



Diversities in physical activity and sport

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1. INTRODUCTION

This *Guide* aims to promote equality in the participation and enjoyment of physical activities and sports at the Universitat de València. It is addressed to all types of groups and people, with a special focus on vulnerable populations.



Why is this guide necessary?

Diversity embodies the most advanced approaches to the promotion of physical activity and sport in democratic societies and especially in their educational institutions. To this end, the **Universitat de València** has recently issued regulations and actions aimed at recognising diversity and promoting equality (regarding gender, social minorities and vulnerable groups) in the university environment. However, to date no cross-cutting initiative has been put forward to address diversities in a broad sense, nor has there been a specific application of this approach to the field of physical activity and sport. From this perspective, this Guide:

- Provides **information and resources** to translate these ideas and intentions into practice.
- Is **addressed to** both physical activity and **sports professionals** (managers, instructors, coaches etc.) **and the general public**.
- Seeks **to promote and provide guidance on equality** in the participation and enjoyment of physical activities and sports **for all type of groups and people** at the Universitat de València.



Inclusive physical activities and sport

Physical activities and sports can and should be adapted to the diversity of individuals and social groups.

They are of great personal and social relevance, as they can make a substantial **contribution** to people's **well-being, health and overall development**. Regardless of fitness level, or personal and socio-cultural condition, anyone can benefit from them. There is such a broad range of options that it would be always possible to find (or create) a physical activity that would match personal interests, possibilities, preferences and abilities. This means that physical activities or sports can and should be adapted to the diversity of individuals and social groups, and not the other way round.

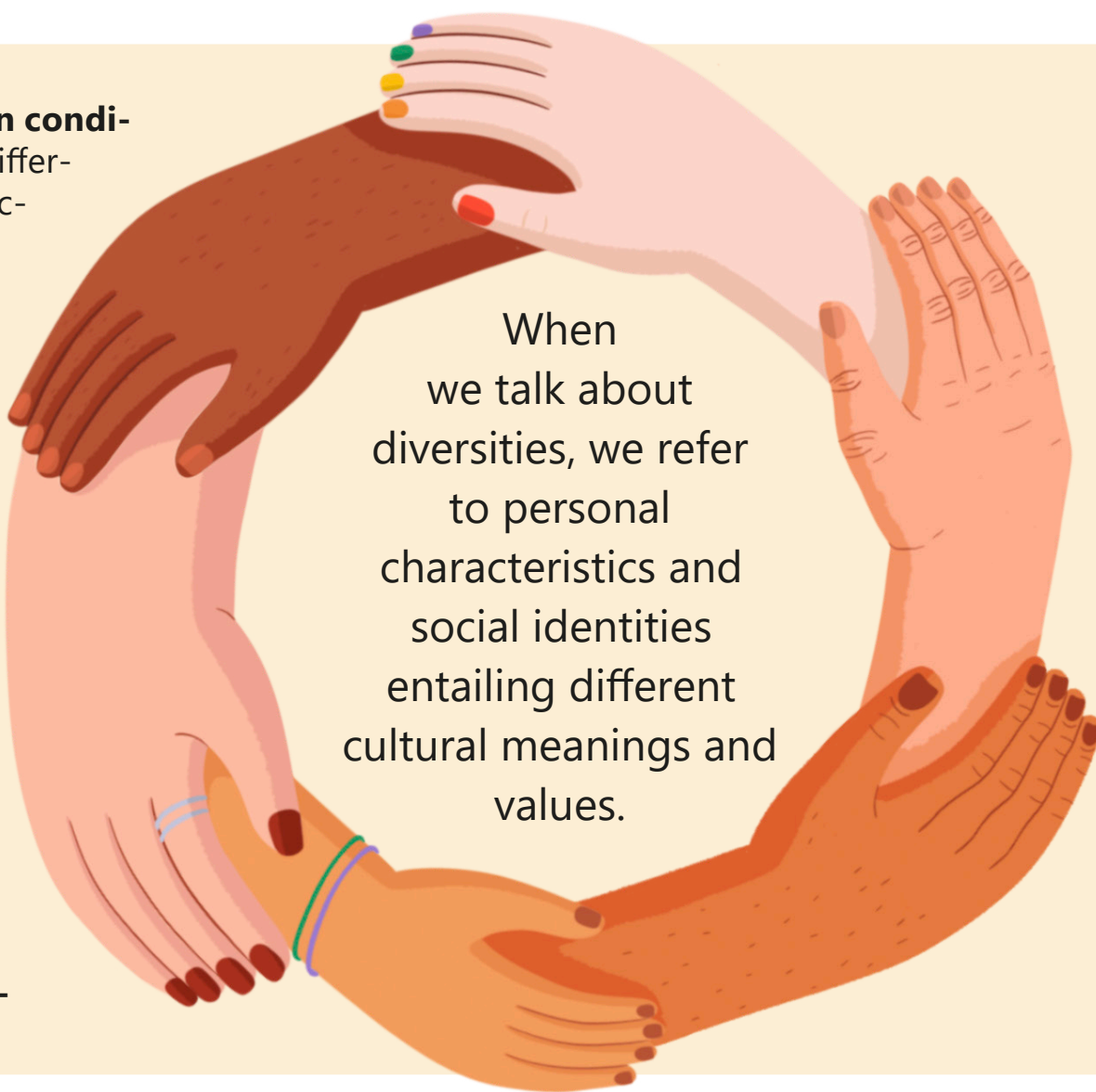
Therefore professionals need to **re-think what and how we do** for all people to enjoy and benefit from physical activities and sports.



It is not just a matter of bringing people into sports and physical activities, but about **making sure that diversities are respected and adequately attended to** in those settings. This implies changes in how physical activities and sports are developed, as well as in the environments in which they are performed, leading to a **person-centred professional approach**.

Diversities as part of the human condition

Diversity is inherent to the human condition. On a personal level, we have different bodies, personalities, preferences and abilities. Moreover, culture, which shapes the basic meanings shared by groups of people, is also diverse in its trends, beliefs and forms of social organisation. **The recognition and appreciation of these diversities enhances** and opens up new possibilities for personal and social growth, and provides different perspectives to understand and inhabit the world. From this basic premise, there are many different ways of approaching the understanding of personal and social diversities. Focusing on physical activities and sports, it is important to bear in mind at least **two key aspects**:



When we talk about diversities, we refer to personal characteristics and social identities entailing different cultural meanings and values.

Diversities, bodies and meanings

We are diverse because we have diverse bodies

Many of the traits that define diversity (age, gender, colour of skin, etc.) are corporal. These embodied traits are essential material support of our identity, which mediate and shape our interpersonal and environmental relationships. For example,

a person may say of herself that she is tall, female and young. However, this **corporal identity is not only personal, but also social**, insofar as it is shaped by comparison with other people.

Diversities entail meanings and values

To a large extent, the different ways of interpreting and valuing the embodied traits that shape identity depend on culturally constructed and socially shared beliefs and values. Therefore, **the appreciation and valuing of diversities** is not neutral, but often rests on socially, culturally and historically delimited stereotypes and prejudices. For example, some cultures value youth, while others place greater value age-re-

lated experience. We can also think about how the aesthetic judgement of overweight bodies has changed over recent centuries. Ultimately, these social and cultural meanings we attribute to the body greatly influence on how we see ourselves and how others see us, and what expectations we have about what they can or cannot be or do.



Vulnerable and excluded groups in sport

Due to different cultural constructions and social structures, **not all identities receive the same recognition and nor do all people enjoy similar opportunities** to participate equally. In every socio-historical moment, certain groups are rejected and see their rights breached, even though the persons or groups change, and the type of violation of rights varies. For instance, consider how women's rights, unlike men's, were denied in the recent past, or the rights of transgender people, ethnic minorities or people with disabilities are denied nowadays.

Some individuals and social groups are undervalued, disadvan-

tagged, excluded or marginalised just because of some common corporal characteristics they share. In these cases, the **difference becomes inequality**. It is not just about 'labels' or names, but about suffering injustices and disadvantages because of embodied identities that do not conform to the prevailing social and cultural meanings and values.

The idea of vulnerability, which has become so popular in recent times, nevertheless entails risks in our approach to these groups. No social group, no person, no collective is just vulnerable. It is precisely this emphasis on vulnerabilities (without

an effort to understand the different capacities that every person and group possesses) that is one of the main criticisms of the approaches that place focus on diversity. Moreover, being 'vulnerable' implies a potentiality, a risk, a fear of something that may (or may not) happen.

Therefore, when rights and the fulfilment of basic needs are continually neglected or violated, we need to go beyond regarding people as simply vulnerable (as if they had an intrinsic or potential problem). Instead, we should consider them as **individuals and groups whose rights have been infringed**.

The rights and the fulfilment of the basic needs of certain individuals and groups are continually neglected or violated. In these cases, we should move beyond regarding them as simply vulnerable (as having an intrinsic or potential problem) to considering them as individuals and groups whose rights have been infringed.



Addressing diversities in physical activities and sport

There are so many different factors influencing social recognition or exclusion that it is difficult to identify which individuals and groups are vulnerable and how they become excluded. However, rejection can be recognised in terms such as **LG-BTI-phobia, fatphobia, gerontophobia, xenophobia** or **ableism** (see the glossary). These concepts show that sexual orientation, gender identity, weight, age, ethnicity

or physical-cognitive capacities may embody **situations and processes of exclusion and violation of rights**.

The truth is that, in the specific field of physical activity and sport, there is evidence proving that people belonging to these groups experience particular difficulties of access to, and lack of adequate spaces, or are stigmatised by various factors. In many cases, activities that match their

preferences and abilities are scarce, or the equipment and facilities are inadequate for their needs. On the other hand, some people's bodies are regarded as strange or queer, making their presence in physical/sporting environments shocking and even inconvenient. These forms of **relational exclusion** are much more subtle, but just as unjust (if not more) as those resulting from the explicit denial of their rights.

