

Synthesis report



Cross-Country Synthesis Report Para Sport Systems and Disability Inclusion in Sport

February 2026

"Sport For All: Promoting Inclusion and Combating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities"

This report was drafted by ACT LLC in collaboration with the Council of Europe, the European Union and other Sport For All joint project partners.

The data in this report is from the "Sport For All: Promoting Inclusion and Combating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities", a European Union (EU) and Council of Europe joint project, to create a more inclusive sports culture by addressing the barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities in sport and fostering a safe and welcoming sports environments for all. One of the project goals was to generate a comparable, policy-relevant evidence base on disability inclusion in sport across eight countries and identify how Para sport systems are structured, where systemic constraints recur, and which strengthening priorities emerge.

►► To find more information about the project and other countries involved in the project, as well as country factsheets and an educational toolkit created to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport settings, have a look at the project website: www.coe.int/sport/sportforall

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
I. INTRODUCTION	3
1. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY	5
2. SCOPE AND COUNTRIES COVERED	5
3. METHODOLOGY	5
II. CROSS-COUNTRY OVERVIEW	8
III. CROSS-COUNTRY ANALYSIS BY CORE DOMAINS	9
1. <i>Legal and Policy Alignment:</i>	10
2. <i>Governance Models</i>	11
3. <i>Funding Models and Distribution</i>	12
4. <i>Athlete and Professional Pathways</i>	12
5. <i>Accessibility and Inclusion</i>	13
6. <i>Data and Monitoring Systems</i>	14
7. <i>Structural Dynamics Observed Across Para sport Systems</i>	17
IV. SHARED SYSTEMIC GAPS	17
1. <i>Limited and uneven financing for sustainable participation</i>	18
2. <i>Weak entry pathways into Para sport participation</i>	18
3. <i>Limited local implementation capacity</i>	18
4. <i>Transport barriers and territorial inequality</i>	18
5. <i>Weak monitoring frameworks and limited outcome tracking</i>	19
6. <i>Fragmented data systems for strategic planning</i>	19
7. <i>Gender, youth and intersectional participation gaps</i>	19
8. <i>Cross-cutting interpretation</i>	20
V. FINAL SYNTHESIS	21
VI. CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS	21
VII. CAPACITY BUILDING PRIORITIES	26
VIII. OPERATIONAL USE OF THIS REPORT	28
IX. ANALYTICAL INPUT TO THE SYNTHESIS – COUNTRY REFERENCE PROFILES	30
1. ARMENIA	30
2. CYPRUS	38
3. GREECE	46
4. IRELAND	54
5. PORTUGAL	66
6. SERBIA	74
7. TÜRKIYE	85
8. UKRAINE	93

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a cross-country synthesis of Para sport systems in Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine. The analysis was conducted within the framework of the Council of Europe and European Union joint project “*Sport for All: Promoting Inclusion and Combating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities*”. The study aims to identify systemic patterns shaping the development of Para sport across participating countries and to highlight structural factors influencing participation opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The analysis draws on desk research and key informant interviews conducted with representatives of national sport authorities, Paralympic committees, sport federations, and disability organisations. Given the methodological scope of the study, the report focuses on institutional structures, governance arrangements, and policy mechanisms influencing participation in Para sport rather than providing a comprehensive quantitative assessment of participation levels. Where data gaps were encountered, these are treated as analytical observations reflecting broader monitoring challenges within national Para sport systems.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that the recurrent challenge affecting Para sport systems across the countries reviewed relates to the conversion of the commitments into accessible and sustainable participation pathways. Across different governance models, systems frequently demonstrate stronger institutional capacity for elite athlete preparation than for grassroots participation expansion, local programme delivery and early recruitment of persons with disabilities into sport.

Across the countries analysed, Para sport governance is generally embedded within mainstream national sport systems and coordinated through cooperation between ministries responsible for sport, National Paralympic Committees, and sport federations. Several institutional configurations are observed, including centralised governance models led by Paralympic committees, mainstream-integrated systems in which Para sport is primarily delivered through mainstream sport federations, and hybrid arrangements combining both approaches. Despite these institutional differences, many countries face similar coordination challenges concerning the distribution of responsibilities among ministries, sport federations, rehabilitation institutions, and local authorities.

A recurring structural pattern identified across the countries is the coexistence of strong elite-level performance with comparatively limited grassroots participation opportunities. Several national systems demonstrate consistent representation and achievements in international Paralympic competitions, indicating well-developed high-performance athlete preparation mechanisms. However, the institutional pathways enabling broader participation remain less systematically developed. In many contexts, structured mechanisms linking rehabilitation services, education systems, and sport organisations are still evolving, limiting the capacity of Para sport systems to expand participation among persons with disabilities.

Financing arrangements represent another key factor shaping system development. Across the countries analysed, Para sport funding relies predominantly on public financing allocated through ministries responsible for sport and channelled to national federations, Paralympic committees, and sport programmes. While this model provides an essential institutional foundation for athlete preparation and programme delivery, reliance on centralised public funding may also constrain the expansion of participation-oriented programmes where dedicated grassroots financing mechanisms are limited. In several contexts, additional financial resources are provided through private sponsorships, municipal contributions, and project-based funding, although their impact on participation expansion remains uneven.

Across all countries analysed, monitoring and data systems present a recurring institutional challenge. Administrative information on athletes and competitions is typically maintained by sport federations or Paralympic committees for operational purposes. However, comprehensive national systems for monitoring participation of persons with disabilities in sport remain limited. The absence of consolidated participation indicators makes it difficult to track long-term participation trends, evaluate the impact of policies and programmes, or systematically assess the inclusiveness of national sport systems.

The cross-country analysis indicates that governance structures, financing arrangements, participation pathways, and monitoring systems operate as interconnected components within Para sport systems. Governance arrangements influence how responsibilities and resources are distributed across institutions; financing mechanisms shape the ability of sport organisations to sustain participation programmes; and the design of participation pathways determines whether persons with disabilities can progress from rehabilitation or community activities into organised sport. Where these institutional components operate in a coordinated manner, Para sport systems are better positioned to support both participation growth and athlete development. Where these linkages remain fragmented, participation opportunities tend to depend on isolated programmes rather than system-wide institutional arrangements.

The analysis also highlights several cross-cutting inclusion challenges affecting participation opportunities. Although legal and policy frameworks across the analysed countries broadly recognise the right of persons with disabilities to participate in sport in accordance with Article 30 of the CRPD, targeted measures addressing the participation of women and girls with disabilities, youth with disabilities, and persons living in rural or geographically remote areas remain unevenly developed. Accessibility of sport infrastructure, availability of adapted equipment, and access to transportation also continue to influence participation opportunities in many regions.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the development of inclusive Para sport systems depends not only on legal recognition of participation rights but also on the institutional arrangements connecting rehabilitation services, education institutions, local sport organisations, and national governance structures. Strengthening these institutional linkages appears to be a key factor in expanding participation opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Based on the cross-country synthesis, the report identifies several priority areas for strengthening Para sport systems. These include improving coordination mechanisms across institutions involved in Para sport governance, strengthening participation pathways linking rehabilitation, education, and sport systems, improving monitoring systems and participation data collection, and supporting targeted inclusion initiatives addressing gender equality, youth participation, and accessibility barriers. Strengthening the role of local authorities and community-level sport organisations also emerges as an important factor in expanding grassroots participation opportunities.

The findings presented in this report provide analytical input for the next stages of the project, including the development of training modules and practical tools supporting stakeholders involved in the governance and delivery of Para sport systems. By identifying recurring institutional patterns and structural challenges across countries, the report contributes to the development of evidence-informed approaches for strengthening inclusive sport systems and expanding participation opportunities for persons with disabilities across the Council of Europe region.

I. Introduction

1. Objective of the Study

The objective of this assessment is to generate a comparable and policy-relevant evidence base on disability inclusion in sport across eight countries: Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine. It is designed to identify how national Para sport systems are structured, where systemic constraints recur, and which system strengthening priorities emerge across different institutional contexts. The study examines how national legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, Para sport governance systems, funding models, and grassroots-level practices support or hinder inclusion of persons with disabilities in sport.

The findings are intended to support evidence-informed system strengthening and practical action at national and regional levels. The analysis is designed to inform the Council of Europe, national authorities, Para sport bodies, and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in strengthening legislation, institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms, financing approaches, and capacity-building efforts related to inclusive sport participation. This report also provides the analytical foundation for subsequent project components, including training modules and educational tools, ensuring that future interventions are grounded in the structural needs and systemic constraints identified through the cross-country analysis.

2. Scope and Countries Covered

The assessment covers eight countries: Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine. It reviews Para sport governance structures, funding systems, athlete and professional pathways, infrastructure accessibility, data collection and monitoring systems, and national coordination mechanisms.

