all answers were translated and grouped into six main categories:



These categories illustrate that the barriers to sport participation are multidimensional—spanning logistical, social, financial, and health domains. While the most cited challenges involved social stigma and mobility issues, the overall results suggest a complex interplay of personal and systemic obstacles.

4.2 Organizations' Perspective

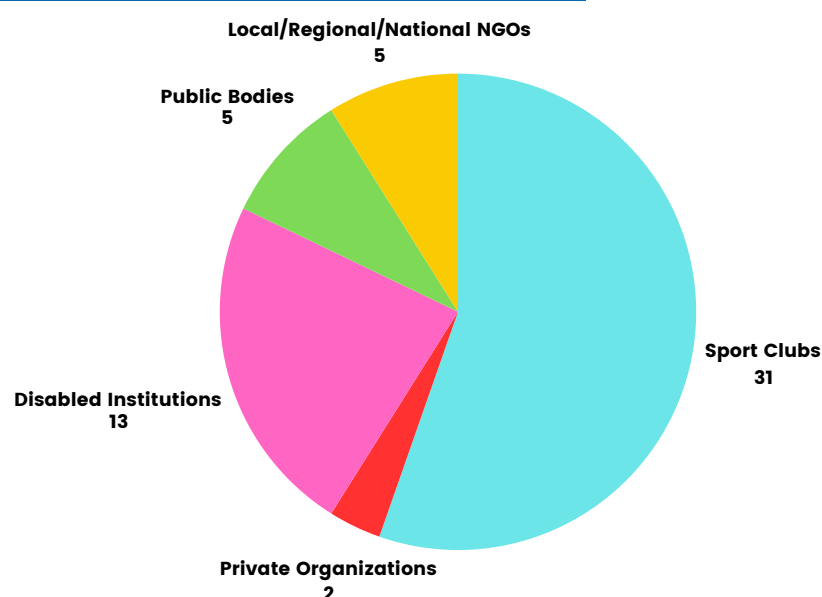
To better understand the systemic factors influencing access to sport for people with disabilities, the project also examined the perspective of organizations involved in sport, inclusion, or youth work. These stakeholders—ranging from clubs and federations to NGOs and community centers—play a crucial role in either enabling or limiting inclusive sport environments.

The survey collected 68 responses from organizations in the five project countries: Romania, Italy, Spain, France, and Ukraine. While the initial research design focused on collecting institutional data from these organizations, the number of responses received was lower than expected. This limitation was addressed by supplementing the research with input from coaches (presented in the following section).

This chapter will analyze the profiles, activities, and views of the organizations involved, identifying common patterns, good practices, and key gaps in provision. It aims to highlight both the current involvement of organizations in inclusive sport and their perceived challenges and needs.

4.2.1 Type of Organizations

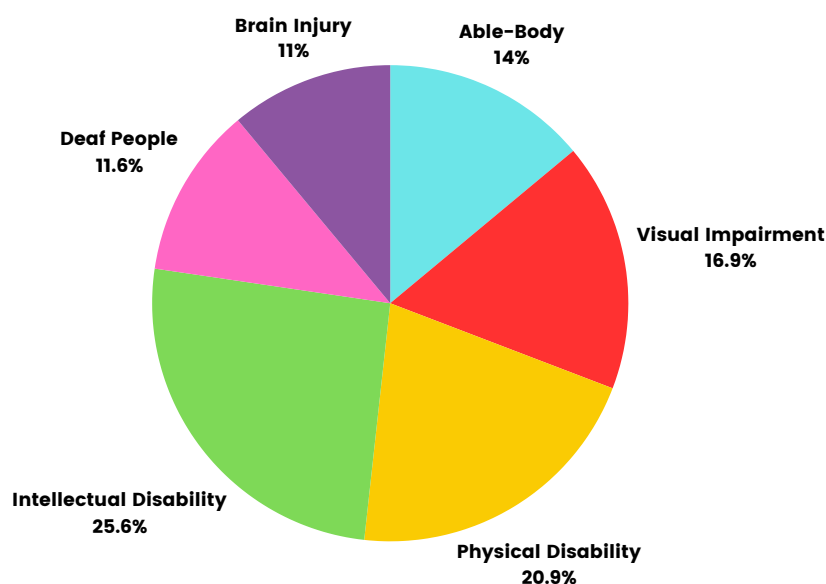
In terms of organizational typology, participants could select multiple categories. For clarity, each organization was classified under a dominant functional category, giving priority to those directly engaged in sport or disability support:



Additionally, the survey asked organizations to indicate which sports they offer. This was an open-ended question, resulting in a wide variety of responses including fencing, football, basketball, athletics, swimming, goalball, table tennis, showdown, and dance. The most frequently mentioned sport was fencing, confirming the relevance of the project's core theme and its presence across several countries and institutions.

4.2.2. Target Audience

This section explores the main target groups served by the organizations involved in the survey. The data provides valuable insight into the types of beneficiaries engaged in inclusive sport initiatives across the partner countries.



A clear majority of organizations focus their activities on people with intellectual disabilities, particularly those with autism or Down syndrome. This was the most frequently cited target group, suggesting that current inclusive sport practices place significant emphasis on cognitive and behavioral support through adapted physical activities.

Closely following, people with physical disabilities represent another substantial group targeted by the surveyed organizations. These include individuals with motor limitations, amputations, or mobility issues requiring the use of assistive devices. Their strong presence highlights the continuing need for accessible infrastructure, adapted equipment, and inclusive methodologies in sports.

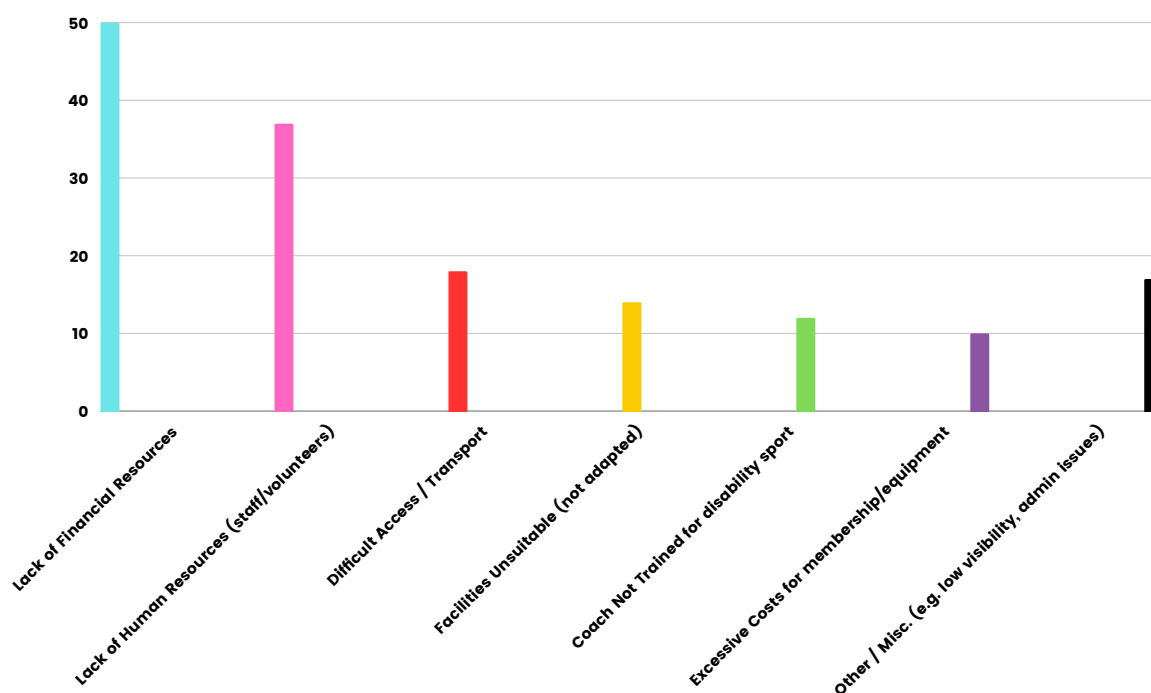
Persons with visual impairments were the third most frequently mentioned group, underlining the relevance of sports like showdown, goalball, and fencing—activities where visual input can be minimized or adapted. This supports the thematic focus of the project and confirms the strategic value of fostering such initiatives within partner networks.