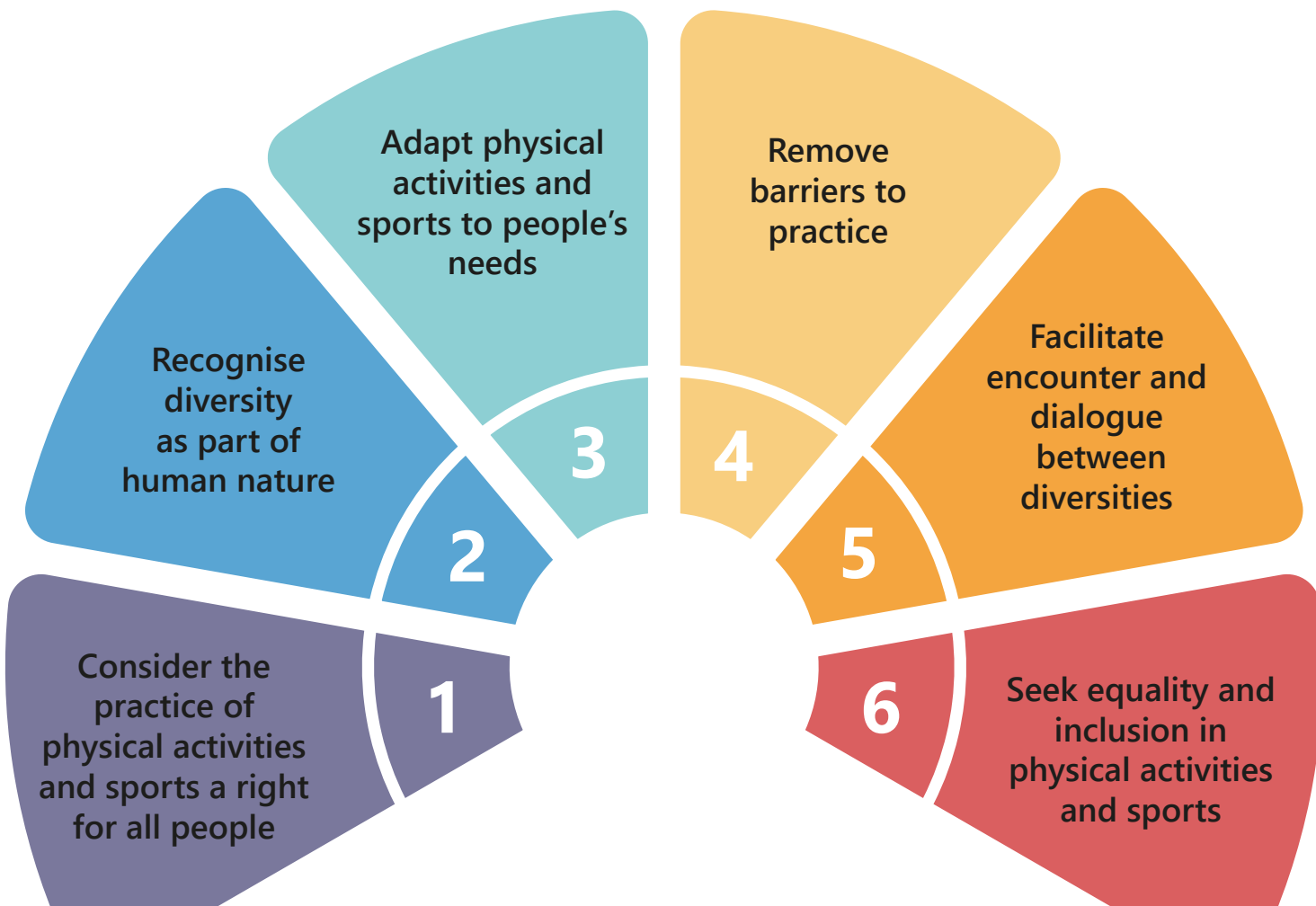
Acknowledging and attending to diversities means broadening visions, changing beliefs and enhancing the variety of options of practice, so that physical activity and sports become fairer and more rewarding for more people.



2. PRINCIPLES OF PROCEDURE

The following principles are a series of general ideas formulated with the intention of **drawing our attention to diversities when involved in physical activities and sports**. These principles

not only guide our practice or ways of understanding activities, but also commit us to actions that address the equal right of everyone to engage in physical activity and sport.



2. Principles of procedure



1. Consider the practice of physical activities and sports a right for all people

All people have equal right to benefit from some form of physical activity **without any discrimination** based on gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, body size, disability or any other condition.



2. Recognise diversity as part of human nature

Diversity is part of human nature and is present in our social relations. Recognising diversity does not imply that we change or deny identity. **Instead, it means that we must respect other possible identities.**



3. Adapt physical activities and sports to people's needs

We must adapt physical/sports activities to people, especially to those who have more difficulties to get involved. This is the only way to make activities **accessible and beneficial to everyone**. To do this, it is vital to consider the wide variety of activities, the modifications we can make, the methodologies used to teach them and the possibilities and preferences of people and groups.

2. Principles of procedure

4. Remove barriers to practice



Access and participation in physical activities and sports must be effective, minimising barriers that hinder or prevent the exercise of this right. These barriers, which can be personal as well as social and environmental, tend to affect more vulnerable people and groups, who are precisely those who can benefit more from this kind of activities.

5. Facilitate encounter and dialogue between diversities



It is vital to convince all stakeholders of their responsibility to foster environments that provide satisfactory experiences for all participants. **Respect, empathy and communication** are basic pillars for dialogue between diversities. Meeting different people is the best way to break down barriers and prejudices.

6. Seek equality and inclusion in physical activities and sports



Seeking equality is about meeting both the **common and particular needs** of specific individuals and groups that sometimes require more professional attention. We need to be aware of the subtle forms of exclusion and consider the point of view of those who are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. On the other hand, **the vulnerable people and groups are also diverse**. It is not, therefore, a question of victimising or a priori stereotyping individuals or groups. On the contrary, respecting diversity and seeking equality means being open-minded, **promoting social justice** and paying adequate attention to the needs of all individuals and social groups.

3. PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

Staff, coaches, teachers and managers of the facilities play an essential role in putting the principles of this guide into practice.

Let us look at two fundamental aspects that contribute to this: language and professional ethics.



Language

An inclusive approach requires inclusive language that recognises diversity. **Inclusive language** is broad, respectful and consistent. **Broad**, in the sense that it uses terms and expressions that recognise and embrace the diversity of corporal identities (not only the majority ones); **respectful**, since it accepts

people's idiosyncrasies and avoids referring to them with pejorative or offensive terms; and **consistent**, because it seeks coherence between the characteristics of the language and the personal and social reality of the people to whom it refers, avoiding the reproduction of exclusionary stereotypes.



How to put inclusive language into practice

Communicating through difference

Professionals need to **use appropriate language**. For example, using names and pronouns coherently with our real gender is a way of asserting our right to decide who we are and how we want to be treated. We also need to know who we are referring to when we use language. For example, when we talk about 'women' participating in sport and physical activities, we mean all women, including trans, queer, lesbian, bisexual, women of colour, women with disabilities, women with non-normative bodies and women of different ages.

On the other hand, a **positive use of language** implies avoiding derogatory labels (e.g. clumsy, lazy) or a paternalistic tone (e.g. he *suffers* from a disability, we are *fighting* against his obesity). For example, imagine how frustrating and demotivating it would be to refer to the 'handicap' of a person with a particular physical impairment. Instead, the language used can highlight people's strengths. Someone who uses a wheelchair can also be friendly, strong, and a hard worker!

Ultimately, language can provide rich, productive and authentic experiences for people involved in physical activities and sports...
Or the opposite!



Examples of problematic and preferable language use

Disability	Problematic	Preferable
	<p>Avoid using inappropriate words that emphasise pathology ("suffers from", "affected by", "victim of", "afflicted with") or disability ("The disabled, the blind, epileptics, a quadriplegic, an invalid, a handicapped, a handicapped person, a retarded person, cripples").</p> <p>Avoid negative descriptions: "Wheelchair-bound", "confined to... a wheelchair".</p>	<p>Use terms that highlight the person and not the pathology or disability, always putting the word PERSON in front. For example, "person with a physical disability" or "person with cystic fibrosis".</p> <p>Use positive descriptions: "A wheelchair user" or "a person using a wheelchair" or "a person who uses a wheelchair".</p>
Gender	Problematic	Preferable
	<p>Avoid generalised masculine words such as "men" and "boys", "sportsmen", "man of the match", "chairman" and "linesmen".</p> <p>Avoid linking certain jobs to a gender such as "cleaning ladies", "caretakers", "club chairman".</p>	<p>Use gender-neutral words such as "person", "people", "sportspeople", "player or star of the match", "chair or chairperson" or "assistant referee".</p> <p>In other cases, you can use the word "person" or other words that refer to specific groups such as "the population or young people", "players", "referees".</p> <p>You can also use gender splitting if you do not abuse it. For example, "women's and men's coaches", "men's and women's game" if the context allows.</p> <p>Use gender-disempowering words such as in the following sentences: "Cleaning staff", "Janitorial staff", "Sports-technical staff" or "Club chairperson".</p>

Examples of problematic and preferable language use

Body shape	Problematic	Preferable
	Avoid stigmatising words such as "flabby", "heavy" and "lazy".	Use more neutral words such as "body weight" or "large" and positive words such as "stouter" or "greater stature".
Sexual orientation Gender identity	Problematic	Preferable
	Avoid insulting words when referring to groups of people: "dykes", "faggots", "trannies" or "effeminate people or sissies, tomboys or butch and the odd ones out"	Use precise and respectful words to refer to these groups, such as "lesbian women", "gay men", "trans people" or "people with sexual and gender diversity".
Age	Problematic	Preferable
	Avoid generalised masculine terms ("the boys", "the guys") and inappropriate ones ("the old man", "the dependents", "the old women", "the burdens on society").	Use other generalist terms with no gender connotations such as "kids/children" or "adults or adult population". In other cases, use more precise terms such as "elderly people" or "person of advanced age".