The scope of the analysis is comparative and system oriented. It does not seek to produce a performance ranking of countries or to evaluate individual programmes. Instead, it examines how different governance and implementation arrangements shape participation opportunities for persons with disabilities in sport, and where common structural barriers persist across national systems. The comparative perspective therefore focuses on institutional configurations and recurring constraints rather than on comparative performance assessments.

The analysis includes both sport-specific legislation and broader disability-related legal and policy frameworks where these reference sport participation by persons with disabilities. Particular attention is given to the alignment of national frameworks with relevant international standards, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), especially Article 30.

Given the downstream use of this report within the broader project, the scope also includes identification of cross-country needs that are relevant for future training, institutional support, and practical guidance materials.

3. Methodology

This cross-country synthesis is based on a structured qualitative research design combining desk review and Key Informant Interviews. The methodological framework was developed to support comparative institutional analysis across eight national contexts while recognising structural differences between countries and variations in data availability.

The desk review constituted the primary evidence base of the assessment. It included analysis of national legislation, policy documents, regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements, strategic plans, and publicly available materials relevant to disability inclusion and Para sport

governance. Documentary sources were examined to identify formal mandates, governance structures, funding mechanisms, participation models, and regulatory provisions affecting sport participation for persons with disabilities.

Key Informant Interviews were conducted to complement the documentary analysis and capture institutional and system-level perspectives from actors directly engaged in disability inclusion, sport governance, Para sport structures, and the civil society sector. Informants were selected based on their institutional roles, technical expertise, and involvement in Para sport governance, disability policy, or sport system administration, ensuring representation of regulatory authorities, governance bodies, delivery structures, and organisations of persons with disabilities. The interviews were used primarily as a validation and contextualisation mechanism rather than as a representative sampling exercise. Their purpose was to support interpretation of documentary findings, clarify institutional practice, and identify areas where formal arrangements and operational realities diverge.

Stakeholder inputs were used to:

- test consistency between formal frameworks and implementation practice
- clarify governance and coordination interfaces
- identify areas of convergence or divergence across system actors
- surface structural constraints, informational gaps, and implementation variability
- support contextual understanding of national system configurations

The analytical approach applied source triangulation, combining documentary evidence and Key Informant Interview inputs to strengthen validity of institutional observations. Documentary sources provide the formal regulatory and structural baseline, while interviews contribute contextual and operational perspectives on system functioning. Where documentary sources and stakeholder perspectives converged, the analysis treated these findings as stronger indicators of stable institutional patterns. Where divergence emerged, the analysis used those differences to identify implementation gaps, coordination tensions, or limits in formal system design.

The research design does not aim to measure participation prevalence, evaluate programme effectiveness or assess system performance. The analysis instead identifies institutional patterns, governance configurations, recurring constraints and overlapping structural needs across national contexts. Comparisons therefore reflect structural characteristics and not comparative performance judgements.

The depth and public accessibility of information relevant to disability inclusion and Para sport systems vary across national contexts. Certain system components, particularly those related to grassroots participation, funding composition and participation metrics, are not consistently documented or publicly consolidated. Where information gaps were identified, these were treated as analytical observations rather than supplemented through inferential assumptions in order to preserve comparability and avoid analytical distortion.

To support comparability, the assessment applied a common analytical lens across all eight countries, focusing on governance arrangements, legal and policy frameworks, financing structures, participation pathways, accessibility conditions, monitoring systems, and institutional coordination. This common structure enables the synthesis to identify recurring patterns while preserving national specificity where it materially affects interpretation. This approach allows the analysis to capture both shared systemic dynamics and context-specific institutional characteristics shaping the development of Para sport systems across the countries reviewed.

Analytical Framework for Cross-Country Comparison

To enable structured comparison across national contexts, the analysis examines Para sport systems across five interrelated analytical domains. These domains are based on the institutional factors that determine how legal commitments to inclusive sport are translated into practical participation opportunities and how participation pathways are sustained from grassroots entry to elite sport development.

Table 1.3.1: Domains and Reach of Analysis

Analytical Domain	Scope of Analysis
Governance and Institutional Structure	Examines how national Para sport systems are organised, including the roles of ministries, Paralympic committees, sport federations, and territorial institutions. Particular attention is given to decision-making flows, coordination mechanisms, and the distribution of responsibilities across governance levels, including how national authorities, sport organisations, and regional actors interact in policy implementation and programme delivery.
Participation Pathways	Assesses how individuals enter and progress within Para sport systems. The analysis considers recruitment mechanisms, links between rehabilitation, education and sport systems, and the institutional structures supporting athlete development from grassroots participation to elite competition, with particular attention to transition mechanisms connecting local participation structures, talent identification systems, and national high-performance pathways.
Financing and Resource Allocation	Examines the financial architecture supporting Para sport development, including the balance between public funding, private resources, and programme financing mechanisms affecting participation expansion. The analysis also considers the extent to which financing models support grassroots participation alongside elite athlete preparation, and how reliance on centralised public funding influences system sustainability and programme reach.
Inclusion and Accessibility Measures	Analyses policies and practical measures aimed at ensuring participation opportunities for persons with disabilities, including gender inclusion, youth participation, accessibility of infrastructure, and targeted programmes. The analysis also considers structural barriers affecting participation, such as accessibility of facilities, availability of adapted equipment, transportation constraints, and unequal participation opportunities for women, girls, and youth with disabilities.
Monitoring and Data Systems	Assesses the availability and organisation of information systems used to monitor participation, evaluate programme outcomes, and inform policy development. Particular attention is given to the existence of consolidated participation indicators, gender-disaggregated data, and national monitoring mechanisms capable of tracking participation trends and territorial coverage of Para sport programmes.

The domains discussed in table 1.3.1 provide basis for identifying cross-country patterns and systemic challenges affecting the development of inclusive Para sport systems and for interpreting how governance arrangements, financing models, participation pathways and

monitoring systems interact to shape participation opportunities for persons with disabilities in sport across national contexts.

II. Cross-Country Overview

Across the eight countries reviewed (Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine), several broad structural patterns emerge in the organisation and governance of Para sport systems. While national contexts differ significantly in scale, institutional capacity and resource availability, the overall architecture of Para sport governance follows a limited number of recurring institutional configurations.

All eight countries are States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and formally reflect Article 30 obligations within national legal frameworks. In most cases, Para sport is embedded within general sport legislation or disability rights legislation rather than regulated through standalone Para sport laws. This approach reflects a broader policy orientation toward integrating disability sport within national sport systems rather than establishing parallel legal regimes.

At the institutional level, Para sport governance is organised through a limited number of structural configurations that differ primarily in the degree of integration between mainstream sport systems and disability-specific governance structures. In most countries, Ministries responsible for sport retain strategic oversight and financing authority, while National Paralympic Committees play a central role in international representation and elite athlete development. Grassroots participation is typically delivered through sport federations, clubs and community-level organisations, often with varying levels of institutional coordination and support. Across several countries, stakeholder consultations also indicate that coordination between national authorities, federations, rehabilitation institutions and territorial actors can be uneven, particularly where responsibilities are distributed across multiple institutions or governance levels.

Table 2.1: Governance Models of Para sport Systems

Governance Model	Countries	Key Institutional Characteristics
Centralised NPC-led model	Armenia, Serbia	National Paralympic Committee acts as the primary coordinating body for Para sport development, working closely with central government authorities, sport federations, and other delivery structures.
Mainstream-integrated model	Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal	Para sport disciplines are integrated within mainstream sport governance structures and federations, while the National Paralympic Committee focuses primarily on elite representation and international competition.
Ministry-led hybrid federative model	Türkiye	Athlete development and sport delivery are shared between mainstream sport federations and disability-specific federations within the mainstream national sport system, while the National Paralympic Committee coordinates international representation.

Hybrid disability federation model	Greece	Para sport disciplines are organised through a dedicated umbrella federation for persons with disabilities alongside National Paralympic Committee elite representation functions.
State-network dual model	Ukraine	Para sport governance is structured through a territorially organised network combining state institutions and non-governmental actors, including the National Sports Committee and the Invasport system.

The governance configurations detailed in table 2.1 illustrate different institutional approaches to balancing mainstream sport integration with disability-specific governance structures. The choice of model influences coordination mechanisms, the distribution of institutional responsibilities, and the organisation of athlete development pathways.

At the same time, important divergences appear in institutional design, system scale and resource capacity. Countries such as Ireland and Portugal rely more heavily on mainstream integration through national governing bodies, while others, including Armenia, Greece and Ukraine, maintain stronger disability-specific institutional structures or specialised federations.

Funding arrangements across all countries remain predominantly reliant on public budgets, although levels and diversification vary significantly. Larger systems such as Türkiye and Ukraine support extensive national team representation and institutional networks, while smaller systems such as Cyprus and Armenia operate with more limited institutional capacity and narrower participation pipelines.

