

EASPD Policy Paper

A Culture of Inclusion

Ensuring equal access to culture,
arts, sport and leisure for people
with disabilities in Europe



European Association of
Service providers for
Persons with Disabilities

Acknowledgements

This is a report of the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD).

The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) is the leading voice of disability services across Europe. Representing over 20,000 services in over 50 different countries, we promote human rights and equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality support.

Our work focuses on key areas essential to quality support provision. This includes Employment, Education and notably Vocational Education & Training, Adult Learning and skills development, Early Childhood Intervention, Inclusive Living, Person-Centred Technology, Workforce Development and Human Resources, Arts, Culture & Sport, and Policy Impact.

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Foreword

Arts, culture, sport and leisure shape who we are, how we experience the world around us and how we connect with the communities we are part of. This is essential to everyone's wellbeing, but still not a reality for many people with disabilities.

Across Europe, disability services play a key role in enabling access to artistic, cultural and sports activities, alongside public authorities, communities and mainstream providers. EASPD has long been supporting its members in developing services and initiatives that place participation and co-creation at their heart.

Over the years, this work has grown in both scope and ambition, while remaining firmly grounded in Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

In 2012, the European Song Festival took place in Cork, Ireland, and set the stage for the creation of a dedicated Interest Group on Arts and Culture in 2014. Since then, the group shared practices, promoted partnerships for projects, and organised study visits and mutual learning activities through [EASPD's Lighthouse Network](#).

This strong, connected community promoted the first EASPD international conference on the intersection between art, disability and inclusion. [The Art of Inclusion](#) conference was meant to happen in Ireland in 2020, but was held online due to the pandemic. Five years later, [A Culture of Inclusion](#) took place in Gandía, Spain. The conference brought together some of the most innovative practices, thinkers and presenters from around the world working on disability inclusion in arts, culture, sport and leisure. Discussions underlined that communities and services need to collaborate and embrace a mindset where participation in cultural life has no barriers. On this occasion, the Interest Group formally expanded its scope to include sport and adopted a new name: [EASPD Member Forum on Arts, Culture and Sport](#).

This report presents the outcomes of this conference. It reflects on where we are today, while inviting us to imagine what more can be done. We are challenged to think ambitiously about the future we want to build, and how we can co-create accessible and inclusive arts, culture, sport and leisure experiences for all European citizens.

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Co-chairs of EASPD Member Forum on Arts, Culture and Sport



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1 Introduction: Framing Article 30 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Culture, arts, sports and leisure enrich our lives in countless ways. They help build relationships, bring people closer to their communities, and foster social inclusion. They are a **powerful tool for self-expression and self-determination** and contribute to the personal development by boosting confidence and opening minds. For many people with disabilities, this is particularly impactful: inclusive sports break down stereotypes about disability, while accessible arts and culture empower people with disabilities as both creators and spectators.

Yet, access to arts, culture, sport and other forms of leisure has frequently been approached through the lens of the medical model of disability. According to this perspective, participation in activities like art therapy or recreational art serves primarily healthcare purposes. Especially for people with intellectual disabilities, many artistic and cultural activities take place outside of the community, in day care centres and residential settings. Despite the ongoing transition to human rights-based approaches, the medical model remains a prominent lens through which disability is understood within the disability sector. Consequently, arts, culture, sports, and leisure are often framed within healthcare paradigms, rather than being recognised and valued on their own terms.

Driven by the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#) and the [European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the change of paradigm towards the **social model of disability**, grounded in human rights, reflects a broader shift in how the role of art, culture, and sport is understood. It emphasises inclusion, accessibility, and the right for people with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of cultural life, alongside their peers without disabilities. This shift calls on disability service providers to move beyond the medical model and co-create new rights-based support. In practice, this means rethinking long-standing ideas about disability and how arts, culture, sport, and leisure are defined, organised, and made accessible across different sectors. That is the essence of [Article 30 of UNCRPD](#): **equal access to cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport.**

However, in practice, **for many people with disabilities this right remains unfulfilled.** Despite the commitments set out in Article 30, a concert venue may be inaccessible if it can only be reached by stairs, without alternative options such as lifts or ramps; books may not be available in easy-to-read or other accessible formats; and museums may not provide audio guides, Braille materials, or other adaptations that enable full participation. Such barriers deny the fundamental right to participate equally in cultural

and social life. Access to employment, education and healthcare is essential, but so are the activities that make life enjoyable and meaningful.