Examples of problematic and preferable language use

Ethnicity/Race	Problematic	Preferable
	Avoid pejorative terms such as "spic", "illegal immigrant", "negro", "coloured person", "half-caste", "towelheads" (Moors/North Africans), "menas", "pikies" or "gyppos".	Use more precise words such as "migrant person", "person in an irregular situation", "black person", "racialised person", "person of African descent", "Maghreb person", "Moroccan person", "Roma or Gypsy person".
General	Problematic	Preferable
	Avoid expressions such as: "the poor", "the homeless", "shopping at the Paki shop or the Chinky shop", "Islamic terrorism".	Use words such as "people living in poverty", "people with low income", "going to the supermarket or market" and specify the terrorist group (e.g. "Al Qaeda" or "Daesh").
General	Problematic	Preferable
	Avoid using the term " normal " or "normal people".	Use other more precise expressions such as "able-bodied people", "heterosexual people", "normal-weight people" or "the rest of the population".
General	Problematic	Preferable
	Using 'he' or 'she' exclusively to refer to people implies that non-binary people are not considered. Gender pronouns (and possessive adjectives) are part of a person's identity. A continuous usage of wrong pronouns is a form of hostility or microaggression.	Corresponding pronouns/possessive adjectives for non-binary people are: Ze/zie/sie (for she/he) Zirs/hirs (for hers/his) Zir/hir/zim (for her/him) Zis (for her/his)

Conclusion

People cannot be defined solely by one characteristic (ethnicity, sexual orientation or age), as they are all the result of a specific and unique combination that places them in the world. In order to be truly inclusive and egalitarian, these characteristics should never be ranked one above the other and, of course, pejorative labels should not be used at all.

Clara is Clara



My name is Clara, and I am a woman. It is not a question of choice (wanting to be a woman), or of feeling (feeling like a woman), or of changing anything (I have always been a woman). However, I admit that being born with male genitalia has made it all a bit confusing. Because they thought I was a boy, they called me "John", a name, however, I couldn't identify myself with. I knew I was "Clara", but it took me a long, long time to make it clear to some people.

Fortunately, this was not the case at the sports centre where I have been going for the last two years. There, everyone has always called me by my name. There I am just Clara. I am always personified as a female. When they refer to "girls", I know they mean me. I am one of them. It's incredibly refreshing! My name is part of who I am. A very important part. It seems so simple...

Professional ethics

Doing our job well is a matter of professional ethics. Our service to society is to help people live fulfilling lives, to meet their needs and help them formulate and achieve their goals. This aspiration is neither easy nor simple to achieve, but it is essential to legitimise our professional work.

One way to do this would be to put **person-centred professional action** first, i.e. **to treat all people as beings worthy of respect and capable of making their own decisions.**



How to implement a person-centred approach

A person-centred approach is a process that involves:

1) Listening to people (and, where appropriate, to their immediate environment)

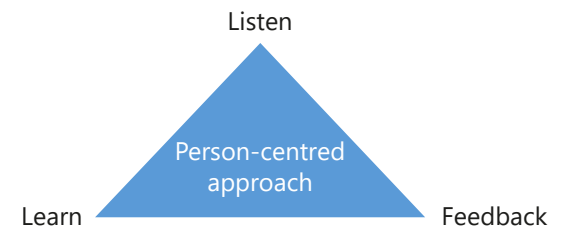
We have to count on people to understand what they want or need, and to be able to help them get it. In order to do so, we have to **avoid 'classifying' them and predetermining their aspirations or objectives**. For example, deciding that an obese person must exercise simply to lose weight means: a) classifying them (you are a fat person); and b) predetermining their aspirations (someone with obesity must exercise to lose weight). These types of message may be motivating for some people, but they can also damage their self-esteem and undervalue the wider benefits of physical activity and sport. Losing weight may be desirable, but doing so at the expense of self-esteem is not conducive to a full and satisfying life.

2) Obtaining feedback from the actions implemented

We must be able to analyse in a responsible manner the consequences and obligations of our professional actions in the specific context in which they are carried out. For example, if we want our actions to be fair, we must learn to treat people equally in their common needs, but also to support the specific needs of individuals and groups. If in doubt, **it is best to talk to the people concerned** about what they need and how they do or do not want to be treated.

3) Learning from practice

Our professional approach has to be a source of knowledge. To this end, we need to **reflect** on what we do and the consequences of what we do **before, during and after** our professional activities. Reflecting implies (re-)examining our own goals, strategies, behaviours and approach on a continual basis, as well as seeking new developments and pathways to match the tastes, capacities and needs of all people. Ultimately, **the services we provide are not an end in themselves**. What is important is to focus on the people we serve.



Working for diversity

Emphasis on service

Talking about people
Planning for people
Focusing on people's deficiencies, labels and diagnoses
Creating support based on what works for some people
Things are done this way because it works for the profession or service.
Family and community are distant or simply ignored in the provision of services.
The customer is always right.

We do what the majority demands.



Emphasis on people

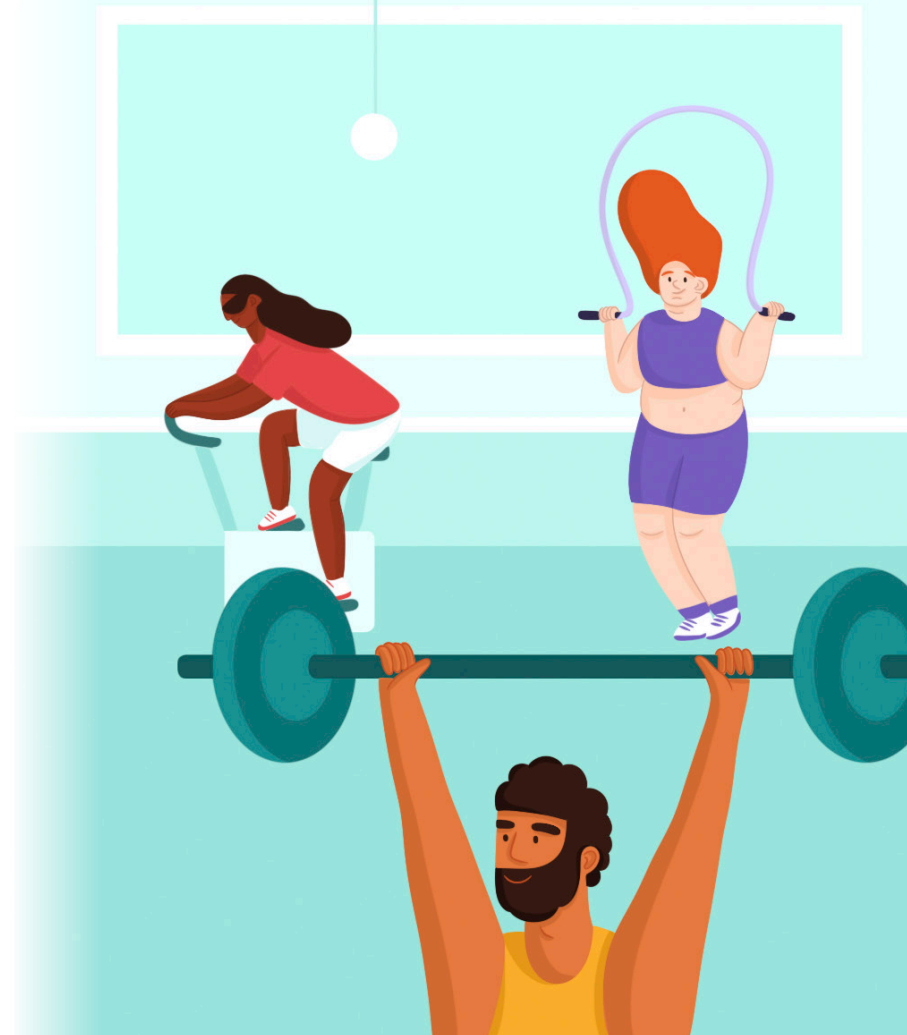
- ✓ Talking to people
- ✓ Planning with people
- ✓ Focusing on people's strengths, skills and capabilities
- ✓ Finding solutions that can work for all people
- ✓ Things are done this way because it works for people.
- ✓ The family and the community share the responsibility for the care of users.
- ✓ We help people make their own decisions in an informed and reasoned manner.
- ✓ Attention to common and individual needs

Reflections of a gym manager

Almost four months ago Maria, a wheelchair user, came to our gym for the first time. Maria 'could' come to our Facility, which complied with all accessibility regulations. There were access ramps, lifts, the doors were wide enough for her wheelchair, we had toilets for disabled people... In other words, our gym allowed Maria to exercise supposedly like any other user... in theory.

However, we soon realised that this was not the case in practice. In reality, Maria could come to the gym (i.e. access it), but she could not use the facilities and equipment on an equal footing with others, i.e. whenever she wanted to. She also did not attend any organised classes because, as she later told us, she felt that **"that was not my place"**.

Often, in informal chats and team meetings, we would talk about María. Somehow, we knew something was wrong, and that worried us. We talked about it a lot. It was not a matter of our attitude. On the contrary, we tried to be nice to Maria, to encourage her to participate in classes and to help her get into the machines. Finally, we decided that the best thing to do was to talk to her. So one day, when I saw her arrive, I asked her if she wanted to have a coffee. We chatted for a long time about many things that had nothing to do



Reflections of a gym manager

with the gym, until I finally asked her: “How do you feel here?”. What she replied proved decisive. **“Very good, I love coming here”** -and added: **“although sometimes I feel a little bit intimidated”**. Since then, our aim has been to ensure that Maria’s experience of the gym is one of a welcoming place.

After several group meetings, we decided we should start with some simple adaptations. For example, there are now spaces in the gym that she can actually use when and how she wishes, with no or minimal assistance (in particular, we have installed an arm pedalling machine, and we have fitted elastic bands on wall bars, at an accessible height). Maria also told us that **she loved to dance, but was embarrassed**. So we invited one of her relatives to accompany her to an adapted zumba class, in which people with very different abilities can participate. It was such a success that Maria **asked us if she could bring more friends** (also wheelchair users), to which we gladly agreed. And everyone enjoys the classes, some on their feet and others in their wheelchairs!

Ultimately, we believe that thanks to Maria we have improved and can continue to improve our service. And we want to continue along this path...