Across several national contexts, the analysis also indicates that institutional capacity at grassroots level often remains more limited than elite-level preparation systems. While many countries maintain strong international representation through Paralympic programmes, the institutional pathways linking rehabilitation services, education systems and community sport structures to sustained athlete development remain unevenly developed.

Monitoring and data systems represent an additional cross-country challenge. Participation data is not consistently consolidated or publicly available across all countries, limiting the ability of national authorities and sport organisations to systematically track participation trends, evaluate programme reach, and identify structural participation gaps across territories or population groups.

Overall, the cross-country overview suggests that while normative commitments to disability inclusion in sport are broadly consistent, differences in governance systems and funding structures contribute to significant variation in participation pathways and system maturity.

III. Cross-Country Analysis by Core Domains

The cross-country analysis examines Para sport systems through a set of core analytical domains covering governance arrangements, legal frameworks, financing structures, athlete pathways, accessibility conditions, monitoring systems and inclusion considerations.

Table 3.1: Cross-Country Domain Analysis

Domain	Cross-Country Pattern	Key Variations	System Implication
Legal alignment	All countries recognise Para sport within national sport legislation and disability frameworks	Operational provisions differ across systems	Legal recognition does not automatically translate into participation growth
Governance structure	Para sport embedded within national sport governance systems	Degree of integration between mainstream and disability-specific structures varies	Coordination complexity affects implementation
Funding	Public budgets dominate financing	Diversification through lotteries, sponsorship, or EU funding varies	Grassroots participation often underfunded
Athlete pathways	Elite athlete preparation systems are generally well developed across most countries	Entry mechanisms and transition pathways between grassroots participation, local clubs and national development structures vary significantly	Weak transition mechanisms between grassroots participation and structured athlete development limit long-term participation growth and talent identification
Accessibility	Legal accessibility obligations broadly exist, and inclusive sport is recognised in policy frameworks	Accessibility of facilities, adapted equipment, and transport support varies significantly across regions and local systems	Territorial inequalities and infrastructure barriers affect participation opportunities for persons with disabilities
Monitoring	Administrative data on elite athletes and competitions is widely available across countries	Participation data for grassroots and community sport is often fragmented or not consolidated nationally	Limited availability of comprehensive participation indicators constrains evidence-based policy development and long-term system planning

1. Legal and Policy Alignment

All eight countries are States Parties to the UN CRPD and reflect Article 30 obligations within domestic legislation. In most systems, Para sport is embedded within general sport legislation supplemented by disability rights laws and national policy frameworks rather than governed through standalone Para sport statutes.

While normative alignment with international standards is therefore broadly consistent across countries, the operational depth of these legal commitments varies considerably. In countries

with more developed institutional systems, legal provisions are complemented by national sport strategies, disability action plans or policy instruments that provide a clearer implementation framework. In others, legal references to inclusive sport participation remain more general and lack detailed operational mechanisms.

As a result, the presence of legal recognition does not necessarily correspond to the strength of institutional implementation or to the availability of structured participation pathways for persons with disabilities within national sport systems. Drawing from country experiences identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, some systems demonstrate how this gap between legal recognition and operational implementation can be meaningfully bridged. Where legal frameworks are complemented by time-bound policy instruments with measurable targets, they provide a stronger operational foundation: an explicit national participation target for persons with disabilities embedded in a multi-year sport action plan, with implementation accountability assigned to the statutory sport authority, offers one approach to converting legal obligations into trackable policy commitments (Ireland). Similarly, the adoption of a national physical culture and sport strategy that explicitly names persons with disabilities as a target group, accompanied by a time-bound action plan, provides a replicable accountability mechanism that goes beyond general non-discrimination provisions (Armenia, 2024-2030 Strategy).

These examples illustrate transferable approaches that can support the operationalisation of legal commitments across different system contexts.

Governance Models

Across the eight countries, Para sport governance is embedded within national sport systems, but institutional design varies significantly. **Five principal governance configurations can be identified:**

1. **Centralised NPC-led systems (Armenia and Serbia)**, where the National Paralympic Committee plays a central coordinating role linking ministries, sport federations and other delivery structures while also overseeing national team development and international representation.
2. **Mainstream-integrated systems (Cyprus and Ireland)**, where Para sport disciplines are incorporated within mainstream sport federations and national governing bodies, while the National Paralympic Committee focuses primarily on elite representation and international competition, and Mainstream-integrated system with complementary institutional roles (Portugal).
3. **Ministry-led hybrid federative systems (Türkiye)**, where athlete development and sport delivery responsibilities are shared between mainstream sport federations and disability-specific sport federations within the national sport system under the authority of the Ministry responsible for sport.
4. **Hybrid disability federation systems (Greece)**, where a dedicated umbrella federation for persons with disabilities coordinates multiple Para sport disciplines alongside the National Paralympic Committee's elite representation functions.
5. **State-network dual systems (Ukraine)**, where Para sport governance operates through a territorially organised institutional network combining state authorities, the National Sports Committee for Sports for the Disabled of Ukraine and the Invasport system linking national, regional and local sport structures.

Country experiences from the desk research illustrate what deliberate institutional design can look like in practice across different governance configurations. In mainstream-integrated systems, the formal differentiation of roles between the national sport authority, the national Paralympic committee, and national governing bodies – where each layer holds a distinct and

non-duplicated mandate across policy, elite performance, and pathway delivery respectively, can support institutional coherence while avoiding the duplication that often affects systems with overlapping responsibilities (Ireland). In larger, more territorially complex systems, a nationally coordinated network of regional and local delivery centres for persons with disabilities, operating under a unified institutional framework that connects national, regional and local structures, offers a model for sustaining geographic reach and delivery continuity (Ukraine).

2. Funding Models and Distribution

Evidence from documentary sources and stakeholder consultations indicates that Para sport financing across all eight countries relies predominantly on public budgets. Government allocations constitute the principal funding channel for governance bodies, athlete preparation and programme implementation.

While funding systems remain predominantly oriented toward elite sport, several country experiences demonstrate how financing can be extended toward participation-level activity. Drawing from desk research and key informant interviews:

Routing dedicated disability participation grant calls through national governing bodies, with clubs applying to their federation, which submits a consolidated application to the sport authority, provides a replicable mechanism for extending grassroots reach within the existing administrative architecture rather than creating a separate funding stream (Ireland). Legally structured development contracts covering financial, material and logistical support, with eligibility explicitly extending to clubs as well as federations and the national Paralympic committee, offer a formalised basis for directing resources toward participation rather than concentrating support at institutional level (Portugal). The formal equalisation of allowances, insurance and preparation support between Olympic and Paralympic athletes within the national high-performance framework represents a concrete parity mechanism, translating governance integration into material equivalence of support conditions (Cyprus). The explicit legal designation of Para sport activities, including preparation for and participation in the Paralympic Games and the development of the national Paralympic committee, as activities of general interest in sport provides a statutory basis for sustained public financing less vulnerable to discretionary annual budget decisions (Serbia). In Greece, the CHILON system provides an indicator-based mechanism for distributing the regular grant to federations of persons with disabilities, while disability sport clubs receive a 50% uplift in their calculated rating within the national betting tax distribution system.

In several systems, public financing is complemented by additional sources such as lottery revenues, European programmes, sponsorship or project-based grants. However, these funding streams typically operate as supplementary rather than structural components of the financing architecture.

Across countries, stakeholders frequently report resource constraints affecting grassroots participation and local sport delivery, while available funding tends to prioritise high-performance sport structures.

These examples illustrate transferable financing approaches that can support a rebalancing of investment toward participation-level activity.

3. Athlete and Professional Pathways

Elite athlete representation varies considerably across countries, reflecting differences in system maturity, institutional capacity and population size. Part of the identified systems (e.g. Türkiye and Ukraine) demonstrate high levels of Paralympic participation, indicating structured high-performance pathways. Others (e.g. Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Serbia) show moderate

representation, while part of systems (e.g. Cyprus and Armenia) demonstrate more limited elite presence.

Country experiences from the desk research point to several approaches that have strengthened entry and development mechanisms in practice. Ministry-operated accessible sports schools providing disability-inclusive training through provincial networks, linked directly to disability sports federations, offer a structured and scalable mechanism for expanding participation pipelines from community entry to federation-level development (Türkiye). A national network of sports inclusion disability officers, operating through local sport partnerships at county and city level and functioning as a direct interface between persons with disabilities and sport clubs, represents an approach to embedding inclusion capacity at the point of delivery rather than concentrating it at national level (Ireland).

In mainstream-integrated systems, athlete pathways increasingly mirror those of non-disabled athletes. In disability-specific systems, development pathways remain more parallel.

Across countries, stakeholders frequently report resource constraints affecting grassroots participation and local sport delivery, while available funding tends to prioritise high-performance sport structures and national team preparation over the expansion of community-level participation programmes.

