



SPORT
IRELAND
ETHICS

SPORT IRELAND POLICY ON

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN SPORT





Sport Ireland is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. This includes participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland Campus. Participation in all those areas of sport is open to all, and the greater the diversity of those involved, the better all of those areas of sport are likely to be.

Sport Ireland is pleased to present this ambitious policy, which expresses our vision for a diverse and inclusive sector. The policy builds on Sport Ireland's work in this area over the years and aims to support and complement the implementation of existing Sport Ireland policies, plans and strategies by embedding diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work.

Sport Ireland recognises and acknowledges that there are many partner agencies and organisations, both at a national and local level, that have an important role to play in achieving the outcomes of this policy. Sport Ireland will work creatively and proactively with all stakeholders and play a strong leadership role in this sector over the coming years.

Sport Ireland recognises the wider societal, structural and systemic challenges faced by marginalised groups in Ireland today. In acknowledging the contribution of sport as outlined in the National Sports Policy 2018–2027, Sport Ireland hopes that this policy will be the catalyst to removing barriers and eliminating discrimination in sport. Furthermore, Sport Ireland will continue our extensive cooperation across Government Departments and Agencies by contributing to national policies and strategies focused on promoting inclusion and tackling discrimination.

OUR VISION

A sport sector that celebrates diversity, promotes inclusion, and is pro-active in providing opportunities for lifelong participation for everyone.



A photograph of a person in a blue athletic outfit performing a deadlift with a barbell in a gym. The person is in a low, powerful stance, with their hands gripping the barbell. The background is blurred, showing gym equipment. The image is partially covered by a teal-colored graphic element on the right side.

OUR **MISSION**

To lead by example and
be a force for inclusion
and belonging.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

One of the core values of the National Sports Policy 2018–2027 is the promotion of inclusion:

“Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all. We will promote inclusion to deliver our desired outcomes with a focus on addressing social, disability, gender, ethnic and other gradients.”

By enacting this Diversity and Inclusion policy we hope to achieve that core value of the National Sports Policy, and we retain it as our guiding principle, together with the following principles:

- People will be inspired, their lives enriched, their enjoyment enhanced, and their quality of life improved because of their own active or social participation in sport, and as a result of success by our top sports people in competition.¹
- As we enact this policy we will centre the needs and rights of those at risk of marginalisation in our decision making.
- Participation in sport and physical activity has a positive impact on people’s physical and mental health and wellbeing and we want the opportunity for participation to be open to all.
- Active inclusion in sport and physical activity acts as a tool to foster a sense of belonging in communities.

¹ <https://assets.gov.ie/15979/04e0f52cee5f47ee9c01003cf559e98d.pdf> (pg 18)





INTENDED **OUTCOME**

By enacting this policy, we hope to see more people from diverse communities participating and engaging in lifelong sport and physical activity and reaching their full potential, whatever that might be.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Throughout this document and in our approach, we define:

Diversity refers to the different characteristics of people who make up our community. Diversity includes an understanding and acceptance of the fact that people have individual characteristics which make them unique from each other.

Inclusion is valuing people's differences. Inclusion is pro-active behaviours, options and actions to make people feel welcome, respected and that they belong

LSP: Local Sports Partnerships are an initiative of Sport Ireland and aim to co-ordinate and promote the development of sport at local level. The key aims of the LSPs are to increase participation in sport, and to ensure that local resources are used to best effect.

NGB: An organisation, recognised by Sport Ireland, that coordinates the development of a particular sport or sports through constituent clubs.

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

Participation is to be understood as involving all aspects of engagement in sport including active participation, club membership, volunteering, supportive family members, attending sporting events and governance (management and administration) of sports bodies.

Representative Sports Organisations: those organisations whose remit is supporting people from diverse communities, and their engagement in a specific sport or a multitude of sports.

Sport Sector: within this document means the sports sector in its entirety, all of us who make up the entire community of sport on our island. It is in all our interests to embrace diversity and inclusion and it is all of our collective responsibility to make the necessary changes.

*"Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice. And belonging is having that voice be heard."*²

² Liz Fosslien & Molly West Duffy

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

In 2020 Sport Ireland commissioned specific research to better understand the issues relating to diversity and inclusion in sport. Through the end of 2020 and the first half of 2021 the appointed Researchers engaged with a range of stakeholders (including people from diverse communities) and produced a Report for Sport Ireland based on this process.

The Research & Consultation Report set out a comprehensive overview of the barriers and challenges to participation in sport and physical activity for people with a disability, people from minority ethnic communities including Irish Travellers, and individuals from the LGBTI+ community. This was informed by contributions from 2275 individuals, 1056 of those from across the target groups (593 LGBTI+, 310 people with a disability & 153 people from minority ethnic communities) and from more than 150 unique organisations that provide sport and physical activity opportunities, or general support to people from across the target groups.