In a smaller, but still relevant number of cases, organizations also mentioned engaging with people with hearing impairments, those with brain injuries (including stroke and traumatic brain injury), and able-bodied participants in mixed or inclusive settings. These responses suggest a broader understanding of inclusion, where sports can serve as a common ground for interaction and mutual growth, regardless of the specific ability level.

Overall, the data reveals a well-balanced outreach to multiple categories of disabilities, with a predominant focus on intellectual and physical disabilities. This aligns with the project's vision to promote equity in grassroots sports and reinforces the importance of tailoring future resources and training materials to address the most common needs identified by the field.

4.2.3. Difficulties in Working with People with Disabilities

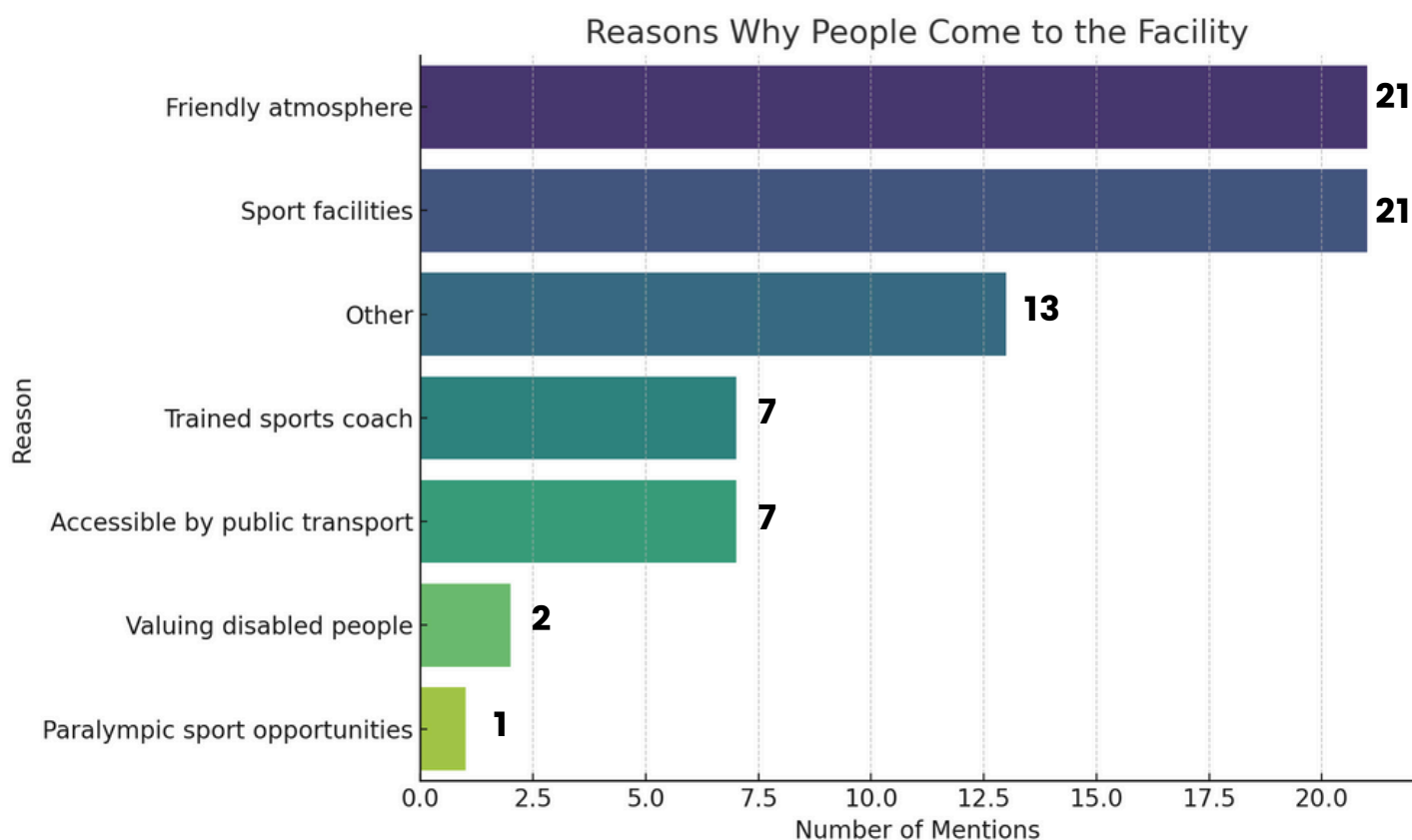
Organizations were invited to select (and, where needed, describe) the main obstacles they face when running inclusive-sport programmes. The biggest challenge for most organizations working in inclusive sports is funding. Whether it's buying adapted equipment, renting proper facilities, or hiring the right people, a lack of financial resources makes everything harder. Alongside this, many clubs also struggle to find enough people—especially trained staff or volunteers—who feel confident working with athletes with different types of disabilities. For small, community-based organizations, this shortage of human support can be a real barrier to offering consistent and inclusive activities.