The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) is the leading voice of disability services across Europe. Representing over 20,000 services in over 50 different countries, we promote human rights and equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality support.

The EASPD Member Forum on Arts, Culture, Sport and Leisure believes that co-creating new policies and practice-informed opportunities with our disability community is crucial for the future of rights-based disability support across Europe. Our members want to lead this cultural shift and demonstrate what can be possible. That is why we explored this topic at our international conference [A Culture of Inclusion: Enriching Lives through Arts, Sports and Leisure](#), which took place in May 2025 in Gandía, Spain. From art spaces to sports clubs, the conference highlighted the central role support services play to make Article 30 a reality.

Building on the insights from the Conference, this document outlines the current **state of implementation of Article 30 at European level** and highlights the key role of service providers in advancing it.

This work supports the European Commission's efforts under the [EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#) and the [Culture Compass for Europe](#), helping Member States develop policies that promote the participation of people with disabilities in sports, leisure and cultural and artistic activities.

This policy paper is structured as follows:

- The first part examines the **EU's overall policy framework**, describing how strategies, policy and funding instruments shape access to culture, arts, sport, and leisure for people with disabilities.
- It then turns to the **outcomes of the EASPD Conference**, using debates and reflections to frame the real-life implementation of Article 30. The second section analyses the **key challenges** that continue to limit participation in cultural, sporting, and leisure activities. It then highlights a range of **good practices** from across Europe, stemming from the EASPD Innovation Awards and the conference programme, showing how inclusive models are developed in different contexts.
- Finally, the paper draws on these insights to provide a set of **recommendations** directed at service providers, national authorities, and EU institutions.

2 EU policies and actions to support access and inclusion in culture, sport and leisure activities: Policy and funding frameworks

Enhancing cooperation, promoting diversity and inclusion, and contributing to the richness and dynamism of European cultural life is at the heart of EU actions in the field of culture, arts, and sport. [Article 165](#) and [Article 167](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union mandate the EU to promote European sporting issues and contribute to the flourishing of Member States' cultures whilst respecting their diversity. The EU has adopted a range of policy and funding initiatives to improve access to culture, arts, and sport for people with disabilities, presented in the following section.

2.1 EU policy frameworks and key initiatives

By ratifying the UNCRPD, the EU and its Member States have committed to promote equal access to cultural, recreational, and sporting life. The [EU Strategy on the Right of Persons with disabilities \(2021-2030\)](#) outlines initiatives aiming to support the mobility of artists with disabilities.

The [European Disability Card](#) is a flagship initiative of the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, piloted since 2016 in 7 countries and adopted in 2024, to extend to all 27 Member States by 2028. It provides benefits such as priority access, discounts, and tailored services at museums, theatres, and sports venues. However, there is still a lack of awareness amongst people with disabilities and cultural institutions and confusion with pre-existing schemes.

The [European Accessibility Act](#) (2019) is a directive of the former Disability Strategy (2010-2020), focusing on accessibility of products and services. It covers electronic devices, websites, media services, e-books, and e-commerce platforms, essential to participate in cultural and recreational activities.

In the framework of the 2021-2030 [European Child Guarantee](#), several Member States have integrated access to culture, arts, and sports access for children into their National Action Plans. This is particularly relevant for vulnerable children, which includes children with disabilities:

- Lithuania: “Cultural Passport” for pupils with limited access.
- Sweden: Creative school initiative with grants for pupils with severe intellectual disabilities.
- Germany: “Alliances for Education” providing extracurricular cultural education.
- Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels): Physical adaptation of leisure facilities.

The [Council conclusions on sustainable and accessible sports infrastructure](#) (2022) highlight the need to develop sports infrastructures that remove barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities.

The [EU Work Plans for Sport](#) (2024-2027) aims to build a sustainable sports culture promoting health, social cohesion, and equal access to physical activity through cross-sector collaboration and inclusive practices.

The [Culture Compass for Europe](#) (November 2025) establishes a vision for culture and key policy directions. Its initiatives include a report to support Member States in increasing disability participation in culture and a Joint Declaration celebrating freedom of artistic expression. This Declaration is aimed to enhance inclusive access to culture and cultural heritage for people with disabilities, protect the rights of artists with disabilities and cultural professionals, and support human-centric, rights-based artificial intelligence (AI) that respects cultural rights, accessibility, and inclusivity.