Coaching capacity represents a further structural constraint. While formal coaching qualifications exist within national sport education systems, specialised training in Para sport remains unevenly developed, particularly at grassroots and regional levels. Where disability sport competencies are integrated into mainstream coach certification pathways rather than treated as a separate qualification stream, this can normalise Para sport coaching capacity across the general sport workforce (Türkiye). In several systems, the transition between grassroots participation programmes and structured athlete development pathways remains uneven, limiting the progression of new participants into sustained training environments and competitive structures. The experience of Ukraine suggests that dedicated youth competition programmes designed specifically for persons with disabilities, such as national spartakiads providing structured competitive experience at early development stages can function simultaneously as participation entry points and talent identification mechanisms, linking early competitive experience to broader athlete development pathways. These examples illustrate transferable approaches to strengthening entry pathways, coaching capacity and progression mechanisms across different system contexts.

4. Accessibility and Inclusion

Accessibility considerations are reflected in legal and policy frameworks across all countries, often as part of broader disability inclusion strategies. However, infrastructure accessibility remains uneven, particularly in older facilities.

Newer infrastructure projects increasingly incorporate universal design standards, but regional disparities persist. Participation opportunities often remain concentrated in larger urban centres, while smaller municipalities face limited infrastructure and programme availability. Country experiences identified through the desk research illustrate several approaches to moving accessibility from legal obligation to operational reality. Ministry-led funding calls specifically financing physical adaptations to sports facilities, including documented measures such as platform lifts, adapted sanitary facilities and accessible pool equipment demonstrate how accessibility obligations can be operationalised through concrete, funded implementation rather than left as declarative standards (Serbia). The statutory assignment of a monitoring mandate over the modernisation and accessibility of older sports venues to the national Paralympic committee creates an institutionalised mechanism for sustaining infrastructure improvement within governance rather than through ad hoc project initiatives (Greece). Embedding universal design and accessibility compliance within the standard building permit

process – applicable to sports venues including gyms, pools and stadiums, converts accessibility from a policy aspiration into an enforceable construction requirement applicable to all new and adapted facilities (Cyprus). Inclusion strategies are more formalised in systems with dedicated inclusion structures, such as Ireland’s sport inclusion officer network. In other contexts, accessibility improvements occur more gradually through project-based initiatives.

Gender participation is generally reported as comparatively low across systems, and targeted programmes addressing gender and youth participation remain limited while gender-disaggregated participation data is not consistently available across countries, limiting the ability to systematically assess participation gaps and design targeted inclusion measures.

5. Data and Monitoring Systems

Data collection practices vary significantly across the eight countries. Some systems maintain official databases or sport monitoring portals tracking athlete registration and competition participation. Others lack consolidated national data systems covering broader participation trends.

Elite-level indicators, including Paralympic participation and medal outcomes, are widely available and comparable across countries. However, broader participation data, including gender-disaggregated figures, regional participation trends and grassroots engagement metrics, remain fragmented or incomplete.

This uneven data infrastructure limits cross-country comparability and constrains evidence-based planning.

Formal monitoring mechanisms typically focus on financial reporting and activity oversight linked to public funding agreements. Continuous monitoring of inclusion outcomes, accessibility improvements and participation growth remains less systematically institutionalised.

Country experiences from the desk research point to approaches that can strengthen monitoring infrastructure even within constrained systems. E-government-based athlete tracking linked to federation and classification records provides a replicable data infrastructure that, even where currently focused on registered competitive athletes, offers a starting point for progressively extending monitoring toward broader participation-level data (Türkiye). Where sport legislation assigns local authorities an explicit mandate to collect and analyse information on citizens' sport needs, this creates a formalised legal basis for municipal-level monitoring that could be progressively extended to disability sport participation data, supporting evidence-based planning even where national systems remain incomplete (Serbia). A nationally representative annual participation survey that consistently tracks sport engagement disaggregated by disability status and gender enables authorities to monitor the disability participation gap over time and assess whether policy interventions are producing measurable shifts in outcomes (Ireland). These examples illustrate transferable approaches to strengthening monitoring systems and enabling more evidence-based planning across countries.

Table 3.5.1: Cross-Domain Synthesis

Domain	Cross-Country Pattern	Key Variation	System Implication
Legal alignment	All countries recognise Para sport in legislation	Implementation mechanisms vary	Legal recognition alone does not guarantee participation growth
Governance structure	Para sport embedded in national sport systems	Degree of integration varies	Coordination complexity affects implementation
Funding	Public budgets dominate	Diversification varies	Grassroots participation underfunded
Athlete pathways	Elite pipelines exist	Scale varies	Entry pathways remain weak
Accessibility	Legal obligations present	Infrastructure uneven	Territorial inequality persists
Monitoring	Elite data available	Grassroots data fragmented	Weak data limits strategic planning

Taken together, the domain analysis highlights a consistent structural pattern across the eight countries: while legal recognition and elite athlete development structures are generally established, participation systems remain constrained by weak grassroots recruitment pathways, uneven local implementation capacity and fragmented monitoring systems.

Table 3.5.2: Comparative Overview of Para sport Systems Across Eight Countries

System Domain	Armenia	Cyprus	Greece	Ireland	Portugal	Serbia	Türkiye	Ukraine
Detailed governance structure	Centralised NPC-led model with National Paralympic Committee coordinating federations and development structures	Mainstream-integrated model (Cyprus Sports Organisation and National Paralympic Committee)	Hybrid disability federation model (Hellenic Paralympic Committee and Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities)	Mainstream-integrated model: National Governing Bodies; Local Sports Partnerships and Sports Inclusion Disability Officers	Complementary institutional roles (Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth and the National Institute for Rehabilitation)	Mixed model with Paralympic-Olympic institutional parity (Serbian Paralympic Committee and branch associations)	Ministry-led hybrid federative model within the national sport system (Ministry of Youth and Sports and disability-specific federations)	State-network dual model combining the National Sports Committee for the Disabled and the Invasport system
Institutional coordination	National Paralympic Committee-led, informal	Cyprus Sports Organisation-led, formal reporting	General Secretariat of Sports-led, federation-based	Sport Ireland; Disability Sports Group; Sports Leadership Group; Sports Inclusion Disability Officers	Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (primary sport authority) with complementary involvement of the Institute for the Rights of People with Disabilities	Ministry direct contracts	Ministry; provincial directorates	Ministry; National Sports Committee for the Disabled; Invasport network

Legal and policy alignment (CRPD Article 30)	General sport law; 2021 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (limited operationalisation)	Cyprus Sports Organisation Law; National Disability Strategy	Law 2725/1999 Article 29; National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2024–2030	Sport Ireland Act; National Sports Policy 2018–2027	Law 5/2007; National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2025	Law on Sports 2016; forthcoming National Sport Development Strategy	Law 7405; Law 5378 on Disabled People	Law on Physical Culture and Sports; 2025 adaptive sports amendments
System organisation and key actors	National Paralympic Committee; three discipline federations	Mainstream National Governing Bodies; National Paralympic Committee	Hellenic Paralympic Committee; Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities; discipline clubs	National Governing Bodies; Paralympics Ireland; Active Disability Ireland	Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth; Portuguese Paralympic Committee; Portuguese Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities; mainstream federations	Serbian Paralympic Committee; four recognised entities; territorial associations	Ministry; Turkish National Paralympic Committee; four disability-specific federations	Invasport centres; four national federations; National Sports Committee for the Disabled
Professional pathways (grassroots to elite)	Ad hoc referrals; limited structured tracks	Youth and High-Performance schemes from 2025	Club-based; mandatory athlete health card system	Carding system; National Governing Body pathways; Local Sports Partnerships	Club → Association → Federation; Sports Inclusion Map platform	Sport-specific, no standardised national pathway	Accessible Sports Schools; Talent Screening Programme	Invasport schools; All-Ukrainian Spartakiad “Believe in Yourself”
Funding mechanisms	State budget (critically low)	Cyprus Sports Organisation fund (lottery; state)	State budget; betting tax	Sport Ireland core funding; Dormant Accounts; European Social Fund Plus	Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth funding agreements (predominantly public funding)	Ministry annual contracts	Ministry; Spor Toto betting revenue; sponsorship	State budget; regional and municipal budgets
Facility accessibility	Older facilities poor; newer facilities improving	Majority accessible but capacity limited	New builds compliant; older facilities limited; transport barriers	Improved but transport and rural gaps remain	Regional disparities (coastal vs interior)	Halls adapted but local funding uneven	Legal obligations exist; enforcement gaps	90 training bases (many damaged by war)
Data collection and monitoring	No unified national portal; data maintained by federations and National Paralympic Committee	Administrative data only; no public participation data available	e-Kouros central national registry	Irish Sport Monitor annual survey	In development (no unified national database yet)	No unified national portal	Federation-level data only	Invasport and National Sports Committee for the Disabled administrative data only
Grassroots inclusion and delivery	Limited local clubs; heavily volunteer-dependent	Federation-led delivery with limited outreach	Club-based but concentrated in urban areas	Local Sports Partnerships; Sports Inclusion Disability Officers; regional hubs	Sports Inclusion Map platform; local clubs (weaker in interior regions)	Clubs; territorial sport associations	Provincial directorates; clubs	Invasport centres; local branches
Gender and youth inclusion considerations	Low women’s participation; no targeted measures	Lower women’s participation	Low women’s participation; legal one-third gender quota on boards	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion framework but implementation gap	Low women’s participation; no dedicated Para sport programme for women and girls	Women’s participation below 10%; limited targeted measures	Limited evidence of targeted gender or youth strategies	Not systematically tracked

Table 3.5.2 provides the comparative baseline for the synthesis. It consolidates the principal system characteristics across the eight countries and supports the cross-country analysis that follows by making visible both recurring patterns and areas of structural divergence.