4.2.4. Motivation and Reasons for Involvement in Inclusive Sports

Based on the survey responses, the main reasons why people choose to attend the facilities of the participating organizations reveal both practical considerations and emotional preferences.

Friendly atmosphere and sport facilities emerged as the most frequently cited reasons, each mentioned by over 20 organizations. This indicates that a welcoming environment and adequate infrastructure are fundamental in attracting and retaining participants. Interestingly, many respondents placed emphasis on community spirit, inclusive vibes, and the social value of their centers – all of which seem to outweigh more technical or specialized offerings. Behind these, a significant number of organizations also highlighted their trained sports coaches, showing that expertise and safety in sport practice are valued, especially for people with disabilities. Accessibility via public transport was mentioned as well, reinforcing how mobility and location continue to influence participation rates.



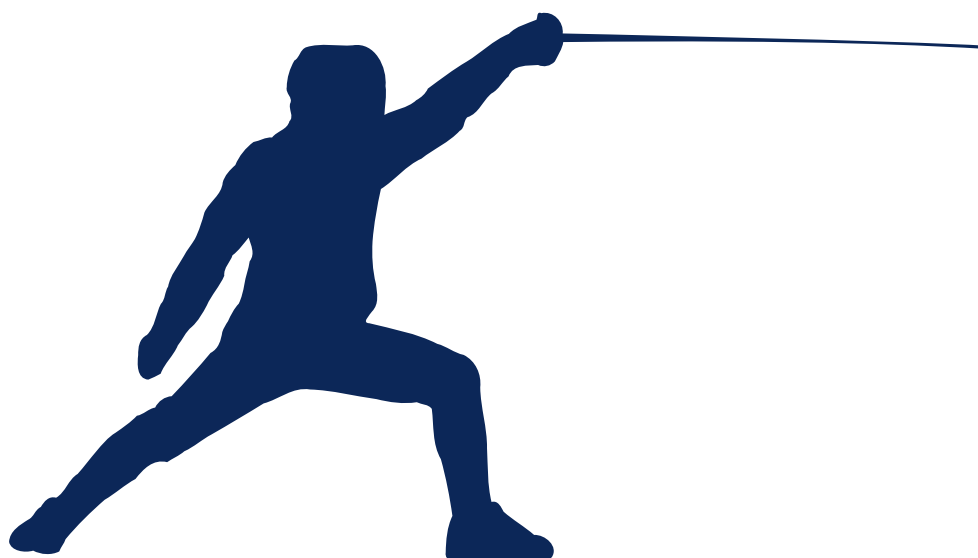
4.3. Coaches Perspective

To complement the data gathered from organizations, we decided to include an additional layer of data collection focused on coaches – the professionals working directly with athletes with disabilities.