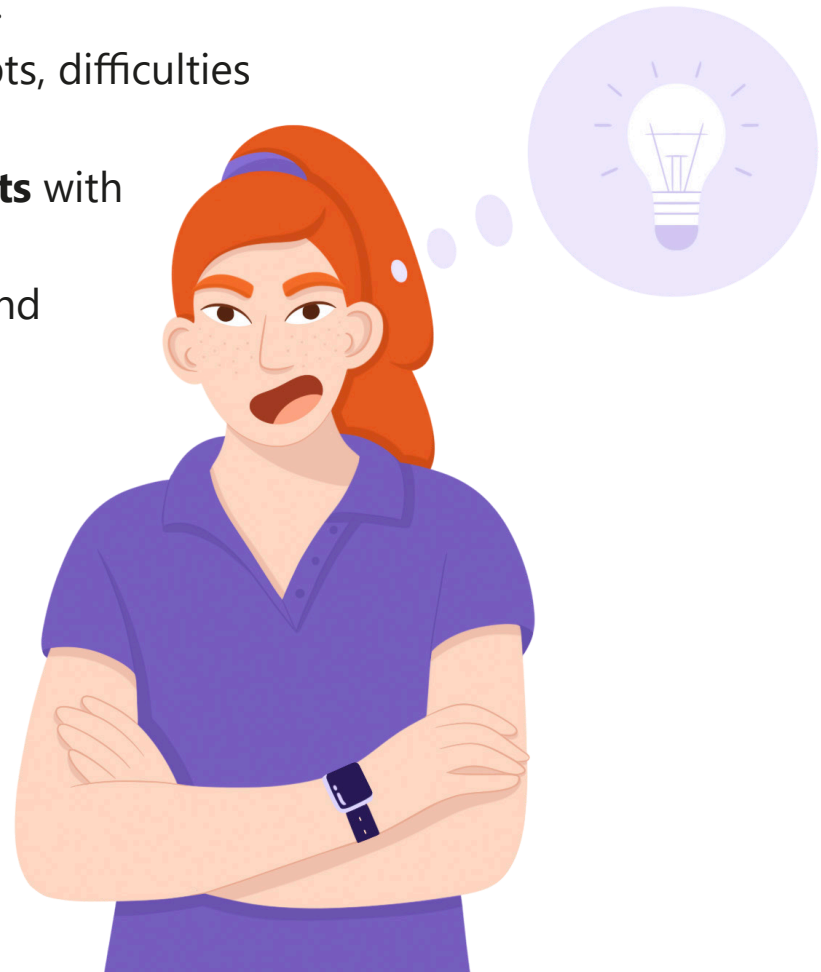
People-centred professional action

People-centred professional action must be understood as a process that starts from the **needs and interests** of the people involved and during which professional actions are **learnt** and **readjusted**.



12 key ideas for action

- Understand that everyone is **different**.
- **Avoid** stereotypes.
- First listen, then talk and ask questions, **don't be left in doubt**.
- Don't be afraid to **be wrong**, but apologise if you are.
- Show willingness to **learn** at all times.
- **Support** anyone who expresses doubts, difficulties or lack of knowledge.
- Create safe, challenging **environments** with accountable relationships.
- All people **deserve equal** attention and respect.
- Look for **solutions**, not problems.
- Ask yourself **questions** about what you are doing and share them with your colleagues.
- Look for **up-to-date information** in your professional work.
- In the face of discrimination and harassment:
React! **Zero tolerance**.



4. ACTIVITIES AND CONTEXT

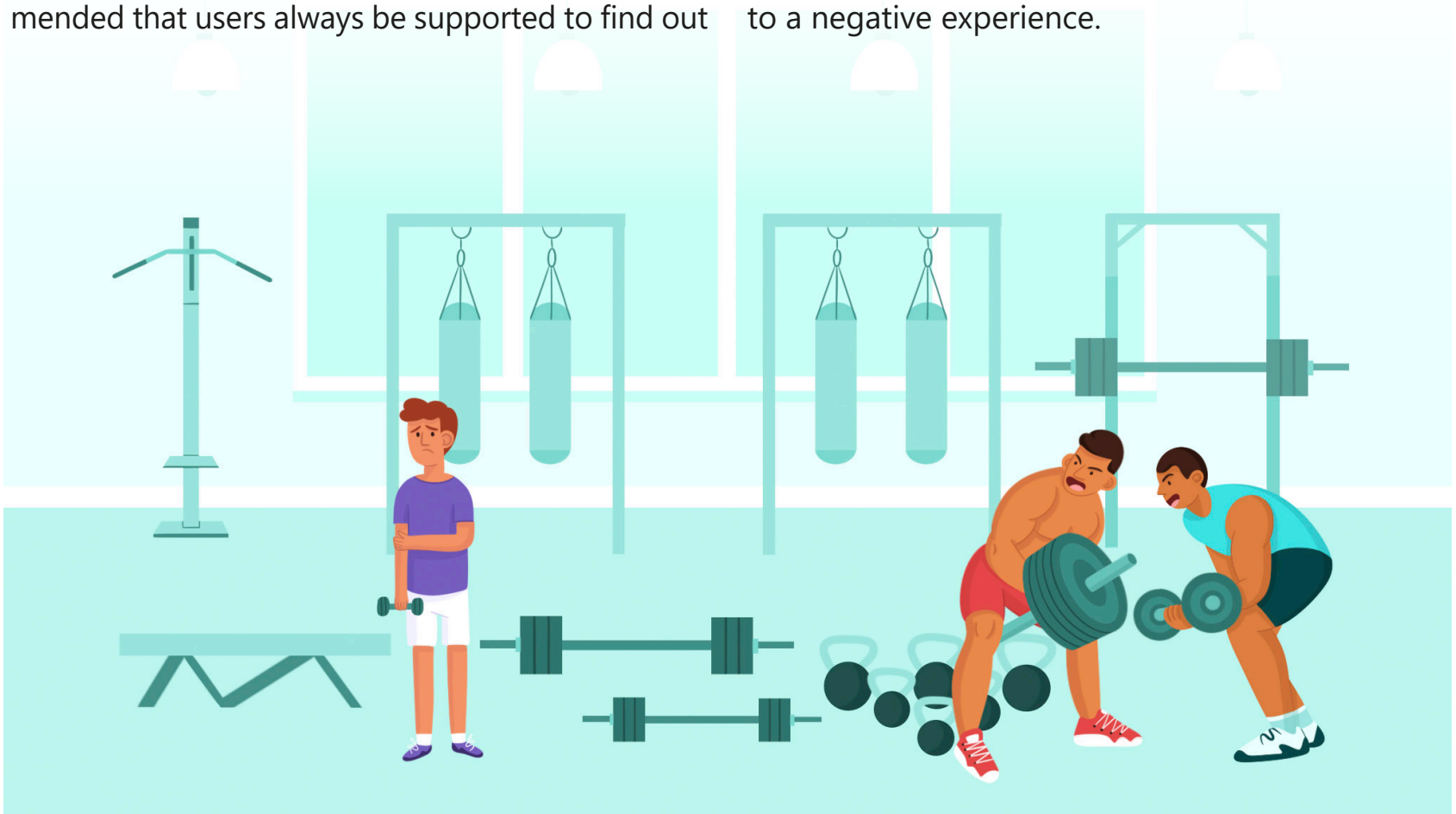
The range of possible physical activities and sports available is so wide and varied that it is always possible to find (or create) an activity suitable to our interests, possibilities, tastes and abilities. This means that physical activities and sports can and should be adapted to the diversity of people and social groups, and not the other way round.



The importance of positive visibility

As long as there is no explicit rejection, it is advisable to **make the diversity of people, bodies and cultures visible** during physical activities and sports. This contributes to the acceptance and normalisation of diversity. This visibility must be free from stereotypes, giving value to each person and **avoiding any kind of discrimination**. It is recommended that users always be supported to find out

the degree of satisfaction or possible problems and barriers that they may face during the activity. This is a **responsibility** that must be assumed mainly by those people in charge of the activity and it is especially important that they do this at the beginning. **A bad start may cause participants to drop out the activity immediately** or may lead to a negative experience.



Personal relationships

Relationships between people who participate in physical activities and sports must be based on **respect** and **equality**. This principle is valid for all types of activities: recreational or performance activities, individual in shared spaces (yoga, gym, swimming, etc.), cooperative (partner dancing, capoeira, sailing, etc.), combat or opponent sports (martial arts, tennis, etc.) or cooperation-opposition sports (football, basketball, volleyball, etc.).

Not all people have the same learning pace or previous experiences. For this reason, sessions cannot be prepared in the same way for only one type of user, but **the strategies** chosen must be **adapted to the specific needs of each type of user**. Different levels of difficulty or workload can be offered within the same activity, as well as simple sequences that gradually become more complex.



Wide range of physical activities and sports

To provide a wide range of physical activities and sports that are not limited to an homogeneous public and are open to diversities of gender, ability, age, culture, sexuality and body size. It is advisable to foster mixed activities that are suitable for people with disabilities, can be carried out by non-normative bodies, are affordable and reflect the values of different cultures.

SPORTS SERVICE

TIMETABLE	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00/9:00H	FOOTBALL	DANCING (WHEELCHAIR)		CYCLING	ADVANCED FUNKY
9:00/10:00H		VALENCIAN PELOTA	ADAPTIVE ATHLETICS	ADAPTIVE TENNIS	
10:00/11:00H	PÉTANQUE		SWIMMING		
11:00/12:00H		GOALBALL	YOGA N1	ARCHERY	
12:00/13:00H	(WHEELCHAIR) BASKETBALL				
13:00/14:00H		ADVANCED YOGA	JUDO		
14:00/15:00H	FENCING	BOCCIA		BOCCIA	
15:00/16:00H			(WHEELCHAIR) FENCING		
16:00/17:00H	YOGA N1	SOFT GYMNASTICS		GOALBALL	
17:00/20:00H	EASY FUNKY		SOFT SPINNING		
20:00/21:00H		AFRICAN DANCE		FOOTBALL	
21:00/22:00H	ADAPTIVE SWIMMING		VALENCIAN PELOTA		



Importance of methodologies for participation

We should never assume that mixed activities promote equality between participants. Inclusion and participation are determined not only by the activities and people, but also by the **teaching methodologies** used. The aim is to

create a **culture of participation** from which all people, instructors, coaches and users are concerned with the **well-being** and **satisfaction of practitioners** in the activities.