6. Structural Dynamics Observed Across Para Sport Systems

Uneven institutional consolidation

Across the eight countries, Para sport systems have evolved from historically marginal or charity-based initiatives toward greater institutional recognition within national sport governance structures. **This shift is reflected in stronger legal alignment with disability rights frameworks, increased ministerial oversight and more explicit public financing arrangements.**

However, institutional consolidation remains uneven. **In several countries, improvements in policy frameworks have not yet translated into measurable growth in participation or expanded international representation.**

Policy recognition does not automatically generate participation

Para sport is formally recognised in all eight countries. The key structural weakness lies in the limited conversion of policy commitments into sustained participation pathways.

Participation growth depends on accessible entry points, recruitment mechanisms, local clubs, trained personnel, and transport access. **Where these enabling factors remain weak, legal recognition alone does not translate into broader participation outcomes.**

Public financing dominates but local investment remains limited

Public funding constitutes the primary financial pillar of Para sport systems across all countries. While this contributes to institutional stability, **funding distribution often remains uneven geographically.**

Local governments rarely allocate significant resources to grassroots Para sport activities, and national funding transfers to the local level are often limited. **As a result, many grassroots organisations operate with unstable resources and limited capacity to expand participation.**

Governance models generate different coordination challenges

Different governance models create distinct institutional dynamics. **Centralised systems may face constraints related to institutional concentration and limited local initiative,** while mainstream-integrated or hybrid systems may experience overlapping mandates and coordination challenges among multiple actors.

In both cases, **clear role allocation and effective coordination mechanisms are critical for translating policy commitments into functioning participation systems.**

IV. Shared Systemic Gaps

The cross-country analysis identifies a set of recurring systemic gaps that cut across different governance models and levels of institutional maturity. While these gaps do not appear in identical form in every country, they recur with sufficient consistency to constitute the principal structural constraints affecting inclusive participation in sport across the eight systems reviewed.

1. Limited and uneven financing for sustainable participation

Most systems are structurally dependent on national public budgets, and funding levels remain insufficient in many countries. In several cases, resources allocated to Para sport are widely reported by stakeholders as inadequate to support sustainable system development. At the same time, local-level financing is often weak or absent. Local governments rarely allocate dedicated resources to grassroots Para sport activities, and in many cases, there are no adequate fiscal transfers from the national budget to support local implementation.

The resulting financing pattern is not only one of insufficiency, but also of uneven distribution. Public funding tends to support central institutions, elite preparation, or nationally visible activities more consistently than local participation structures. This leaves community-level organisations, municipal initiatives, and grassroots clubs operating with unstable resources and limited capacity to expand participation over time. Complementary funding sources exist in some countries, but they remain marginal, fragmented, project-based, and unevenly distributed.

2. Weak entry pathways into Para sport participation

Funding, visibility and institutional attention are frequently stronger at the elite level than at entry and participation levels. While this contributes to visible international representation, it often results in underinvestment in recruitment, grassroots development, and early participation pathways. This imbalance weakens the feeder system and reduces the long-term sustainability of Para sport development.

Across the eight countries, one of the clearest recurring weaknesses is the limited conversion of formal recognition into accessible entry points for participation. In many systems, referral channels linking schools, rehabilitation settings, community organisations and sport structures remain weak, informal, or inconsistently developed. As a result, participation pathways often depend on ad hoc outreach, local initiative, or individual institutional commitment rather than on a structured national approach.

Grassroots participation is the primary source from which future elite athletes emerge; if sufficient attention and resources are not directed toward entry-level participation and local recruitment, the pipeline of future athletes gradually diminishes. This makes weak entry pathways not only a grassroots inclusion issue, but also a medium-term system sustainability issue.

3. Limited local implementation capacity

In multiple countries, local clubs and community structures operate with low staffing, weak technical capacity, dependence on volunteering, limited outreach ability, and unstable financing. This is one of the key bottlenecks for participation expansion.

This gap reflects a broader implementation problem across the systems reviewed: national policy commitments and institutional structures are more developed than local delivery capacity. Even where legal obligations and policy objectives are in place, the local organisations expected to translate them into participation opportunities frequently lack the staff, technical skills, equipment, and operational continuity required to do so consistently.

The consequence is that participation opportunities remain fragile and often dependent on a small number of motivated actors rather than on stable delivery structures.

4. Transport barriers and territorial inequality

Even where legal accessibility obligations exist, practical participation remains constrained by transport barriers, the regional concentration of sport facilities, and uneven distribution of

adapted infrastructure. In many countries, opportunities for Para sport participation remain concentrated in larger cities and major urban centres, while smaller municipalities and rural areas have significantly fewer accessible sport facilities and programmes.

This territorial imbalance is a significant cross-country constraint because it affects the practical reach of otherwise formally inclusive systems. In several contexts, accessibility is addressed more consistently at the level of legal standards than at the level of territorial access. As a result, participation opportunities often remain geographically concentrated, particularly where transport systems, local infrastructure investment, and regional service delivery are weak.

Territorial inequality therefore has influence as both an infrastructure issue and a participation issue.

5. Weak monitoring frameworks and limited outcome tracking

In several countries, comprehensive national sport strategies that clearly define objectives for Para sport development are either absent or insufficiently operationalised. Monitoring frameworks remain underdeveloped and tend to focus primarily on financial compliance rather than on progress toward policy goals established in legislation and national strategies, participation outcomes and inclusion performance.

This creates a recurrent implementation gap across the systems reviewed. Where monitoring is primarily compliance-based, institutions are better positioned to account for expenditure than to assess whether policies are expanding participation, improving accessibility, or reducing exclusion. Fewer systems systematically track participation levels, accessibility improvements, referral pathways, or national and local-level inclusion outcomes. Exceptions exist, where more structured monitoring and data collection mechanisms are in place.

6. Fragmented data systems for strategic planning

The cross-country review shows that data systems represent constraints on strategic Para sport development. While most countries can identify Paralympic participation and medal achievements, much fewer can produce reliable and publicly accessible data on grassroots participation, participation by disability type, region, age, or gender, attrition patterns, or the effectiveness of referral and inclusion measures.

The strategic significance of this gap is substantial. Weak data systems limit the ability of governments and sport authorities to identify underserved groups, justify targeted investment, assess whether reforms are working, or compare progress over time. They also constrain cross-sector coordination, because institutions lack a shared evidence base for planning participation growth and inclusion measures.

In this sense, weak data systems do not simply reflect an information gap; they function as a structural planning constraint.

7. Gender, youth and intersectional participation gaps

Across the eight countries, the low participation of women and girls with disabilities reflects not only a representation issue but also a broader structural pattern. Although general gender equality provisions exist in several national policy frameworks, these provisions rarely translate into Para sport-specific recruitment, retention, mentoring, or leadership initiatives. In practice, women with disabilities face barriers such as limited targeted outreach, insufficient incentives for participation, and a lack of visibility within sport systems.

Youth participation presents a similar challenge. In many countries, systems do not yet have robust transition mechanisms linking school sport, rehabilitation environments, grassroots

participation, and structured elite pathways. Where youth development pathways formally exist, they often remain stronger at the level of policy documentation than in practical implementation.

These gaps point to a broader limitation in how inclusion is operationalised across Para sport systems. Participation inequalities affecting women, girls, youth and other potentially underserved groups are often recognised at a general policy level, but much less frequently addressed through targeted implementation measures. This gap is particularly concerning given that several countries are already experiencing declining or ageing athlete populations within their Para sport systems. The absence of targeted youth participation strategies therefore represents not only an inclusion challenge but also a medium-term sustainability risk for national Para sport development.

8. Cross-cutting interpretation

These systemic gaps indicate that the principal constraints affecting Para sport development across the eight countries do not arise primarily from the absence of legal recognition or institutional visibility. Rather, they stem from weaknesses in how inclusive sport participation is financed, operationalised, territorially distributed, monitored, and sustained over time.