Coaches play a crucial role in inclusive sport. They are not only responsible for implementing training but also directly shape the sporting experiences of people with disabilities. Their insights provide a practical, field-level perspective on both challenges and needs in inclusive sport environments. The findings presented in this section enhance the analysis provided in the previous chapter and help build a more complete understanding of the realities faced across Europe.

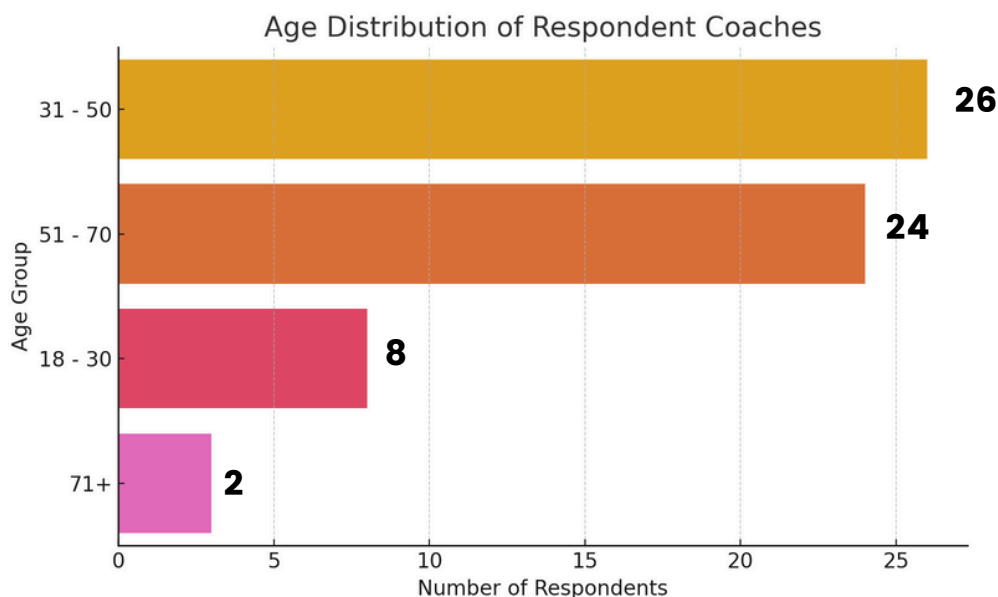
Although the primary aim of the survey phase was to collect data from organizations working in inclusive sport, the response rate was uneven across countries. These professionals often serve as the bridge between institutional intentions and actual inclusive practice on the field.

The coaches' input provides valuable insight into current knowledge levels, perceived challenges, training needs, and interest in inclusive fencing. Their perspectives help contextualize the organizational data and offer practical recommendations for designing effective support mechanisms under the V.A.P.E.P. model.

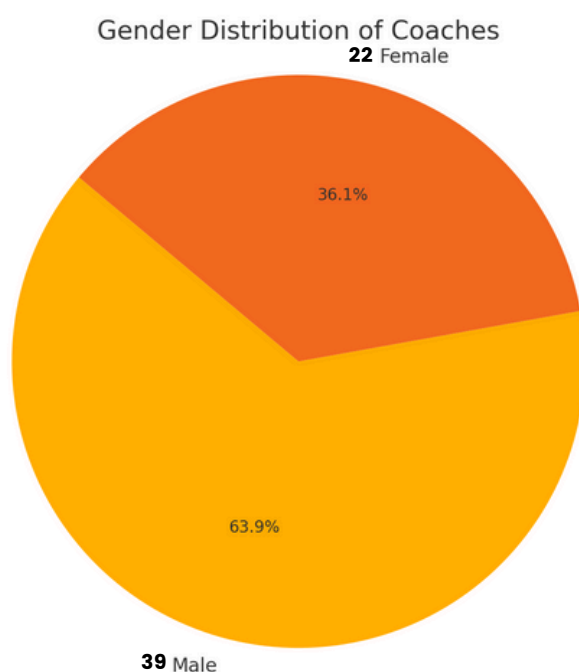


4.3.1 Profile of Respondents

The coaches who participated in the survey come from a diverse set of backgrounds, covering five partner countries: Romania, Spain, Italy, France, and Ukraine.