Signing up to the activities

We must respect the diversity of people's identities when they sign up for a physical activity or sport. Therefore, for example, according to the ["Protocol on gender identity and expression"](#) of the Universitat de València: "the University must guarantee access to and use of university facilities in accordance with everyone's self-reported gender identity, including toilets and changing rooms, and must adapt, if necessary, the spaces to make this right effective".



The illustration shows a registration form titled "CULTURE AND SPORT" with a sneaker icon. The form is divided into sections: "REGISTRATION FORM" and "PERSONAL DATA". It includes fields for "NAME", "SURNAME", "ID", "DATE OF BIRTH", "GENDER" (with options FEMALE, MALE, and NON-BINARY, where NON-BINARY is selected with an 'X'), "POSTCODE", and "TELEPHONE". There is a "USER NO." field at the top right and a profile picture of a man. Below the personal data section is a section for "ACTIVITIES TO ENROL IN". At the bottom, there are fields for "DATE" and "SIGNATURE". A hand holding a blue pen is shown filling out the form.

Stands and supporters

It is crucial to promote **respect**, from the people in the stands, towards those participating in a match or sports competition, including referees, and to condemn insults or disrespectful and discriminatory banners.



Competition and diversity in sport

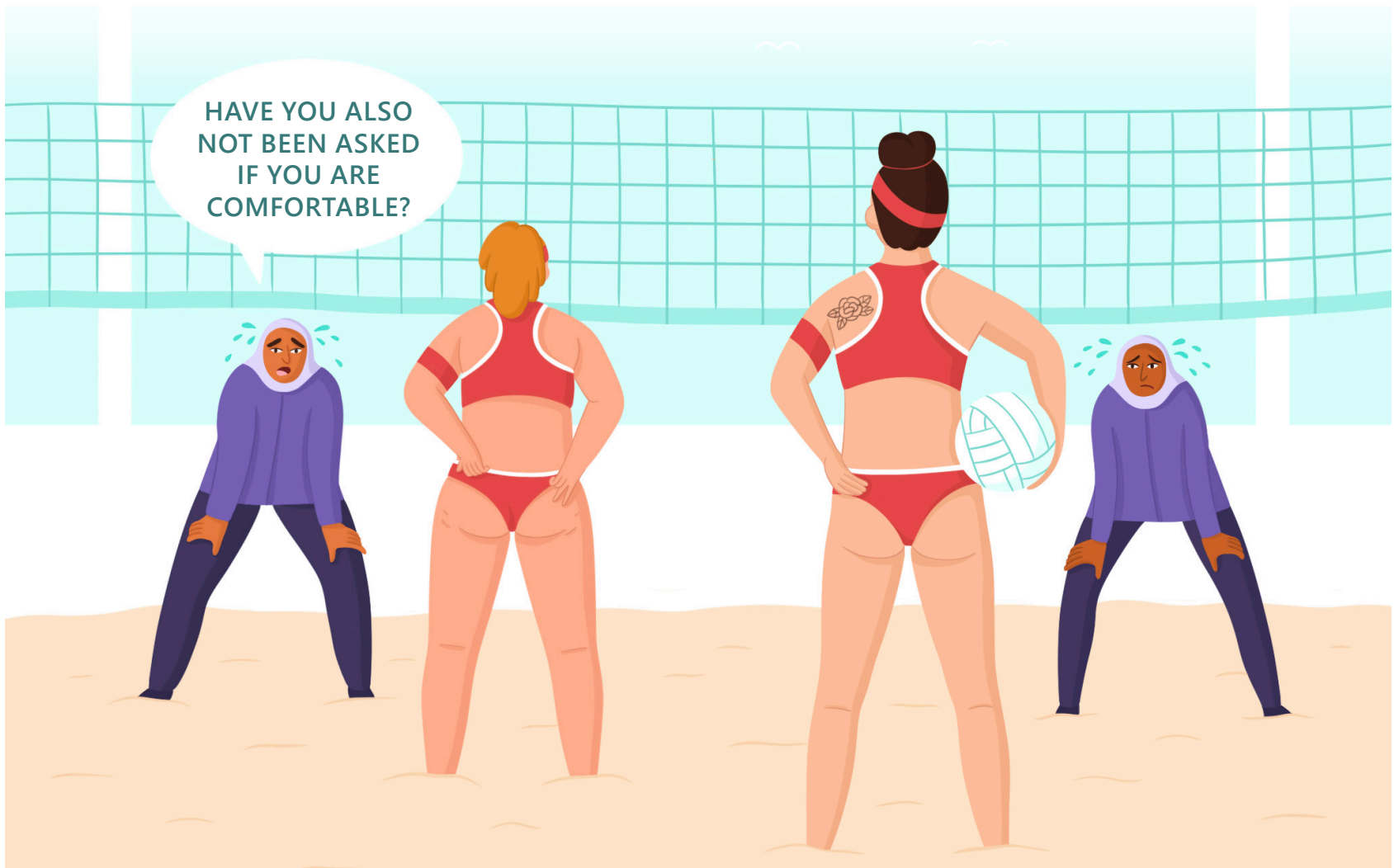
Sports competition should allow for **equal participation** of diverse persons in the same game or sport. However, it can be difficult in certain cases, for example, when there are people with disabilities. In these situations, the most common is to create different categories to facilitate equal participation of those involved in sports. However, we can also **introduce rules or modifications that ensure a starting point of equality** between participants in order to

enjoy a good game or sport. On other occasions, it is even recommended to apply the **principle of difference**, whereby the most disadvantaged people would obtain greater benefits and the most favoured or advantaged less. The aim is to ensure **that competition does not generate major inequalities** and, if it does, that the competition system has mechanisms to mitigate them.



Sportswear

It is important to foster **respect for the choice** of sportswear and prevent the obligation to wear clothing that is not freely chosen and that may promote sexism, cultural intolerance or discomfort for non-normative bodies.



Stereotypes and inequalities

Stereotypes often contribute to **disfiguring or distorting reality**. This occurs to the extent that a person is lumped into a social category or group and certain characteristics are attributed to him or her based on preconceived opinions or **prejudices**. He or she is expected to think, feel and gen-

erally behave in a way that is consistent with the characteristics of that group. In these cases, people are seen as part of **a group that is assigned a distorted set of characteristics**. Essentially, stereotyping is about making generalisations of a group of people.



5. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Sports equipment and facilities **are not neutral**. Their characteristics (sizes, shapes, uses, accessibility) facilitate or prevent certain bodies from occupying or using them. They carry subtle meanings that directly influence the principles and objectives of equality and universal access proposed by sports institutions. They can favour situations of stigmati-

sation and exclusion that influence well-being and participation in physical activities and sports. To avoid situations of this kind, sports institutions need to be aware of existing **architectural and material barriers** and **propose restructuring**, where necessary, in order to maximise the benefits of these activities for all users.



Physical accessibility to sports facilities

Facilitating physical accessibility to sports venues not only means **guaranteeing compliance** with **disability** laws, but also incorporating **innovative elements** to achieve this goal. For example, **handrails** should be installed in these spaces to facilitate the movement of those people with reduced mobility. Sports centres that offer their services on different floors of the building must incorporate **lifts** in their facilities to ensure accessibility.

In addition, **wayfinding** strips shall be placed in the facility to help people with reduced visibility find their way around. For the same reason, both the access doors and interior doors shall **contrast** in **colour** with adjacent areas and door handles. It is also important to incorporate **pictograms** that facilitate the understanding of messages for people with language impairment or greater difficulties with language, including foreigners and immigrants.

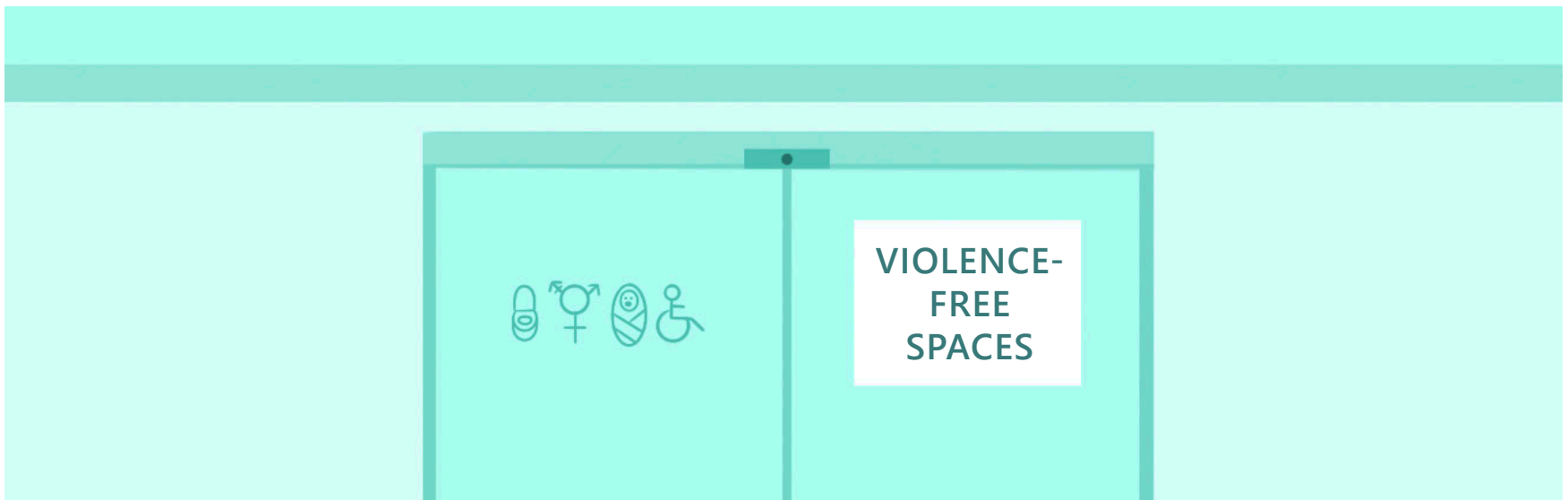


Improving accessibility and use of changing rooms

The changing rooms are highly regulated and differentiated spaces. Most facilities have male and female changing rooms, as well as changing rooms for disabled and non-disabled persons. This gender- and ability-restricted admission creates pecking orders and inequalities. Given that most changing rooms feature communal and open areas for changing clothes and showering, they promote greater body visibility and exposure of differences between people. In the changing rooms, young, able-bodied, white, slim bodies that respond to the hegemonic model of male or female beauty are highly valued, while those