2.2 EU funding programmes

EU policies are supported through funding programmes enhancing accessibility, inclusion, and innovation:

- [European Structural and Investment Funds](#): Funds like the European Regional Development Fund finance projects improving access to cultural and recreational infrastructure for disadvantaged communities.
- [Creative Europe](#): Supports cultural, creative, and audiovisual initiatives explicitly aiming to promote cultural participation for people with disabilities, including tackling disability stereotypes in media, promoting accessible tourism, and working with sports organisations for inclusion. As a part of it, the [Culture Moves Europe](#) scheme supports the mobility of artists and cultural professionals with disabilities.
- [Erasmus+](#): Supports cultural and sports projects promoting inclusion. From 2014 to 2018, 51 projects focused on disability participation in sport.
- [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values](#): Supports projects promoting creative expression to combat discrimination.
- [European Solidarity Corps](#): Offers volunteering and solidarity opportunities involving cultural and sports activities for social inclusion.
- [Horizon Europe](#): Cluster 2.2 covers social inclusion and participation of marginalised groups, promoting research on inclusive policies and accessible cultural environments.

3 EASPD Conference: “A Culture of Inclusion: Enriching Lives through Arts, Sports and Leisure” outcomes and recommendations

The conference “A Culture of Inclusion: Enriching Lives through Arts, Sports and Leisure” took place on 15-16 May 2025 in Gandía, Spain. It was co-hosted by EASPD together with [Fundació Espurna](#) and gathered over 250 participants, including service providers, disability organisations, cultural actors and policymakers from across Europe. Together, they discussed barriers, shared good practices, explored inclusive models for arts, sports and leisure, and necessary legal and policy changes to fully implement inclusion under Article 30 of the UNCRPD.

3.1 Challenges for people with disabilities to access and enjoy culture, sport and other leisure activities on an equal basis

Having a disability or illness is the third most mentioned reason for not practising sport more regularly, cited by 14% of [Eurobarometer](#) respondents. Yet the barriers extend far beyond sport. People with disabilities continue to face significant challenges in accessing cultural and other leisure activities while culture is being the [number one factor](#) that fosters a sense of community among EU citizens.

For people with disabilities, access to sport is often described as taking place through two main avenues: **participation in mainstream sport** alongside non-disabled peers, and participation in **para-sport** designed or adapted for people with disabilities. In practice, however, participation exists along a much broader spectrum. Within mainstream sport, inclusion can range from individuals joining regular clubs or teams to more structured inclusive approaches such as mixed-ability teams, where inclusion is intentionally built into the organisation of the activity.

Similarly, para-sport covers a wide variety of practices. Some activities are adapted versions of widely practiced sports, such as football or basketball, organised specifically for players with disabilities and sometimes involving volunteers or support players (mainly carers). Other sports are designed to respond to particular or more significant disabilities, where the focus may be on participation, enjoyment and physical activity as well as competition. Importantly, adapting certain rules to enable participation, such as adjusting playing time, modifying specific actions within a game, or allowing forms of support, does not necessarily transform an activity into para-sport. As in youth sport and other sporting contexts, rules are often adapted to reflect the characteristics of.

This diversity highlights that the barriers people with disabilities face in sport are not inherent to disability itself, but often arise from how sporting environments are organised

and delivered. They are choices embedded in how we design spaces, train staff, allocate resources, and think about community. Understanding them is essential for creating environments where everyone can participate.

Drawing on the collective expertise of EASPD members¹ and the conference's first panel, "The Big Picture: Framing Article 30", the following paragraphs outline the challenges that prevent people with disabilities from accessing culture, sport, and leisure on the same ground as any other citizens.

The architecture of exclusion. The physical world itself often blocks the route. A community theatre with stairs but no ramp. A museum with doorways too narrow for wheelchairs. A sports facility where the only parking is a five-minute walk away, making it impossible to reach for people with reduced mobility. Transportation systems that don't connect to cultural venues, or buses without ramps, mean that even when a building is accessible, getting there is not. These are fundamental barriers that prevent people from participating in community life before they even get a foot in the door.