Three cross-cutting constraints emerge as particularly significant across different governance models: weak grassroots entry pathways, insufficient local delivery capacity, and fragmented monitoring and data systems. These factors repeatedly limit the translation of policy commitment into broad-based and sustainable participation.

Table 3.8.1: Shared Systemic Gaps Across Para Sport Systems

Systemic Gap	Cross-Country Pattern	Primary System Effect
Limited and uneven financing	Public budgets dominate, but local-level financing is weak or absent in many systems	Grassroots delivery remains unstable, and expansion capacity remains limited
Weak entry pathways	Recruitment and referral mechanisms insufficiently structured	Participation growth and long-term athlete pipelines remain constrained
Limited local implementation capacity	Clubs and community structures often operate with low staffing and unstable resources	National commitments do not consistently translate into local participation opportunities
Transport and territorial inequality	Participation opportunities concentrated in urban centres; regional access uneven	Inclusion remains geographically uneven despite formal accessibility commitments
Weak monitoring frameworks	Monitoring often focused on compliance rather than outcomes	Institutions have limited capacity to assess progress in inclusion and participation growth
Fragmented data systems	Grassroots and disaggregated participation data incomplete or unavailable	Strategic planning and targeted reform remain weakly evidence-based

Gender, youth and intersectional gaps	Targeted inclusion measures remain limited across most systems	Participation inequalities persist and future athlete development is weakened
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Table summarises the principal systemic gaps emerging across the eight countries and shows how different institutional weaknesses converge around a common implementation problem: the limited ability of national Para sport systems to convert legal recognition into broad, accessible, and sustainable participation.

V. Final Synthesis

The cross-country analysis demonstrates that the development of Para sport systems across the participating countries is shaped less by differences in legal recognition and more by variations in institutional implementation capacity.

All countries examined have established legal frameworks recognising the right of persons with disabilities to participate in sport. However, the extent to which these commitments translate into accessible participation opportunities depends largely on the organisation of governance structures, participation pathways, financing arrangements, and monitoring systems.

Countries with more structured participation pathways and coordinated institutional frameworks tend to demonstrate stronger connections between grassroots participation, athlete development, and elite performance. In contrast, where recruitment mechanisms remain informal and institutional responsibilities are fragmented, participation expansion remains limited despite formal policy commitments.

The analysis further highlights the importance of territorial accessibility and local-level programme delivery. Participation opportunities often depend on the availability of adapted facilities, trained coaches, and accessible transport infrastructure at regional and municipal levels. Strengthening these local participation conditions therefore represents a key dimension of inclusive sport system development.

Finally, monitoring and data systems remain underdeveloped in several national contexts. The absence of consolidated participation data limits the ability of policymakers to assess participation trends, identify regional disparities, or evaluate policy outcomes.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the development of inclusive Para sport systems requires moving beyond legal recognition toward stronger institutional implementation frameworks that support participation expansion, governance coordination, and evidence-based policy development.

VI. Cross-Cutting Recommendations

The comparative analysis identifies a set of cross-cutting recommendations relevant across different governance models and levels of system maturity. These recommendations address the structural gaps identified across the eight countries and focus on strengthening the institutional conditions required to convert legal recognition of Para sport into accessible, sustainable and territorially balanced participation systems.

Each recommendation is accompanied by indicative actions illustrating possible implementation approaches within national contexts.

1. Strengthen grassroots participation and entry pathways

Strengthen institutional mechanisms enabling sustained grassroots participation of persons with disabilities in sport and expand structured entry pathways into Para sport systems.

Key actions

- Establish structured expansion pathways linking schools, rehabilitation environments, community-based programmes and sport organisations.
- Develop clearer referral channels connecting education systems, rehabilitation services, community organisations and sport clubs.
- Expand targeted outreach and recruitment mechanisms to reduce reliance on ad hoc participant identification.
- Complement elite sport investments with participation-oriented financing to maintain sustainable athlete development pipelines.

2. Improve financing stability and local-level equity

Strengthen financing predictability, transparency and territorial equity in Para sport development.

Key actions

- Establish dedicated participation-oriented funding envelopes supporting grassroots programmes and local delivery structures.
- Introduce transparent distribution criteria ensuring equitable territorial access to funding.
- Strengthen fiscal transfers supporting municipal-level Para sport initiatives.
- Diversify financing through sponsorship frameworks and structured partnerships complementing core public financing.

3. Clarify governance roles and strengthen coordination

Clarify institutional responsibilities and strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms across ministries, Paralympic committees, sport federations, local authorities, and disability organisations in order to ensure coherent planning, implementation, and monitoring of Para sport development policies.

Key actions

- Formalise coordination platforms involving ministries responsible for sport, national Paralympic committees, sport federations, disability organisations and local authorities.
- Clarify institutional mandates in multi-layered governance systems.
- Strengthen inter-sectoral collaboration between sport authorities, rehabilitation services, education systems and disability organisations.
- Introduce structured consultation mechanisms supporting coherent policy interpretation and implementation.

4. Address infrastructure, transport and territorial access barriers

Strengthen infrastructure planning and territorial access conditions supporting inclusive sport participation.

Key actions

- Integrate universal design principles systematically into sport infrastructure planning.
- Prioritise adaptation of existing facilities to improve accessibility.
- Expand accessibility-oriented investment mechanisms supporting facility upgrades.

- Introduce targeted transport solutions where participation is constrained by distance or mobility barriers.

5. Develop targeted inclusion measures for women, girls and youth with disabilities

Strengthen participation and leadership opportunities for women, girls and youth with disabilities in Para sport systems.

Key actions

- Introduce targeted recruitment initiatives increasing participation of women and girls with disabilities.
- Develop mentorship and leadership programmes supporting women with disabilities within sport systems.
- Strengthen school-to-club transition mechanisms supporting youth participation.
- Introduce youth-focused development programmes and retention strategies.
- Integrate intersectional approaches into participation and leadership policies.

6. Strengthen representation of persons with disabilities in governance and decision-making

Strengthen participation of persons with disabilities in governance and decision-making structures across sport systems.

Key actions

- Expand representation of persons with disabilities within governance bodies of sport ministries, authorities and federations.
- Integrate lived-experience perspectives into policy development and programme design.
- Promote leadership pathways for persons with disabilities within sport governance.
- Strengthen representation of women with disabilities within governance environments.

7. Improve data systems and monitoring ecosystems

Strengthen coherent national data ecosystems capturing participation of persons with disabilities in sport.

Key actions

- Develop national participation indicators and harmonised monitoring frameworks.
- Consolidate participation data across sport authorities and national Paralympic committees.
- Improve public accessibility and transparency of participation data.
- Strengthen analytical use of data for policy design, territorial targeting, and monitoring of participation growth.

8. Operationalise legal and policy commitments through implementation instruments

Strengthen implementation mechanisms translating legal recognition of Para sport into measurable outcomes.

Key actions

- Integrate measurable indicators into national sport strategies and Para sport development frameworks.
- Align legal commitments with operational instruments such as action plans, financing mechanisms, and monitoring systems.
- Introduce outcome-oriented monitoring frameworks tracking participation growth and accessibility improvements.
- Strengthen alignment between sport policy, disability inclusion frameworks and CRPD obligations.

Implementation Horizons

The recommended actions can be implemented progressively across different time horizons. The classification below reflects the relative feasibility of implementation within existing institutional frameworks as well as the degree of structural change required.

Immediate operational improvements

These measures can be initiated within existing institutional mandates and administrative arrangements and primarily focus on improving participation access and operational coordination.

- Establish multi-stakeholder working groups involving ministries responsible for sport, national Paralympic committees, sport federations, local authorities, and civil society organisations to prepare structured Para sport development action plans defining objectives, activities, responsibilities, and indicative financing.
- Establish structured referral pathways linking schools, rehabilitation centres, disability organisations, and sport clubs, ensuring that persons with disabilities are systematically informed about opportunities for participation in sport.
- Expand targeted outreach and awareness initiatives to recruit new participants and increase visibility of Para sport pathways, including collaboration with schools, rehabilitation services and community organisations.
- Introduce practical transport and mobility solutions in areas where participation is constrained by distance, accessibility barriers, or limited connectivity to sport facilities.
- Conduct accessibility assessments of existing sport facilities and integrate universal design considerations into ongoing renovation and facility planning processes, particularly in regions where access to adapted infrastructure remains limited.

Medium-term structural system strengthening

These actions require stronger institutional coordination, financing adjustments or integration into national sport governance frameworks.

- Clarify institutional roles and responsibilities within multi-actor governance systems and formalise coordination mechanisms between ministries, National Paralympic Committees, sport federations, disability organisations and local authorities.
- Strengthen the role of local governments in supporting grassroots Para sport participation, including financing local programmes, supporting community sport initiatives and improving access to adapted facilities.
- Align national planning, financing and monitoring frameworks for Para sport development, ensuring that policy commitments are supported by coherent implementation instruments.