The research provides useful and reliable insights into the experiences, gaps, challenges and barriers experienced by people from diverse communities.



The following table provides a summary of the most prominent barriers and challenges per group, beyond the general barriers as identified in the Irish Sports Monitor³ these are presented in order of prominence in the consultation findings:



LGBTI+

1. Anxiety or fear of experiencing homophobia, prejudice, discrimination, bullying and exclusion
2. Attitudinal barriers, not feeling welcome or included within sport and physical activity settings
3. Lack of representation and of sport and physical activity role models
4. Awareness and access to clubs and facilities
5. Preference for non-competitive, individual sport because of low confidence, self-esteem or perceived lack of ability



DISABILITY

1. Lack of resources, capacity and skills within sport and physical activity settings to cater for needs
2. Accessibility of facilities and equipment
3. Attitudinal barriers, not feeling welcome or included within sport and physical activity settings
4. Lack of choice
5. Lack of confidence, self-esteem, perceived lack of ability and fear of being judged, feeling embarrassed and being a burden



ETHNIC MINORITY

1. Anxiety or fear of experiencing discrimination, racism and exclusion
2. Lack of representation and of sport and physical activity role models
3. Attitudinal barriers, not feeling welcome or included within sport and physical activity settings
4. Availability and accessibility of facilities, clubs and opportunities

³ <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-09/irish-sports-monitor-2019-report-lower-res.pdf>

Furthermore, the Irish Sports Monitor 2021 provided additional statistics and perspectives into the area, as follows:

Research carried out in 2021 found that 70% of people agree that sport clubs actively welcome those from diverse ethnic backgrounds, however lower proportions feel sports clubs are welcoming to those from LGBTI+ community (59%) or to those from Traveller or Roma backgrounds (32%).



34%

agree that their club tries to reach out to people from minority communities

84% agree that everyone knows that they feel welcome in their club, only 34% agree that the club tries to reach out to people from minority communities and 50% believe their club needs to do more but needs more help and support to reach out to people from minority communities.

60% of sports club members report that their sports club has no members or volunteers from minority ethnic communities including Travellers and 56% are unaware of any members or volunteers from the LGBTI+ community.

56%

of clubs are unaware of any members or volunteers from the LGBTI+ community



24% 
of people are somewhat fearful of saying something wrong and causing offense



Almost a quarter (24%) are somewhat fearful of saying something wrong and causing offense in a sports environment when engaging with people from minority communities.

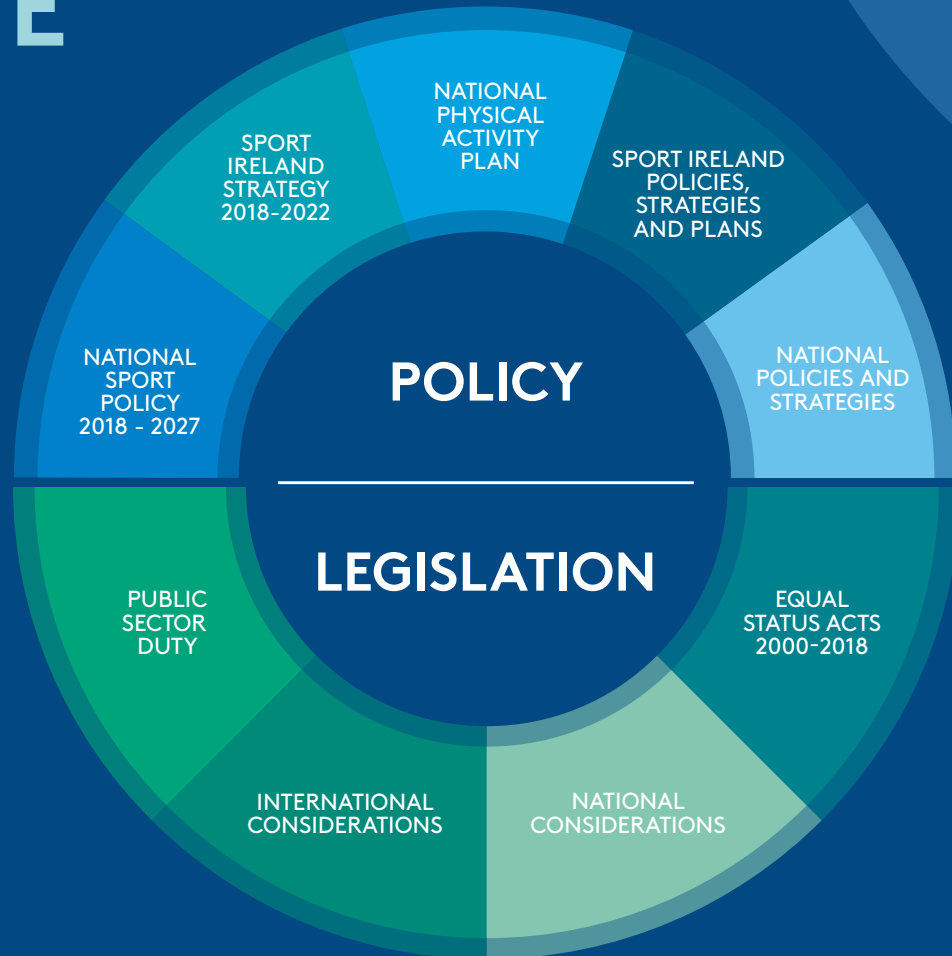
Among those from diverse backgrounds, active participation in sport is similar or lower than the rest of the population.