When information becomes invisible. Cultural experiences rely heavily on sight, sound, and communication, yet venues frequently fail to accommodate different sensory needs. Museums that display priceless artworks with no audio descriptions or braille labels. Theatres that stage performances without sign language interpreters. Lighting remains dim and signage lacks contrast, leaving visitors with visual impairments unable to navigate independently. For people with autism, neurodevelopmental conditions, or intellectual disabilities, environments with overwhelming sensory input and no quiet spaces can make participation unbearable rather than enjoyable.

The cognitive maze. Beyond sensory access, many venues create cognitive barriers without realising it. Exhibition often display texts written in academic language or are hard to navigate, with confusing maps and inconsistent signage. Staff members may lack training in supporting visitors with intellectual disabilities, leaving people to struggle alone or give up entirely. When information isn't available in easy-to-read formats or simplified versions, entire communities find themselves locked out of cultural participation.

¹ Insights from EASPD's Conference, EASPD Member Forum on Arts, Culture and Sport, the [Sports Inclusion Media Seal project](#), but also external resources such as a [recent study](#) on Barriers to cultural participation by people with disabilities in Europe.

Attitudes that harm. Perhaps the most painful barriers are social. Prejudice from staff who view accommodations as burdens, or coaches who doubt people's abilities before giving them a chance. Fellow participants who stare, make assumptions, or exclude. These attitudes compound into self-exclusion, with people with disabilities and their families choosing to stay away rather than face judgment, stigma, or the exhaustion of constantly advocating for basic inclusion. The message becomes clear: you're not welcome here.

Communication breakdown. Access to information is access to opportunity, yet communication barriers persist across the cultural and sports landscape. Websites and promotional materials rarely offer large print, braille, audio formats, or autism-friendly versions. Assistive listening devices for people who are deaf or hard of hearing remain scarce. Details about accessibility features, or their absence, are too often buried or non-existent, forcing people to make phone calls and send emails just to find out if they can attend. In sports, media coverage celebrates elite para-athletes at the Paralympics but ignores the grassroots inclusive communities where everyday participation happens.

The price of participation. Finally, economic factors exacerbate every other barrier. Adaptive sports equipment costs thousands. Accessible infrastructure requires investment that many venues haven't made. Personal support or environmental modifications add expenses that subsidies rarely cover. When participation is not affordable, many people with disabilities simply can't afford to join in, regardless of their interest or talent.

All these barriers operate on two levels. First, they **prevent people with disabilities from accessing and enjoying activities**, whether sitting in the audience at a concert or playing on a community football team. Second, and less visibly, they **block pathways to professional careers in arts, culture, and sports**. An aspiring dancer cannot train at an inaccessible studio. A talented visual artist cannot seek gallery representation without accessible exhibition spaces. A potential sports coach faces venues that were not designed with their needs in mind. This dual impact underscores the **need for systemic changes** to ensure that both recreational and career opportunities in art, culture and sport are accessible to everyone.

Fortunately, solutions exist at every level: installing ramps and lifts, training staff to welcome all visitors, providing information in multiple formats, challenging assumptions, investing in adaptive equipment, and amplifying the voices of people with disabilities in cultural and sporting spaces. The following section explores practices that were spotlighted at EASPD's conference and are already making a difference.

3.2 Enriching lives through arts, sports, and leisure: Good practices from across Europe

In May 2025, during the EASPD conference, hundreds of participants from across Europe exchanged knowledge and good practices on how arts, sports, and leisure can drive inclusion. The conference offered a unique space for collaboration between service providers, policymakers, and cultural actors, highlighting practical solutions to make participation in culture and sport a lived reality for people with disabilities.

The annual [EASPD Innovation Awards](#)² were dedicated to culture, arts, sport, and other forms of leisure. The Innovation Awards gathered inspiring examples of service providers embedding good practices into their daily support and partnerships to foster access for people with disabilities.

These initiatives underline **what is needed to scale up success: stronger political commitment, sustainable funding, and systemic change**. Here the winning projects, presented and discussed during the conference:

- The EU-funded [T-GUIDE training](#) challenges the lack of awareness among tourist guides, cultural sites, cultural and touristic destination workers about visitors with learning difficulties. The course certifies tourist guides to support tourists with disabilities and was delivered to 150 cultural heritage sites and museums in Europe.
- [ALL INCLUSIVE](#) is an EU-funded project which promotes the development of talents and develops creative and professional skills. This happens through workshops, facilitated by established artists and co-produced with and for people with disabilities, and other disadvantaged communities.
- The [International Coaching Course](#) empowers local coaches to create inclusive sports programmes that allow people with disabilities to participate in mainstream sports. It has provided a two-year training to 5,800 sports professionals reaching tens of thousands of athletes and communities.
- The [Nevronas FESTival](#) of Inclusive Performing Arts and Artistic Interaction is held annually in Athens. Its Inclusive Volunteering Programme brings together people with and without disabilities and provides them training on disability, neurodiversity and inclusion.
- [SavasRock](#) is an inclusive rock festival which gathers everyone to enjoy music in a friendly atmosphere. Attendees support needs have been considered in every aspect including Picture Communication Symbols, Finnish Sign Language

² EASPD's annual award designed to highlight the work of service providers in the disability sector. In 2025, the EASPD Innovation Awards received over 80 submissions, culminating in 6 winning initiatives.

interpretation, and neuro-divergent friendly, low-sensory spaces, that can inspire any festival that would like to be accessible to all.

- [Supereroi Printre Noi](#) organises fully accessible and inclusive concerts, theatre performances, literature clubs, exhibitions, and film screenings. Accessible venues and staff trained enable a welcoming cultural experience. Resources and guides for organising accessible events and digital content are also developed, for organisations interested in creating inclusive environments.

The conference underlined how while arts, culture, and sports are vital recreational and holistic practices, they can also inspire change both in the disability sector, and in wider society. The fundamental question was: how can service providers best facilitate this?

Professionalism was a key topic, namely how people with disabilities can pursue art and sport as their livelihood. This requires challenging notions of people with disabilities as passive enjoyers of art. Instead, **they are positioned as creators, not consumers**, with service providers fostering talent and empowering through support. Topics included career guidance, [accessible training and production planning](#), and opportunities for creatives with disabilities to [promote and exhibit their work](#).

Another common thread across the programme was **community engagement and equal access**. People with disabilities have the right of access art, culture and sport on an equal footing to everyone else. Further, their inclusion enriches cultural spaces. Participants heard how art and disability can be incorporated into [rural revival schemes](#), how [inclusive volunteering programmes](#) promotes social inclusion, and how [accessible or universal design for cultural events](#) not only widens access, but improves the experience for all attendees.

Art, culture and sport are powerful tools to highlight challenges and create societal change. **People with disabilities are best placed to tell their own stories and advocate for themselves**. Examples of this include [a film](#) produced by and starring people with disabilities, the impact of which was such that it is now included in the training programme for Budapest public transport workers. [Another practice](#) focused on the performing arts and social inclusion: performers with disabilities and other marginalised group such as Roma communities actively develop and stage co-created performances based on lived experience.

Participation in art, culture, and sport fosters inclusion, reduces isolation, and strengthens family bonds. It allows parents and siblings to reconnect, while children with disabilities explore their creativity, develop social skills, and experience the world like any other child. The **transformative role of cultural and recreational activities in family wellbeing and child development** was discussed during the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Member forum. Members such as [Fondazione Paideia](#) shared how

they integrate leisure and community engagement into their practices, including activities for both families of children with and without disabilities such as swimming, sport games, or artistic events. Similarly, the [Child and Adolescent Centre](#) organises activities like bowling and board games for families of children with autism, together with other families of children with and without disabilities.



4 Conclusions and recommendations to advance the implementation of Article 30 of the UNCRPD

In the final panel of the conference, expert speakers³ echoed many of EASPD's recommendations for service providers: **mainstream and disability-specific services must collaborate.**

Inclusive cultural participation works best when mainstream cultural spaces and disability-focused services work together, sharing expertise and resources. Inflexible, temporal funding streams are inefficient and do not meet needs on the ground. **Only sustainable funding will build inclusive cultural and leisure ecosystems.**

Access to arts, culture and sport must begin from the very start. Leisure and play are foundational to early childhood development, but many children are still facing exclusion. **Schools and community services must be equipped with tools and knowledge to support them.**

Finally, person-centred technology brings new possibilities. **Assistive and adaptive technologies** can be key to access, but **isn't enough alone**, nor is it a standalone solution. Service providers need training and support, the infrastructure must be maintained, and people with disabilities must be included in the design process.