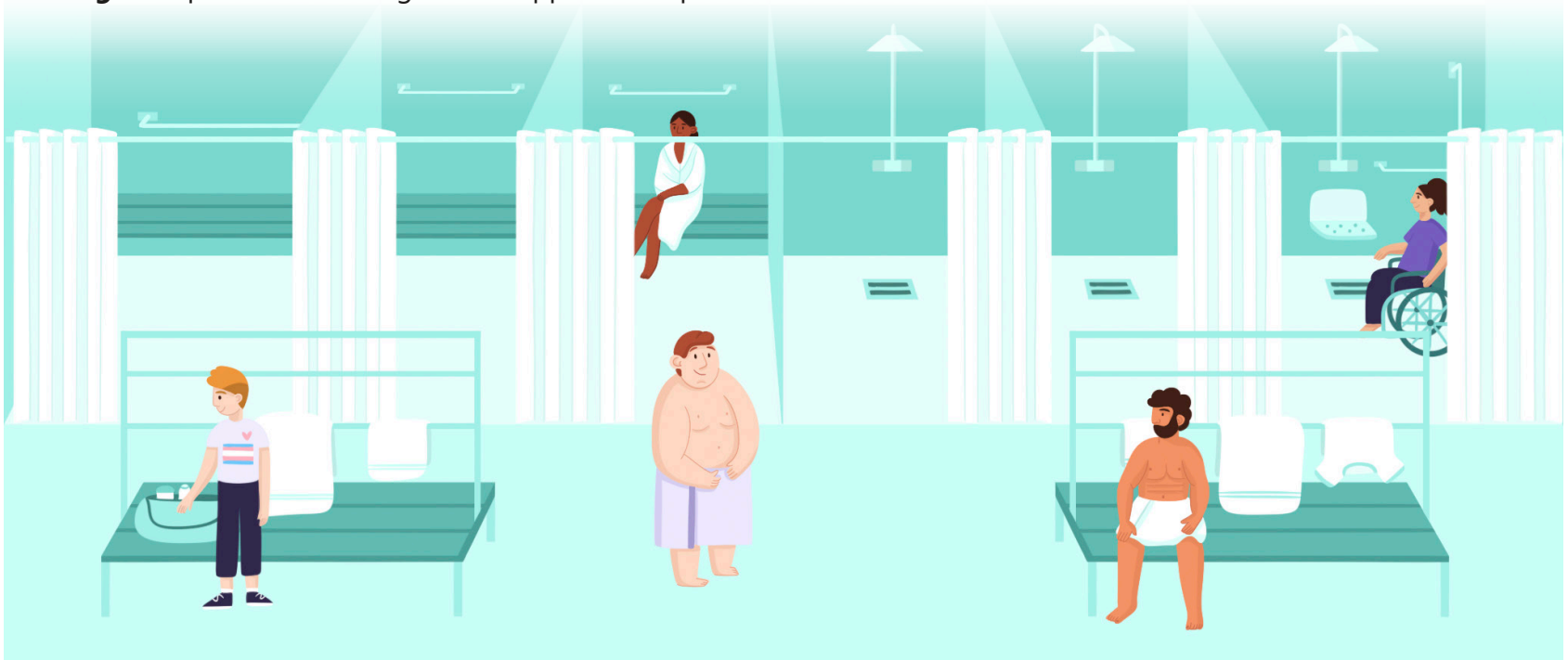
who deviate from these standards are stigmatised and belittled.

Changing rooms and toilets should be **comfortable and safe spaces for all who use them** and should be designed for a wide range of bodies and (dis)abilities. A first step in achieving this involves the **physical transformation of the space** and the **removal of physical barriers**, but beware: removing physical barriers does not, in itself, remove the social or cultural barriers, which also need to be addressed.



Characteristics and conditions of an inclusive changing room

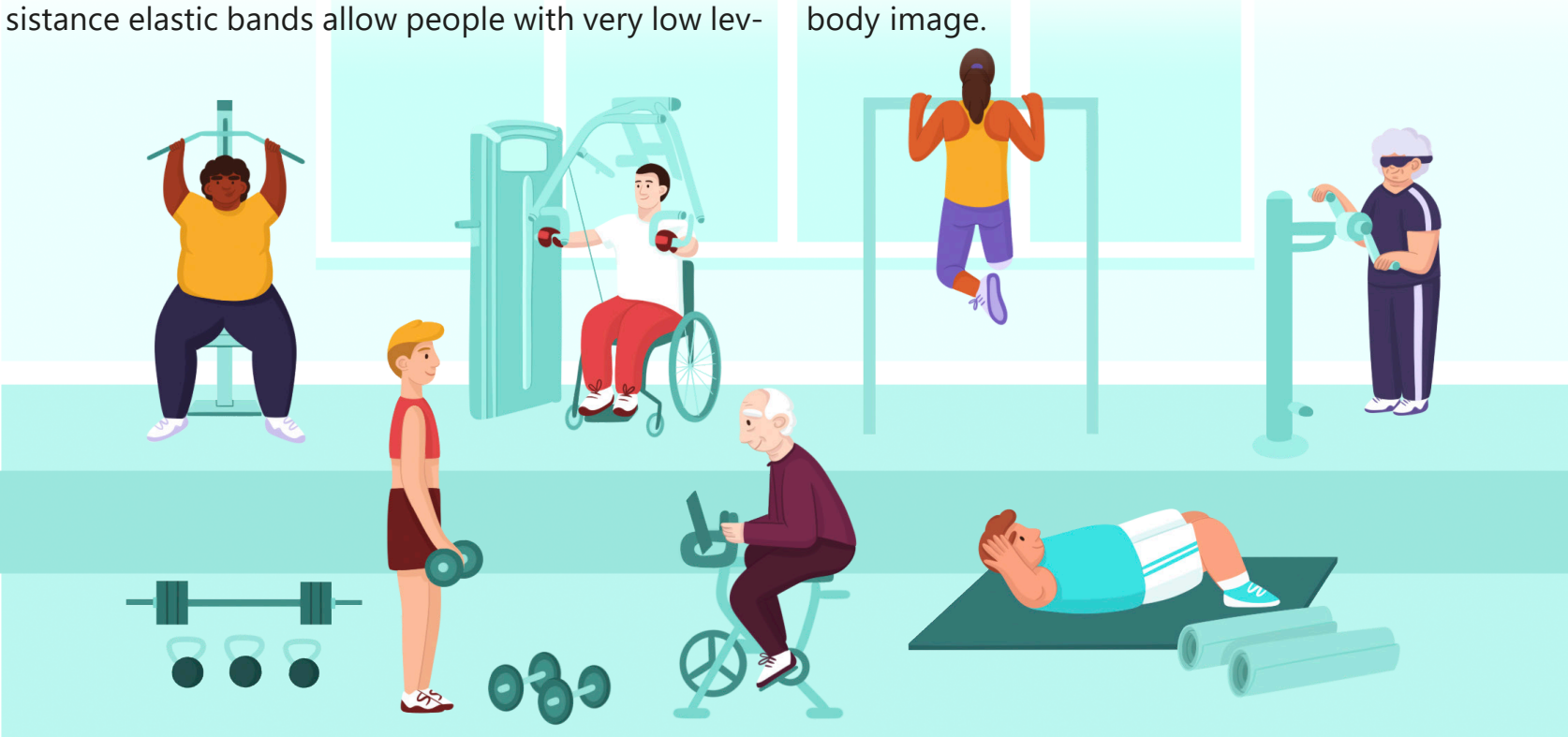
- Changing rooms should be **non-binary spaces** to include anyone who defines themselves as trans, intersex, queer and gender non-binary.
- They must guarantee privacy and **intimacy**. This will include private showers and individual rooms with toilets rather than urinals, so that everyone can make use of these facilities, particularly those who do not wish to reveal their bodies.
- These spaces should form part of the **anti-violence policies** and should have visible preventive posters and all necessary information against sexual abuse.
- Changing rooms and toilets should have **accessible** showers and toilets for people with different degrees of mobility, as well as wide doors that open outwards or sliding doors, **non-slip flooring** and spaces wide enough to fit supports if required.
- The different elements of the changing room, such as switches, sockets or accessories (soap dispensers, hand dryer, etc.), should be in a low position to **ensure that they can be used** by people of different heights.
- The changing rooms should have **homogeneous lighting** to prevent glare, and the walls and floor should be also constructed to prevent glare from reflections.
- The different spaces and services in the changing room should be marked with large, easy-to-understand **graphic information** in colours that contrast against the surroundings. This information should also be communicated through lights to indicate that the space or service is in use and **tactile signalling** for blind persons.



Equipment

The spaces must be equipped with all kinds of **materials and equipment adapted** to the needs and characteristics of the people who use them. It is important that machines are **suitable** for use by people with disabilities or that benches used for strength training with these machines are not fixed to the floor and can be removed and a wheelchair used instead. Other **equipment** should also be **varied and versatile** to suit different characteristics, capacities and preferences (elastic bands, free weights, machines, arm pedalling machines, etc.). For example, low resistance elastic bands allow people with very low lev-

els of strength due to their personal characteristics to do strength training. Strength and conditioning equipment with a pneumatic system (compressed air resistance) also make it easier to work with very low and adjustable loads than with dumbbells and free weights. For example, in gyms, people with obesity need mats with greater weight-bearing capacity, more space to access weight machines or larger mats and benches. **Inclusive spaces** should also consider the number and location of mirrors, as in some cases they can contribute to a negative self-assessment of body image.