In terms of gender distribution, both men and women are represented, with a slightly higher number of male coaches overall. Age-wise, most respondents fall within the 31–50 and 51–70 brackets, highlighting a mature group of professionals with solid experience in the field. A few younger coaches aged 18–30 also took part, along with a small number over 70 years old, which may include retired but still active volunteers.



The qualifications reported by respondents include both general coaching certifications and specific titles such as physical education teacher, kinesiologist, and licensed handisport coach. While the levels and titles vary by country, a strong trend is visible: many of these professionals have significant experience in working with athletes, though not all have formal education in inclusive or adaptive sport.

Regarding the types of organizations they represent, most coaches are affiliated with sport clubs, followed by schools, NGOs, and institutions serving people with disabilities. This variety indicates that inclusive sport activities are not limited to one type of structure but are promoted through multiple channels, ranging from formal education settings to grassroots clubs.

Overall, the profile of coaches shows a solid base of experienced individuals who are key to bridging the gap between institutional efforts and actual sport inclusion at the community level.

4.3.2. Training and Experience in Disability Sport

The survey revealed a significant gap in formal training for coaches working with athletes with disabilities. Only a small portion of respondents stated that they received handisport-related training during their initial coach education. For most, their qualifications focused exclusively on able-bodied athletes, with disability sport either briefly mentioned or entirely absent from the curriculum.

Despite this, the lack of formal preparation has not stopped some coaches from gaining experience through informal means. Several respondents indicated that they learned “on the go,” adapting their methods while working directly with athletes with visual, physical, or intellectual disabilities. Others mentioned attending isolated workshops or short-term sessions on inclusive sport – often organized by NGOs, local federations, or accessed through personal initiative.

The findings highlight a clear and urgent need for structured training opportunities tailored to coaches working in inclusive environments. Many expressed the desire to gain specific skills in communication, adaptation of exercises, safety, and motivation when working with athletes with disabilities.

To address this gap, the project will include the design and piloting of a dedicated training module for coaches, aligned with the V.A.P.E.P. model. This training will be practical, accessible, and focused on real-life challenges identified by the coaches themselves, offering them the tools and confidence needed to lead inclusive sport sessions more effectively.

5. KEY INSIGHTS

The cross-analysis of data collected from people with disabilities, organizations, and coaches reveals several patterns, contrasts, and shared challenges. These insights provide a solid foundation for the design and implementation of the V.A.P.E.P. framework, helping to ensure it responds effectively to real needs observed across different countries and stakeholder groups.

5.1. Comparing Perspectives: Organizations vs PwD

Although all stakeholders show strong support for the idea of inclusive sport, their perspectives often reflect their specific roles and experiences.

People with disabilities tend to focus on the personal experience of participation: the emotional safety of the environment, the presence of adapted training methods, and the importance of being truly seen and included. In contrast, organizations mostly frame inclusion in terms of operational feasibility – financial resources, physical accessibility, staffing, and institutional support.

This difference highlights a key gap: while many organizations are open to including athletes with disabilities, their efforts sometimes fall short due to the absence of structured feedback from the very individuals they aim to serve. This underscores the need for mechanisms that allow athletes to influence how programs are designed and delivered – a principle reflected in the spirit of the V.A.P.E.P. framework.

5.2. Common Barriers

Despite local differences, several recurrent barriers emerged in all five countries involved in the project – Romania, Spain, Italy, France, and Ukraine. These include:

- Lack of inclusive coach training, both in formal education and continuing development.
- Inaccessible venues and infrastructure, from transport to changing rooms.
- Low availability of adapted equipment, making certain sports impractical or unsafe.
- Limited funding and staff, especially in smaller clubs or rural areas.