Overall, the core message from the Gandía Conference is that **cross-stakeholder collaboration is essential to make Article 30 a reality.** People with disabilities, disability service providers and mainstream service providers are the key actors. Service providers need to bridge the gap between mainstream services and people with disabilities. They have expertise both in supporting people with disabilities and in creating environments that are supportive and accessible to them. But to do so, they need broader national and European policies to support their efforts.

These [inspiring initiatives](#) illustrate how service providers can foster access to art, culture, sports, and various leisure initiatives and their role in enhancing social inclusion. They help build a strong sense of community and significantly enhance the overall well-being of individuals with disabilities. With half of the projects funded by EU programmes, they also underscore the impactful power of EU funding and the importance of sustain it.

³ Alberto Duran Lopez, President of the Spanish Paralympics Committee and Executive Vice-President of Fundación ONCE; Teresa Shearer, Board Member of the Commonwealth Games, CEO of Enable Group and EASPD Executive Committee Member; Sophie Dowden, Coordinator of the European Network of Cultural Centre's Working Group on Accessibility; María del Mar Galcerán Gadea, Spain's first regional legislator with Down's Syndrome; Charo García Sabater, General Director of Fundació Espurna and Hanga Hegedus; Co-chair of EASPD Member Forum on Arts, Culture and Sport.

In the next section we present actionable recommendations stemming from the conference discussions, which target the micro level (services and local authorities), the meso level (regional and national authorities) and the macro level (the EU).

4.1 Micro level: Service providers and local authorities

For service providers:

1. Develop sports and cultural opportunities. Service providers should include sports and cultural opportunities within their support offer, recognising their important role in wellbeing, social interaction, and community life.

2. Promote participation in mainstream community activities. Service providers should empower people with disabilities to participate in art and sports activities in community venues such as theatres, museums, sports clubs, and festivals. Acting as bridge-builders, support services should connect people with disabilities with mainstream opportunities.

3. Support participation beyond service hours. Opportunities for participation in cultural and sport activities organised within the support service should extend beyond the usual operating hours of centres, including evenings and other community leisure times, when more people are available to engage and support inclusive participation. This can strengthen opportunities for interaction within the wider community.

4. Enable professional careers, not just participation. Support people with disabilities as professional artists, performers, athletes, and cultural workers. Provide career guidance and connections to the mainstream arts, culture, and sports industries.

5. Build partnerships with cultural and sports organisations. Partner with local museums, theatres, galleries, sports clubs, and festivals. Offer training on accessibility and inclusive programming. Co-create accessible events.

6. Invest in accessible formats and assistive technology. Develop easy-to-read materials, audio descriptions, sign language interpretation, and autism-friendly spaces. Invest in hearing loops, accessible booking systems, and adaptive sports equipment. Co-design with people with disabilities.

7. Champion the EU Disability Card locally. Promote the Card with the people you support. Raises awareness among local cultural venues and sports facilities about their obligations.

For local authorities:

1. Foster collaboration between inclusion experts and local activity specialists.

Facilitate partnerships between inclusion experts, service providers expert in inclusive practices, and local specialists in each sport or cultural activity. This collaboration should ensure that necessary adjustments and adaptations are made to facilitate full participation for all.

2. Audit and upgrade cultural and sports infrastructure. Conduct accessibility audits of theatres, museums, galleries, and sports centres with time-bound action plans. Require universal design in new buildings. Fund accessibility modifications.

3. Mandate partnerships and accessibility standards. Create coordination bodies linking disability services with theatres, museums, sports clubs, and arts organisations. Require all funded cultural events and sports programmes to meet accessibility standards.

4. Train cultural and sports sector staff. Mandate disability awareness training for staff in theatres, museums, galleries, sports centres, and leisure facilities. Support service providers in delivering this training.

5. Promote inclusive participation during community leisure time. When planning cultural and sports initiatives, public authorities and organisers should promote inclusive activities during regular community leisure hours, such as evenings and weekends. Community spaces, resources and opportunities should prioritise organisations that deliver their activities in an inclusive way.

6. Remove economic barriers and celebrate creators. Introduce “culture passports” for free or discounted access to cultural venues and sports facilities. Showcase disabled artists, performers, and athletes through local campaigns and inclusive festivals.

4.2 Meso level: Regional and national authorities

1. Embed inclusion in cultural and sports strategies. Integrate disability inclusion targets into national cultural strategies, arts policies, and sports development plans. Establish coordination between culture, sport, education, and social affairs ministries.