The illustration depicts a bright, modern gym environment with large windows in the background. It shows a diverse group of people engaged in various exercises. In the foreground, a person with a beard and a yellow shirt is using a seated chest press machine. To their right, a person in a wheelchair is using a similar machine. Further right, a person in a yellow tank top and purple pants is performing a pull-up on a bar. In the background, a person in a purple shirt is using a standing machine. In the foreground, a person in a red shirt is holding a dumbbell, and an older man in a purple shirt is sitting on a stationary bike. A person in a blue shirt is lying on a mat, and another person is using a resistance band. Various pieces of gym equipment like dumbbells, kettlebells, and a barbell are scattered on the floor.

5. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

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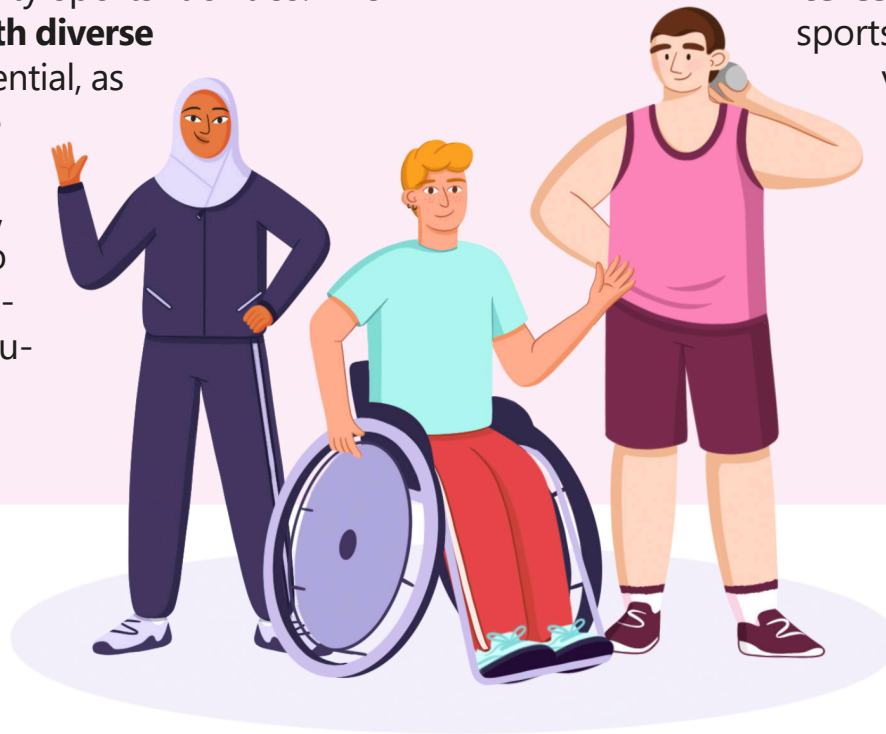
An illustration of a gym environment. In the background, a person in a wheelchair is using a rowing machine. To the left, a person is using a chest press machine. In the foreground, a person is standing and holding a dumbbell. To the right, a person is sitting on a stationary bike. On the floor, there are various pieces of gym equipment including a barbell, kettlebells, and more dumbbells. The scene is brightly lit with large windows in the background.

An illustration of a gym scene. In the background, a person with a long dark ponytail, wearing an orange tank top and purple shorts, is performing a pull-up on a light blue horizontal bar. To the right, an older woman with short grey hair, wearing a dark blue tracksuit and sunglasses, is using a light blue stationary exercise machine. In the foreground, a man with brown hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt and white shorts with blue stripes, is lying on his back on a dark green mat, resting his head on his hands. Two rolled-up light blue mats are on the floor next to him. The gym has a light blue floor and a white wall with a large window.

Trained and diverse staff

Effective promotion of sport and physical activity in these spaces requires **sufficient and qualified personnel** who are familiar with the development of sports and the use of adapted equipment in university sports facilities. The recruitment of **staff with diverse body types** is also essential, as it not only invites the most inactive people to participate in sport, but also contributes to making the sporting environment a more inclusive place.

The staff in question should not limit themselves to complying with the general recommendations set out in this guide, but should be **committed to meeting the particular interests and needs** of sports users when they visit the university facilities.



Advertising, due to its great impact on society, is one of the most effective media for **disseminating diversities** in physical activity and sport. It should help convey a **normalised and non-stereotyped image of diversity** in this area to avoid any exclusion or rejection of certain people. On the other hand, elevating people who perform exceptional feats of achievement, e.g. Paralympic athletes, to the status of hero and heroine can also alienate

more ordinary vulnerable people who would benefit greatly from moderate physical activity. In addition, advertising should **avoid messages and images that stigmatise** certain body types, or that exaggerate and distort the health benefits of physical activity (e.g. losing weight at all costs). Finally, it is important to **disseminate adaptive services and resources**, as well as adaptive sport initiatives and inclusive sport activities.



6. GLOSSARY

Ableism: a set of beliefs, discourses and practices that equate a certain type of subject and body to a supposed essential human condition of normality and which consider disability to be a devalued and inadequate condition of the human being that needs to be rehabilitated or cured.

Accessibility: a condition that physical environments, infrastructures, buildings, processes, goods, products, services, objects or instruments, tools and devices must meet in order to be understandable and usable by all people in conditions of equality, safety and comfort and in the most autonomous and natural way possible, improving their quality of life and their active participation in society.

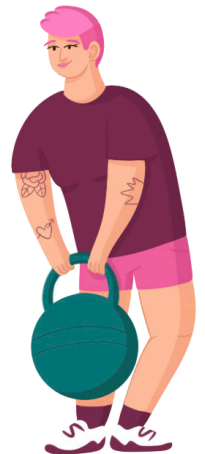
Adaptive sport: a type of sport that is adapted to people with disabilities or special health conditions, either because a series of adaptations and/or modifications have been made to facilitate their practice, or because the structure of the sport itself allows these groups of people to practise it.

Bisexual: a person who is emotionally, affectively and/or sexually attracted to more than one gender, either their own and/or a different gender.

Cisgender (adjective): refers to people whose gender identity is consistent with the biological sex assigned at birth, and therefore have a self-perception and gender expression that matches the behaviours and roles considered 'appropriate' for their birth sex.

Community barriers: these relate to wider issues such as inaccessible public transport, social services or the built environment (e.g. inaccessible pavements).

Diversity: it is the difference and uniqueness that each person brings to the environment from childhood.



Glossary

Ethnicity: a group of people with a shared culture, history and customs, and whose members are united by a sense of identity.

Fatphobia: rejection, discrimination and repulsion towards overweight people who deviate from established aesthetic standards.

Gay: a male-identified person who is emotionally, affectively and/or sexually attracted to other men.

Gender: defined as a social construct, which is transmitted through the agents of socialisation (family, school, peer group, media, etc.), and is reproduced and transferred with a variable degree of exigency, which the social structure determines for its members.

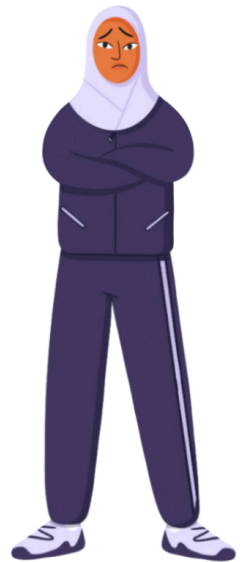
Gender binary or binarism: the concept, practice and system of hierarchical social organisation based on the idea that there are only two genders in societies.

Gender expression: each person's manifestation of their gender identity. It refers to the social experience of gender in aspects such as dress, language and other behaviour patterns that are considered masculine, feminine or androgynous in a particular society and historical moment.

Gender identity: internal and individual experience of gender, as each person feels and self-determines, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

Gerontophobia: fear of growing old and/or discrimination towards people in old age.

Heteronormativity: a cultural system or belief that assumes that people fit into single, complementary sexes and genders, and that heterosexuality is the default sexual orientation. A heteronormative view involves the alignment of biological sex, sexuality, gender identity and identity expression.



Glossary

Homophobia: prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence based on fear, mistrust, aversion or hatred of someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Inclusion: attitude, process or trend that ensures that people at risk of social exclusion have the opportunity to participate fully in social life, and thus enjoy an adequate standard of living.

Inclusive language: language that is respectful and promotes the acceptance and value of all people. This language is free of words, phrases or tones that demean, insult, exclude, stereotype, infantilise or trivialise people on the basis of their belonging to a particular group or because of a particular attribute.

Interpersonal barriers: centred around social relationships with the family, friends or peers, and their influence (e.g. inactivity of friends and family affects more the old people and those with multiple disabilities).

Intersectionality: an analytical and political perspective that recognises that systemic inequalities are shaped by the overlapping or intersection of different social factors such as gender, ethnicity and class, among others.

Intrapersonal barriers: these refer to individual limiting factors such as health status, fatigue or pain, or attitudes towards physical activity (e.g. lack of motivation).

Lesbian: a female-identified person who is emotionally, affectively and/or sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTI: an abbreviation which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and inter-sex. Very often, the letter Q for queer is included, and/or a + sign to include the rest of the affective-sexual diversities.



Glossary

LGBTI-phobia: rejection, discrimination, invisibilisation, mockery or other forms of violence based on prejudice, stereotypes and stigma towards LGBTI people or people perceived as such (including biphobia, interphobia and transphobia and so on).

Non-binary gender/gender diverse/gender queer: a person who does not identify with the gender presumed at birth and who expresses a willingness to move away from the dominant paradigm of understanding gender, which they consider as pathologising, binarist and reifying of the categories of masculine and feminine.

Organisational barriers: linked to institutional factors (e.g. lack of adaptive physical activity programmes in sports facilities and their economic cost; or lack of training of technical staff in sports facilities).

People with disabilities: people with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various social and environmental barriers, may hinder or prevent their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis.

Person with reduced mobility: a person whose ability to move without assistance is temporarily or permanently limited.

Physical activity: any bodily movement, performed with skeletal muscles, that results in an expenditure of energy and a personal experience and which allows us to interact with the people and environment around us.

Physical and sporting activities: a term that aims to bring together all sports and physical activities.