The consistency of these challenges confirms that the barriers are not isolated or context-specific but represent systemic issues within the European inclusive sport landscape. They reinforce the need for a structured, transnational intervention – such as V.A.P.E.P. – rather than fragmented, country-by-country solutions.

5.3. Cultural and Systemic Differences

Beyond shared difficulties, each national context also brings unique dynamics. In Spain, multiple responses referenced supportive public institutions and a more advanced dialogue on inclusive practices.

In Romania and Ukraine, a stronger reliance on grassroots efforts and NGO initiatives was observed, often compensating for the lack of public infrastructure or state programs.

In Italy and France, the ecosystem appears more formalized, but survey response rates were unexpectedly low – suggesting different attitudes toward participation in research, or the need for more tailored outreach strategies.

6. LINK TO V.A.P.E.P. METHODOLOGY

The V.A.P.E.P. methodology was not created in isolation. It was shaped by the voices and realities of over 400 individuals who shared their experiences through our surveys. Athletes with disabilities, coaches, and sport organizations helped us uncover the core barriers and opportunities that define the current state of inclusive sport. What emerged is not just a theoretical model, but a grounded framework built on real needs, hopes, and day-to-day experiences.

Throughout the research, people with disabilities spoke clearly about the importance of being seen, heard, and understood. Many emphasized the emotional toll of exclusion, the frustration of inaccessible communication, and the desire to be treated with respect and dignity. These responses led directly to the inclusion of Participation and Environment as central pillars of the V.A.P.E.P. model. The focus here is on creating welcoming, safe, and empowering spaces that recognize the full spectrum of each person's ability and identity.

Coaches, on the other hand, often acknowledged their own limitations. Few had received any formal training in inclusive sport, and most had learned by doing – often relying on trial and error, personal motivation, or informal workshops. Their honest reflections revealed a clear gap in structured, accessible learning resources. In response, the Education pillar of V.A.P.E.P. was developed to provide targeted support for coaches and staff who want to be better prepared, more confident, and ultimately more effective in their work.

For organizations, the challenges were largely structural. A significant number reported issues related to visibility, recruitment, and outreach. Many operate with limited staff and few communication tools, making it hard to attract new participants or explain what they do to the wider community. This is where the Visibility pillar of the methodology becomes essential – equipping organizations with communication strategies, digital tools, and community engagement techniques to better promote their inclusive offers.

Another recurring theme was the difficulty of access. Respondents pointed to transportation problems, high participation costs, and a lack of adapted facilities as serious barriers. These insights informed our approach to Access, which is not just about physical entry but also about financial affordability, administrative simplicity, and emotional safety. The model includes guidance on forming local partnerships, mapping needs, and co-creating solutions that reflect the context of each community.

Finally, what stood out across all survey groups was the need for bottom-up approaches. Whether it was an athlete asking to be listened to, or a local club trying to do more with limited resources, the message was the same: inclusion cannot be imposed – it must be built collaboratively. That's why the V.A.P.E.P. model is designed to be flexible and adaptable. It offers structure without rigidity, and direction without prescriptiveness.

By directly integrating the findings of the surveys, V.A.P.E.P. becomes more than a model – it becomes a strategy rooted in the lived realities of those it seeks to serve. The methodology will be validated and tested by the same communities that helped shape it, ensuring relevance, responsiveness, and sustainability. In this way, it remains true to its purpose: to bring inclusive sport closer to every athlete, every coach, and every organization that believes in equality and access for all.

7. RECCOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This report highlights both the urgency and the potential of investing in inclusive sport. The findings show that motivation exists across all stakeholder groups, but it must be matched with structure, funding, and practical support. V.A.P.E.P. responds to this need by offering a tailored training model for coaches, a self-assessment framework for organizations, and a narrative that places inclusion at the heart of the European sport agenda. It does not aim to replace existing efforts, but to connect them—providing tools, guidance, and inspiration for those already working on the ground. As the project continues, its real value will emerge not just from the materials it creates, but from the communities it strengthens. Inclusion is no longer optional—it is essential. And the future of sport, to be truly fair and accessible, must include everyone.

7.1 What Sport Organizations Can Do

Sport clubs, federations, and local associations play a central role in making inclusive sport a reality. Many are already motivated and have strong community ties, but they face persistent limitations in resources, infrastructure, and expertise. To progress, these organizations should consider investing in inclusive training for staff and volunteers, even through small-scale modules or collaborations with NGOs. Conducting an internal audit of their facilities and communication practices can help identify gaps in physical and social accessibility. By partnering with disability organizations, families, and schools, they can better tailor their offer to actual needs rather than assumptions. It is also important to involve people with disabilities not only as beneficiaries, but as active contributors—such as assistant coaches, mentors, or board members—thereby strengthening representation and increasing trust. These steps, though incremental, build towards a more equitable and open sporting environment

7.2 What Municipalities Can Do

Municipalities and policymakers hold the power to remove systemic barriers and foster structural change in the field of inclusive sport. The challenges faced by local clubs—such as lack of funding, inadequate transport, or non-adapted facilities—can only be overcome through strategic and well-financed public action.

Public authorities should prioritize the creation of dedicated funds to support inclusive sport, especially in underserved or rural areas where private initiative alone is insufficient. Integrating inclusive sport into public health, youth development, and education agendas ensures that it is treated as a fundamental right, not an extracurricular luxury. Infrastructure upgrades, such as accessible venues and transport services, are essential for sustained participation by people with disabilities. Moreover, municipalities can act as facilitators of coordination between sport structures, disability services, and educational institutions, helping to build an ecosystem that supports inclusion in practice, not just on paper.

7.3 What Coaches Need

Coaches are often the frontline of inclusive sport, and their perspective is shaped by both passion and pressure. Many of the coaches surveyed had no formal training in working with athletes with disabilities, yet they continue to adapt and innovate on the ground. Their needs are clear: access to well-structured training that includes both theoretical and practical components, ongoing support through tools and peer learning, and public recognition of their role in promoting inclusive sport. Continuous development opportunities—such as online modules, video tutorials, or exchanges with experienced practitioners—can equip coaches with the confidence and competence to serve all athletes. In parallel, coaches need time, space, and financial support to implement inclusive approaches effectively, without becoming overburdened in volunteer-dependent systems. The V.A.P.E.P. model seeks to address these needs directly, offering both pedagogical content and a community of practice that validates and sustains their efforts.

7.4 Why a Transnational Approach Matters

While inclusion takes shape in local contexts, the challenges and opportunities are remarkably consistent across countries. Whether in Romania, Spain, Italy, Ukraine, or France, organizations and coaches encounter similar obstacles: underfunded systems, lack of training, inaccessible venues, and limited public awareness. A transnational approach enables partners to learn from each other, share resources, and build a collective voice for change. V.A.P.E.P. is not about exporting one-size-fits-all solutions but about developing a shared framework that can be tailored to national realities. By pooling knowledge, creating joint tools, and building bridges across borders, the project amplifies its impact and ensures that good practices do not remain isolated. In a Europe committed to equality and participation, inclusive sport must be a cross-border priority—backed by collaboration, solidarity, and shared responsibility.

8. ANNEXES

8.1 English Common Answers

[Access our analysis of PwD](#)

[Access our analysis of Organizations](#)

[Access our analysis of Coaches](#)

8.2 National Answers

8.2.1 France

[Access our analysis of PwD](#)

[Access our analysis of Organizations](#)

[Access our analysis of Coaches](#)

8.2.2 Spain

[Access our analysis of PwD](#)

[Access our analysis of Organizations](#)

[Access our analysis of Coaches](#)

8.2.3 Ukraine

[Access our analysis of PwD](#)

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