Those with disabilities show significantly lower levels of active participation. Data from the Irish Sports Monitor shows that social participation in sport (which includes club membership, volunteering and event attendance across sports) is consistently lower among those from identified diverse backgrounds versus comparable groups.

These lower levels of participation are not through the choices of individuals, but are a legacy of years of a long standing status quo that no longer reflects contemporary society. It is now time to put in place a policy that will drive change.

POLICY & LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

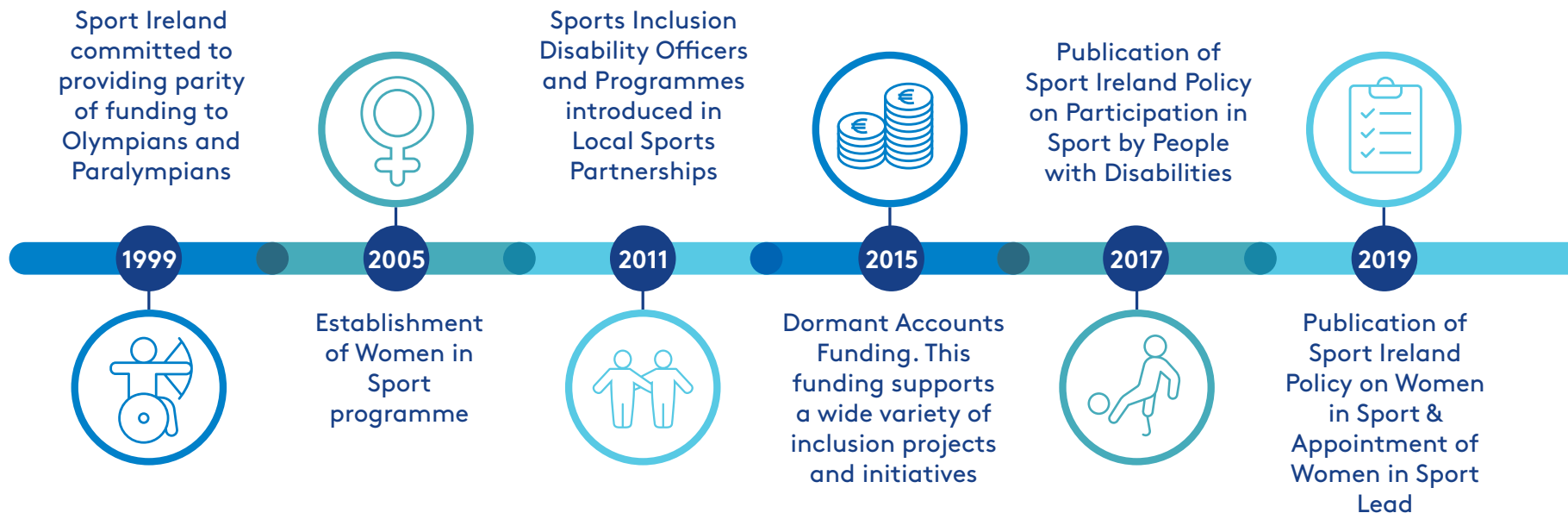
Broader policy and legislation exists both in the sport and physical activity sector, and in wider society that supports and drives this policy.





ACTIONS

TO DATE



A Sports
Inclusion
Disability Officer
in every LSP in
the country



2019



2019

Appointment
of Diversity
& Inclusion
Manager



OUR **POLICY PILLARS**

Through our Diversity and Inclusion research, national policies, and work with expert partners, Sport Ireland identifies five key policy pillars which have emerged as current gaps & future opportunities for diversity and inclusion in sport. We will work with the sport sector to target each of these five pillars in order to deliver on the commitments of this policy.





WHAT DO EACH OF THESE FIVE PILLARS INCLUDE?