Physical exercise: planned, structured and repetitive activity, the purpose of which is to maintain and improve our physical fitness; physical fitness being understood as



Glossary

the level of energy and vitality that allows us to carry out our usual daily tasks, actively enjoying our leisure time, reducing illnesses resulting from a lack of physical activity and developing our intellectual capacity to the maximum.

Queer: a school of thought that seeks to promote human diversity in a broad sense and avoids fixed or static identities, advocating the versatility and variety of human potentials.

Race: a flexible concept used to name people within a group according to various factors, including ancestral background and social identity.

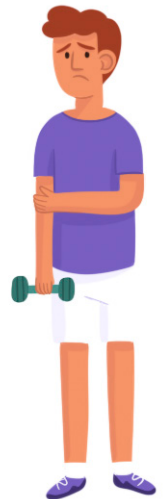
Racism: attribution of traits of superiority or inferiority to a population sharing certain physically inherited characteristics. Racism is a specific form of prejudice that focuses on physical variations between peoples.

Sex: anatomical, biological and physiological difference on the basis of which a person is designated, in our culture, as 'man' or 'woman'. Specifically, sex is determined by the difference of chromosomes, hormones and genitalia in a binary cultural classification (male-female/man-woman) of people and other living beings according to genetic, biological, physical and physiological criteria.

Sexual orientation: a person's tendency to be sexually, emotionally or affectively attracted to people of the same or a different gender.

Specific sport: a type of sport that is intended for people who cannot enjoy or participate in traditional sports, even if they are adaptive. To this end, some sports are created for some specific disabilities.

Sport: competitive, regulated and organised physical activity that has been institutionalised through a process of sportivisation that has emerged in post-industrial societies.



Glossary

Stereotypes: a generalised opinion or prejudice about attributes or characteristics of people that they possess or should possess or the social roles they play. A stereotype is harmful when it limits people's ability to develop their personal abilities, pursue a career and make decisions about their lives and life projects.

Support: devices or equipment used by people with disabilities, on a temporary or permanent basis, which afford a greater degree of independence in the performance of their activities of daily living and generally provide them with a better quality of life.

Trans: an umbrella term for all people who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth according to their sex. The term implies heterogeneity in understanding the body, identity and experiences that go beyond imposed binary social norms. As such, it does not distinguish whether the person has undergone surgery or the political meaning she/he/ze attributes to her/his/zis gender identity.

Xenophobia: hatred, suspicion, hostility and rejection of foreigners. The word is also often used extensively with phobia towards different ethnic groups or towards people whose social, cultural and political physiognomy is unknown.

Victimised group/person: 'victimised' refers to a group/person who has already been affected and has suffered harm, and we are left asking ourselves the question: who is responsible for this condition? The weakness and its causes are external to the person, who is not to blame for a weakness that is often established from outside the affected group.

Vulnerable person/group: 'vulnerable' refers to a group/person who is potentially weak and may suffer harm, physically and/or morally. The weakness is found in the person, as if it were an inherent condition or characteristic.



7. RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY



Resources and bibliography

Guides

- [Guía de comunicación inclusiva](#). [A Guide to Inclusive Communication]. Ayuntamiento de Barcelona
- [Guía rápida. Uso inclusivo del castellano](#). [A quick guide to inclusive use of Castilian Spanish]. Universidad del País Vasco.
- [Somos diversidad](#). [We are diversity]. Activities for the training of formal and non-formal education professionals in sexual, family, bodily diversity and gender expression and identity. Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030 y Ministerio de Igualdad.
- [Guía del deporte inclusivo para personas LGTBI+](#). [A guide to inclusive sport for LGTBI+ people]. Agrupación Deportiva Ibérica LGTBI+.
- [Deporte inclusivo: aplicaciones prácticas](#). [Inclusive sport: practical applications]. Instituto Andaluz del Deporte. Consejería de Educación y Deporte.
- [Libro blanco del deporte para personas con discapacidad en España](#). [White Paper on Sport for People with Disabilities in Spain]. Cermi.
- [Manual de accesibilidad universal en instalaciones deportivas](#). [Manual on universal accessibility for sports facilities]. Comité Paralímpico Español.

Associations and federations

- [Agrupación Deportiva Ibérica LGTBI+](#). [Iberian LGTBI+ Sports Association].
- [Federación Española de Deportes de Personas con Discapacidad Física](#). [Spanish Federation of Sports for People with Physical Disabilities].
- [Federación Española de Deportes para Personas con Discapacidad Intelectual](#). [Spanish Federation of Sports for People with Intellectual Disabilities].
- [Federación Española de Deportes para Ciegos](#). [Spanish Federation of Sports for the Blind].
- [Federación Española de Deportes de Personas con Parálisis Cerebral y Daño Cerebral Adquirido](#). [Spanish Sports Federation for People with Cerebral Palsy and Acquired Cerebral Damage].
- [Federación Española de Deportes para Sordos](#). [Spanish Federation of Sports for the Deaf].
- [Photographic series of different bodies per sport practised](#).

Resources and bibliography

Films

The Swimmers (2022)

Film from the UK directed by Sally El Hosaini. The story of two sisters Yusra and Sarah Mardini who fled war-torn Syria as refugees to live a new life in Europe and have the opportunity to compete at the 2016 Rio Olympics in swimming.

Campeones (Champions) (2018)

Spanish comedy directed by Javier Fesser. The story of Marco, a professional basketball coach, who finds himself one day in the middle of a personal crisis, coaching a team made up of people with intellectual disabilities. What starts out as a problem turns out to be a life lesson.

Wonderkid (2016)

Short film, directed by Rhys Chapman, showing the inner turmoil of a gay professional footballer struggling with bullying on social media because of his sexual orientation. It is part of a campaign to combat homosexual discrimination in the UK.

Dangal (2016)

Nitesh Tiwari directs this biographical film that brings us closer to the life of the Phogat sisters. In India, wrestling is considered a man's sport and a former wrestling champion dreams of training one of his sons to go to the Olympic Games. The only problem is that he has four daughters. While he won't even consider training them, two of them, Geeta and Babita, want to be wrestlers. When they return home one day after fighting with two boys, Phogat realises how wrong he was and begins to train them. The film is the story of how Geeta and Babita became India's first top female wrestlers.

Back on Track (Sein letztes Rennen, 2013)

German fictional tragicomedy directed by Kilian Riedhof. Paul was a legend among marathon runners. He is now in his seventies and lives with his wife Margot in a nursing home where his only choices for entertainment are choir and arts and crafts classes. And he just can't take it any more. For therapy, he puts on his old

Resources and bibliography

running shoes and to the amazement of his colleagues and carers, he starts to run every day in the park of the nursing home, to prepare himself for the Berlin marathon and a repeat of his former glory.

Marathon (2005)

South Korean drama directed by Chung Yoon-chul. It tells the story of Cho-won, a twenty-year-old boy who was diagnosed with autism at the age of five. He trains in small local competitions in order to fulfil his dream of participating in a real marathon.

Gordos (Fat People) (2009)

Spanish comedy drama, directed by Daniel Sánchez Arévalo, about the excesses and shortcomings of life. "Fat People" is a hyperlink cinematic story that revolves around a group of people in therapy with obesity issues.

Wadja (2002)

This is the first feature film shot and directed by a woman in Saudi Arabia, Haifaa Al-Mansour. It tells the story of Wadjda who is ten years old and lives in such a traditional society that certain things like riding a bicycle are totally forbidden to her. Nevertheless, she is a fun-loving and enterprising girl who always skirts the line between the permitted and the forbidden. Wadjda wishes she had a bicycle so that she could compete with her friend Abdullah in a race, but her mother won't let her because bicycles are a danger to a girl's dignity.

A Scene at the Sea (Ano natsu, ichiban shizukana umi, 1991)

Japanese romantic drama directed by Takeshi Kitano, in which a young man born deaf and dumb discovers a half-broken surfboard in the rubbish one day. From that moment on, he turned all his passion to surfing.

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Documentaries

[Audible](#) (2021)

This American documentary, directed by Matthew Ogens, tells the story of Amaree McKenstry-Hall and her classmates at the Maryland School for the Deaf who struggle to succeed in American football while facing personal battles and tragedies.

[Rising Phoenix](#) (2020)

A UK documentary, co-directed by Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui, in which elite athletes and experts reflect on the Paralympic Games and their impact on the way the world views disability, diversity and excellence.

[Los Otros: fútbol y racismo](#) ([The Others: football and racism](#)) (2020)

This Spanish documentary, directed by José Larraza, takes a closer look at racism in football. In recent times, episodes of racism in football have multiplied in countries such as Italy and England. In Spain, the early 2000s saw the highest number of incidents in the history of Spanish football. Without an appropriate legal framework, or the social sensitivity that the situation demanded, it was the footballers themselves who denounced a phenomenon that was beginning to become generalised.

[Alone in the Game](#) (2018)

This documentary from the filmmaker David McFarland, gathers testimonies from several American LGBT athletes in order to cast the spotlight on a widespread problem: LGBT-phobia in sport. It takes us into a world where homophobia and machismo have always been very present. A culture of intolerance, discrimination and exclusion that keeps these athletes in the closet and living in silence. In addition to showing us this reality, the documentary provides references in competitive sport for young LGBTI athletes.

[The Little Team](#) ([El petit equip](#), 2011)

The protagonists of this Spanish documentary, co-directed by Roger Gómez and Dani Resines, are a group of children from a football team who were beaten by every single one of their opponents during a season. When match day comes, they happily rush to put on their kit and run out onto the pitch with bags of enthusiasm, even though they know that only in their wildest dreams would they have a chance of winning.

Resources and bibliography

Too Fast to be a woman?: The story of Caster Semenya (2011)

Documentary directed by Maxx Ginnane that tells the story of Caster Semenya. Her overwhelming victory in the 800-metre race at the World Championships in Berlin in 2009 and her imposing physique raised suspicions about her gender. While international lawyers and eminent scientists analyse what it means to be a woman, the 19-year-old at the centre of the storm just wants to run away. A heartbreaking and uplifting story of a young cisgender intersex woman who overcame incredible obstacles to become the best in the world and discovered that her greatest challenges were yet to come.

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