- Introduce participation-oriented funding mechanisms that complement elite sport financing and support grassroots programme delivery.
- Integrate accessibility and universal design principles systematically into national sport infrastructure strategies and investment programmes, ensuring that future infrastructure development expands territorial access to adapted facilities.

Targeted inclusion and monitoring actions

These measures address persistent participation gaps and strengthen the evidence base required for effective policy planning.

- Introduce targeted participation initiatives for women and girls with disabilities, including recruitment programmes, mentorship initiatives and leadership visibility measures.
- Strengthen youth recruitment and transition pathways linking school sport, rehabilitation services and community participation with structured club sport and competitive Para sport environments.
- Embed intersectional inclusion approaches within participation and leadership policies, ensuring that programmes respond to the multiple barriers affecting persons with disabilities.
- Develop coherent national participation indicators and data systems capturing participation by disability type, gender, age and region.
- Strengthen monitoring frameworks to track participation growth, accessibility improvements and inclusion outcomes, moving beyond financial compliance reporting toward outcome-oriented monitoring.

Table 6.8.1: Cross-Cutting Recommendations by System Strengthening Function

System Strengthening Function	Core Recommendation Focus	Primary Objective
Participation expansion	Grassroots pathways, referral systems, outreach, youth transitions	Broaden entry into Para sport and strengthen long-term athlete pipelines
System coordination	Role clarity, coordination platforms, local government engagement	Improve implementation coherence across multi-actor systems
Inclusion targeting	Women, girls, youth, intersectional participation, governance representation	Reduce persistent participation inequalities
Enabling conditions	Financing equity, infrastructure, transport, local access	Improve the practical conditions for sustained participation
Strategic governance	Monitoring systems, participation indicators, operationalisation of policy commitments	Strengthen evidence-based planning and implementation accountability

Table 6.8.1 brings together the main recommendation areas emerging from the synthesis and shows how they relate to the broader goal of converting formal recognition of Para sport into accessible, coordinated and sustainable participation systems.

VII. Capacity Building Priorities

The cross-country analysis indicates that many of the constraints affecting Para sport systems across the eight countries are not solely related to legislative frameworks or financing availability. Rather, they reflect limitations in institutional coordination, technical expertise, operational planning capacity and monitoring practices. In several countries, policy recognition of Para sport exists at legislative or strategic level, yet the institutional mechanisms required to translate these commitments into sustained participation pathways remain unevenly developed.

Capacity strengthening therefore represents a critical enabling condition for implementing the recommendations outlined in the previous section. The priority areas presented below correspond directly to the systemic gaps identified through the comparative analysis and provide guidance for the development of training modules and practical tools under the project.

Governance coordination and institutional role clarity

The comparative analysis demonstrates that governance arrangements for Para sport vary considerably across the eight countries. In several systems, responsibilities are distributed across ministries responsible for sport, national Paralympic committees, mainstream sport federations, disability organisations and local authorities. While such multi-actor structures can support broad participation ecosystems, they may also create coordination challenges where institutional mandates are not clearly defined or operational; cooperation mechanisms remain informal.

Strengthening governance coordination therefore represents a key capacity-building priority. Institutional actors responsible for sport governance may benefit from practical guidance on establishing coordination platforms, clarifying roles and responsibilities within multi-layered governance systems, and strengthening collaboration between sport institutions and disability inclusion actors.

Training modules developed under the project may therefore focus on:

- defining institutional roles and responsibilities in multi-actor Para sport governance systems;
- establishing coordination mechanisms and consultation platforms supporting Para sport development;
- improving cooperation between ministries responsible for sport, national Paralympic committees, mainstream federations, disability organisations and local authorities;
- strengthening mechanisms for consultation with persons with disabilities and representative organisations within sport governance processes.

Development of grassroots participation and recruitment pathways

One of the most consistent findings of the cross-country analysis concerns the limited development of structured entry pathways into Para sport. Although several countries demonstrate visible elite sport achievements, many systems rely on ad hoc recruitment or isolated local initiatives to attract new participants. In such contexts, the absence of systematic referral pathways linking schools, rehabilitation environments and community sport organisations may limit opportunities for persons with disabilities to access sport participation.

Strengthening grassroots participation therefore requires improved institutional capacity to design and implement recruitment mechanisms connecting different sectors of the participation ecosystem. Capacity-building initiatives may support sport authorities and organisations in developing practical approaches for expanding community-level participation and improving coordination between sport systems and disability services.

Relevant training topics may include:

- developing grassroots Para sport programmes within sport clubs and community structures;
- establishing referral pathways linking schools, rehabilitation centres and sport organisations;
- designing outreach strategies aimed at increasing participation among persons with disabilities;
- strengthening cooperation between sport systems and disability services to improve access to sport participation.

Gender inclusion in Para sport

Across the eight countries reviewed, participation of women and girls with disabilities remains comparatively low. While broader gender equality provisions exist in several national policy frameworks, targeted measures addressing gender-specific barriers to participation in sport remain limited in many systems. The comparative analysis suggests that participation of women and girls with disabilities is often constrained by a combination of structural barriers, including limited targeted outreach, reduced visibility of women athletes with disabilities and insufficient mentoring or leadership opportunities.

Capacity strengthening therefore represents an important avenue for improving gender-responsive programme design within Para sport systems. Training initiatives may support sport

institutions and organisations in developing participation policies and programmes that address gender-specific barriers and promote leadership opportunities for women with disabilities.

Priority capacity-building topics may include:

- strategies for recruiting and retaining women and girls with disabilities in sport;
- development of mentorship and leadership initiatives supporting women with disabilities in sport governance and programme delivery;
- integration of gender-responsive and intersectional approaches within sport participation policies and programmes.

Strategic planning and operationalisation of Para sport policies

Although Para sport is recognised within national policy frameworks across the eight countries, the analysis indicates that several systems face challenges in translating policy commitments into operational programmes and measurable results. In some cases, Para sport development remains incorporated within broader sport strategies without clearly defined objectives, participation indicators or implementation mechanisms.

Strengthening institutional capacity for strategic planning and policy operationalisation therefore represents a key priority. National sport authorities, national Paralympic committees and sport federations may benefit from practical guidance on developing structured Para sport development plans that link policy objectives with implementation tools, financing mechanisms and monitoring frameworks.

Capacity-building initiatives may therefore address:

- development of multi-year Para sport development strategies and action plans;
- definition of measurable objectives and participation indicators;
- integration of Para sport priorities within national sport strategies and disability inclusion policies;
- development of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms supporting implementation of Para sport policies.

VIII. Operational Use of this Report

The comparative analytical framework developed in this report provides a structured basis for strengthening Para sport systems across different governance contexts. By examining governance arrangements, participation pathways, financing mechanisms, infrastructure accessibility, inclusion dynamics, and monitoring practices across eight countries, the report identifies systemic patterns, alongside with structural constraints and institutional opportunities relevant for policy and programme development.

The findings therefore serve not only as an analytical overview but also as a practical reference supporting institutional learning, policy development and implementation of inclusive sport systems in line with the principles of CRPD Article 30. The analysis, recommendations, and capacity-building priorities presented in the previous sections provide a structured evidence base that stakeholders may use to inform system strengthening measures, support participation pathways and improve governance arrangements within Para sport ecosystems.

Strategic Planning and National Action Plans

The report provides an analytical reference for the development or revision of national Para sport development strategies and multi-year action plans. Ministries responsible for sport, national sport authorities and national Paralympic committees may draw on the identified systemic gaps and cross-country patterns to prioritise system strengthening efforts, define measurable objectives and clarify institutional responsibilities within national policy frameworks.

The comparative findings also highlight structural factors affecting participation pathways, governance coordination and financing stability, which can inform the design of more coherent national planning frameworks. By integrating the report's recommendations into strategic planning processes, stakeholders can strengthen the alignment between legislative commitments to disability inclusion in sport and the operational mechanisms required to sustain participation growth.

Programme Design and Institutional Coordination

The analysis highlights the importance of coordination between actors involved in Para sport governance and delivery, including ministries responsible for sport, national Paralympic committees, sport federations, rehabilitation institutions, and civil society organisations. Strengthening collaboration across these actors is essential for improving referral pathways, expanding grassroots participation opportunities and ensuring continuity between different stages of sport participation.

Stakeholders may therefore use the report's findings to strengthen programme design and coordination mechanisms within national Para sport systems. The comparative analysis identifies institutional arrangements and participation pathways that may support more coherent programme delivery, particularly in areas such as community-level recruitment, collaboration between disability services and sport organisations, and coordination between national and local actors.

Capacity-Building and Training Initiatives

The systemic gaps identified across the eight countries also indicate areas where institutional capacity strengthening may support the development of more inclusive and sustainable Para sport systems. In particular, the analysis highlights the need for stronger coordination mechanisms, improved grassroots participation structures, and enhanced institutional capacity to translate policy commitments into operational programmes.