CHANGE

How we become champions of change involves:

- Conversations about diversity
- Awareness, Understanding and Confidence
- Conduct and use of language



COMMUNICATION

How we tell people and raise awareness involves:

- Visibility of inclusion
- Representation and role models – the celebration of success
- Promote opportunities, amenities and facilities



ACCESS

How we break down barriers involves:

- Proactive efforts
- Outreach
- Venues, Transport and Affordability



CAPACITY

How we build capacity and skills across sport to lead on inclusion involves:

- Education and Sharing of Knowledge
- Resources and Support



LEADERSHIP

How we make the right decisions and take responsibility involves:

- Culture
- Governance structures
- Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

To address each of these pillars, Sport Ireland is focused on achieving the objectives assigned to each pillar. These objectives are reflective of the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 and National Physical Activity Plan, as well as Sport Ireland's own strategy.

OUR OBJECTIVES AND **OUTCOMES**



OBJECTIVES		DESIRED OUTCOMES
CHANGE		
1.	Sport Ireland will lead from the front and provide a nationally co-ordinated approach, engaging with the sector to create a cultural and practical shift towards inclusion.	That sport becomes more welcoming and inclusive, offering greater opportunities for participation and improvement to all.
2.	Support the sector to understand diversity and inclusion and its benefits, what it means at national, local and club level and how to be more inclusive, covering areas such as supporting culture change and developing champions of change.	An increase in awareness and confidence in the sector to engage people from diverse backgrounds.
COMMUNICATIONS		
3.	Promote the availability of programmes, initiatives and opportunities for people from diverse communities, using targeted, inclusive and culturally appropriate methods of communication.	Greater awareness amongst diverse communities of opportunities to participate.
4.	Develop and support the use of a visible outwards commitment to diversity and inclusion that will be promoted by campaign at national level, for use at local level – club, venue, facility.	Greater awareness of diversity and inclusion at national level; participants at local level feeling welcome.
5.	Improve the visibility and profile of local and national role models to inspire others in relation to participation, performance and high performance.	That the make-up of sport (volunteers, coaches, officials, players, family) reflects the make-up of the broader population.
ACCESS		
6.	Provide support to sports and clubs to develop outreach programmes – proactively bringing the sport out to diverse communities, or partnering with existing outreach programmes.	More clubs will be more inclusive and proactively retain diverse communities as active members of their clubs.
7.	Development of specific programmes to focus on diverse communities and on removing cost, transport and access barriers.	More people from the target groups will be participating in sport and physical activity because of the barriers to access being removed.

OBJECTIVES		DESIRED OUTCOMES
CAPACITY		
8.	Develop a suite of capacity building and education resources for the sport sector to empower the sector to cater for the needs of diverse communities at national and club level – these resources will be co-designed with expert partners.	An improvement in the skills, knowledge and capacity of the individual and the organisation to engage people from diverse communities
9.	Expansion of and investment in the Sports Inclusion programme to create a Diversity and Inclusion remit across the LSP network	An increased focus on building the capacity of clubs at a local level to become more diverse and inclusive.
LEADERSHIP		
10.	Improve research (data and insight) around the participation of diverse communities in sport across all levels, so that actions taken can be based on data, and changes tracked and evaluated.	Access to data-based decision making and the ability to track change and design actions according to that data
11.	Support the representation of a minimum % of marginalised groups in leadership positions at Board level in Sport Ireland, NGBs and LSPs, and next within staffed positions, and later onwards to local/club level	More people from the target groups will be represented on senior and other positions e.g. coaching, management and committee level roles
12.	Establishment of a Diversity and Inclusion Champion at national and club level.	Changes made to organisational culture to foster inclusion, as well as improved understanding across & within communities

RESOURCES

Sport Ireland will assign appropriate resources to deliver on the commitments of this Policy. There are three core areas of resource: **People and Partnerships**, **Programmes**, and **Investment**.

PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS



A Sport Ireland Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Group will be established to act as a leadership group overseeing the implementation of this Policy. The Diversity & Inclusion Manager will be tasked with Policy activation. NGBs and LSPs will be consulted in this process ensuring all five target areas are sufficiently addressed. Sport Ireland will work with stakeholders and partners in the sector, and those representing diverse communities, to best understand requirements and support the delivery of initiatives.

PROGRAMMES



Sport Ireland recognises the capacity of NGBs and LSPs to deliver initiatives that impact on diversity and inclusion in sport. Sport Ireland will continue to invest in and evaluate the programmes of NGBs and LSPs and specifically those that support diversity and inclusion in sport. Sport Ireland will also enhance the work delivered to the sport sector internally with a specific focus on governance, leadership, and capacity building.

INVESTMENT



Sport Ireland recognises that the success of this policy depends on the level of investment and support provided. Sport Ireland is committed to investing in the areas required to support the delivery of this policy.









www.sportireland.ie
[@sportireland](https://twitter.com/sportireland)