2. Enforce accessibility standards legally. Transpose the European Accessibility Act with enforcement for theatres, museums, galleries, cinemas, and sports stadiums. Mandate universal design in building codes for cultural and sports venues.

3. Reform funding to support sustainable partnerships. Replace short-term grants with multi-annual funding. Support partnerships between disability services and

cultural and sports organisations. Fund professional pathways for disabled artists, performers, and athletes.

4. Integrate culture and sport into the Child Guarantee. Follow Lithuania, Sweden, Germany, and Belgium models. Introduce “cultural passports” and creative school initiatives. Allocate European Social Fund+ (ESF+) funding to disability service providers for children's cultural and sports programmes.

5. Implement the EU Disability Card fully. Ensure operational systems by 2028. Run national campaigns targeting people with disabilities and cultural and sports venues. Define specific benefits like priority access, discounts, and sensory-friendly performances.

6. Create professional pathways for disabled creatives and athletes. Include disability inclusion in training for artists, curators, coaches, and sports administrators. Fund scholarships and mentorship for disabled artists, performers, and athletes.

7. Increase media coverage and challenge stereotypes. Require broadcasters to cover inclusive cultural events and para-sport beyond major competitions. Fund campaigns positioning disabled people as creators in theatre, music, dance, visual arts, and sport.

8. Build evidence on participation and outcomes. Research barriers to accessing theatres, museums, and sports clubs. Study career pathways for disabled artists and athletes. Develop impact measurement frameworks for wellbeing outcomes.

4.3 Macro level: European Union

1. Strengthen the second phase of the EU Disability Strategy with culture and sport priorities. Ensure culture, arts, and sport remain central priorities in the 2026 update of the EU Disability Rights Strategy (2021-2030). Include initiatives specifically addressing employment pathways for disabled artists, performers, and athletes (as a part of the disability Employment and Skills Guarantee), as well as accessibility in cultural heritage sites and sports facilities.

2. Strengthen policy frameworks across culture and sport. Include people with disabilities explicitly in the next EU Work Plan for Sport. Accelerate the 2028 Report on disability participation in culture. Ensure the implementation of the EU Culture Compass and Joint Declaration on Artistic Freedom support access to arts and culture for people with disabilities, both as professionals, and as audiences and participants in cultural and leisure activities.

3. Ensure EU Disability Card works across borders. Provide technical assistance to Member States for the implementation of the Disability Card. Launch EU-wide

campaigns targeting people with disabilities and venues. Standardise training for theatres, museums, and sports centres.

4. Create sustainable, multi-annual funding. Reinforce Creative Europe, Erasmus+, and ESF+ funding for disability inclusion. Short-term project-based grants should be replaced or complemented by multi-annual funding commitments, enabling organisations to plan strategically, build capacity, and deliver lasting impact for people with disabilities as both professionals and participants. Calls should require partnerships between mainstream and disability organisations and funding should be directed to adaptive equipment and assistive technology.

5. Build evidence and share knowledge across Europe. Research economic barriers and career pathways for disabled artists and athletes. Create an EU database of good practices in accessible theatres, museums, and sports programmes. Fund peer learning and innovation awards.

6. Develop EU-wide training for cultural and sports sectors. Fund training and certification schemes building on T-GUIDE, International Coaching Course, and ALL INCLUSIVE. Expand Culture Moves Europe mobility grants for disabled artists and cultural professionals.

7. Challenge stereotypes through media and content. Strengthen the Audiovisual Media Services Directive to tackle disability stereotypes. Fund EU campaigns positioning disabled people as creators. Support content production by disabled artists and performers. Increase broadcaster coverage of inclusive events.

8. Promote accessible cultural tourism and inclusive sport. Expand tourism awards with disability inclusion criteria. Promote the EU Disability Card for cross-border cultural tourism. Work with sports federations to promote inclusion from grassroots to elite levels.

9. Harness AI through the Apply AI Strategy for cultural and creative sectors. Ensure cultural and sports organisations can access AI Factories to develop accessibility applications such as automated captioning, audio descriptions, and sign language interpretation for cultural events and sports broadcasts. Co-design AI tools with people with disabilities to ensure they enhance participation rather than create barriers.

10. Monitor and report on Member State progress. Track participation in theatres, museums, concerts, and sports clubs. Require reporting on disabled people as professional artists and athletes. Strengthen EU reporting under UNCRPD Article 30.



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