These findings provide a direct analytical basis for the development of training modules and practical guidance tools under the project. Training initiatives may focus on areas such as governance coordination, grassroots programme development, inclusive participation practices and strategic planning for Para sport development. By addressing the recurring institutional capacity gaps identified in the comparative analysis, such initiatives may contribute to strengthening the practical implementation of disability inclusion policies in sport.

Evidence-Based Funding Allocation

The comparative analysis also provides insights relevant for public authorities and funding institutions responsible for allocating resources within national sport systems. The findings highlight the importance of balancing investment between elite sport development and participation-oriented programmes that support grassroots recruitment and sustained engagement of persons with disabilities in sport.

Public authorities and funding bodies may therefore draw on the report's findings when assessing financing priorities and designing funding mechanisms supporting Para sport development. In particular, the analysis highlights the importance of strengthening community-level delivery structures, improving territorial accessibility of sport opportunities

and supporting participation pathways that connect grassroots participation with higher levels of sport development.

Monitoring and Evaluation of System Development

Finally, the analytical framework developed in this report may support ongoing monitoring of Para sport system development across the countries analysed. By identifying key institutional dimensions influencing participation and inclusion, the report provides a structured reference that stakeholders may use to assess progress over time.

Institutions responsible for sport governance may draw on the analytical dimensions presented in this report to track changes in governance coordination, participation pathways, financing structures and inclusion outcomes. Such monitoring efforts can help determine whether policy initiatives are translating into measurable improvements in access to sport for persons with disabilities and more inclusive participation environments.

IX. Analytical Input to the Synthesis – Country Reference Profiles

The following country profiles are provided as detailed contextual reference materials supporting the cross-country synthesis. These sections consolidate national institutional, legal, governance, and system characteristics that informed the comparative analysis. They are not intended to function as standalone country assessments, and their inclusion does not alter the synthesis-oriented nature of the Report.

1. Armenia

Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population (estimate)	3 million (Armstat, 2024)
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	161,459 (Armstat, 2024)
Persons with disabilities in Para sport	More than 200 individuals, of whom approximately 60 compete at international level (ANPC administrative records; indicative estimate, not a verified statistical figure)
Paralympic Games 2024	3 athletes (2 men; 1 woman); Medals – 0
Paralympic Games 2020	1 athlete (1 man, 0 women); Medals – 0
Paralympic Games 2016	2 athletes (0 men; 2 women); Medals – 0

Source: Armstat statistical database (2024); ANPC administrative records. The participation figure of more than 200 reflects licensed competitive athletes only and does not capture recreational or informal participants. Comprehensive data on participation by disability type, gender, region, or age group is not systematically published.

Stakeholders report that the armed conflict has contributed to an increase in the number of persons with disabilities in the country, particularly among individuals injured during military

operations and conflict-related incidents. In this context, Para sport is often viewed as a potential instrument supporting rehabilitation, social inclusion, and active participation in society for persons with disabilities.

Legal and Policy Framework

Armenia is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the Convention, are reflected to a limited extent in national legislation and policy frameworks.

At the constitutional level, the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia includes an explicit reference to sport and physical culture among the functions of the state. The core legal framework governing the sport sector is established by the Law “On Physical Culture and Sport” (2001), which defines the general foundations of sport governance and assigns responsibilities to the authorised state body. The law does not include provisions specifically addressing Para sport or sport for persons with disabilities, and related activities are implemented within the general sport framework under the same institutional arrangements.

Within the broader disability rights framework, the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021) provides that the State shall ensure opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in recreational, leisure, and sporting activities on an equal basis with others. This includes participation in mainstream sporting activities, access to sporting facilities, and the provision of appropriate instruction, training, and resources.

At the policy level, Armenia has adopted the Physical Culture and Sports Strategy for 2024-2030, together with its accompanying Action Plan. The Strategy sets out strategic priorities aimed at increasing participation in sport and physical activity across population groups, including children, adults, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Within its objective to make “physical activity and a healthy lifestyle a national way of life”, the Strategy includes persons with disabilities and sets a target to increase participation of persons with disabilities in healthy lifestyles from 3% to 5% by 2030. The Strategy further recognises the need to adapt existing sports facilities and envisages creating accessible conditions for persons with disabilities within the development of mass sport and physical culture.

The absence of dedicated Para sport legislation limits the ability of public authorities to define targeted development priorities, allocate predictable funding, and establish institutional accountability mechanisms.

Governance and Institutional Structure

Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (Strategic and funding authority)



Armenian National Paralympic Committee (ANPC); Armenian Deaflympic Committee (NGO); Armenian Special Olympics (NGO); Union of the Blind of Armenia (NGO)

▼ *Recognition + joint calendars + athlete selection*

Para sport Federations (Discipline-specific delivery)

Sport Clubs (early-stage) (Local participation)

The current Para sport governance structure in Armenia has gradually evolved since the establishment of the Armenian National Paralympic Committee in 1994, but the institutional framework remains relatively small and resource-constrained compared with the growth of

disability sport participation needs. Responsibility for sport at government level in Armenia lies with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. The state policy in sport is elaborated and implemented through **government programmes** adopted annually.

The Armenian National Paralympic Committee (ANPC) is the central national body responsible for representing and developing the Paralympic movement in Armenia. It was established in 1994 and positions itself as the umbrella organisation for Para sports in the country. Its functions include the development of Para sports, the organisation and conduct of national Para sport championships, and the selection, preparation, and participation of Armenian Para athletes in Paralympic and other international competitions, including classification-related events.¹ Its governing bodies include representatives of sports federations, members of the Armenian diaspora who support the development of Para sport, and both persons with and without disabilities.² The broader Para sport ecosystem also includes the Armenian Deaflympic Committee (serving deaf athletes), Armenian Special Olympics (serving athletes with intellectual disabilities), and the Union of the Blind of Armenia. Each organisation operates within its specific mandate and disability community, interfacing with the Ministry in matters related to programme planning, funding allocation, and participation in international competitions.

Para sport in Armenia is delivered through discipline-specific Para sport federations (Boccia, Wheelchair Basketball Federation, Table tennis), which must be recognised by and affiliated with the ANPC to operate within the national Para sport system. These Para sport federations in cooperation with the ANPC are responsible for identifying and developing athletes from the grassroots level and for preparing them for participation in national and international competitions. Boccia and Wheelchair Basketball Federation directly represent international sport federations, while in other Para sports the ANPC acts as the official national representative to the relevant international bodies.

At the local level, sport clubs implementing Para sport activities operate in some regions, although geographical coverage remains limited and not all disciplines are represented. These initiatives typically operate with constrained resources and may rely on a combination of municipal support, private contributions, and, in some cases, support from international organisations.³

The governance structure of Para sport in Armenia is highly centralised, with the ANPC serving as the primary institutional anchor of the system.

National Coordination

Coordination among stakeholders in the Para sport sector in Armenia is facilitated by the ANPC. Para sport federations cooperate closely with the Committee in the planning and implementation of sector activities, jointly developing annual competition and activity calendars and coordinating budget planning processes. These coordination activities are primarily carried out through the ANPC's own resources, with coordination meetings held approximately ten times per year, mostly in an online format.

Moreover, Armenia has established a national coordinating mechanism on the rights of persons with disabilities, in line with Article 33(1) of the UN CRPD, to ensure cross-government coordination of disability policy. The mechanism brings together multiple ministries and sectors to oversee the implementation of the UN CRPD and national disability legislation. It operates as a horizontal, disability-wide framework and serves as a platform for discussion of a range of issues, including the participation of persons with disabilities in sport.

¹ <https://paralympic.am/en>

² Based on the interviews

³ Based on the interviews

Funding and Resource Allocation

Central Government (State Budget) Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport

▼ *Annual programme funding*

ANPC (Manages resources, accountable to Ministry)

▼ *Direct implementation or allocation to federations*

Para sport Federations (Programme delivery)

Local Clubs (Limited, irregular support)

The central government is the primary source of funding for Para sport in Armenia, with financial support channelled through the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. Funding is provided under the state-budget programme **“Services Related to Sport for Persons with Disabilities,”** which finances Para sport activities and events nationwide. The Ministry provides annual funding to the ANPC, which manages these resources either by directly implementing programme expenditures or, where mutually agreed, allocating funds to Para sport federations, while remaining accountable to the Ministry for financial reporting and the use of allocated funds. The Ministry also provides annual funding to other specialised Para sport organisations, including the Armenian Deaflympic Committee, Armenian Special Olympics, and the Union of the Blind of Armenia. Funding decisions for all Para sport organisations are made based on their activities in Armenia and the results they have achieved in domestic and international championships in previous years, creating a performance-linked allocation mechanism.

Local authorities may provide occasional financial support to the Paralympic Committee or local clubs; however, such support is not systematic and generally limited to specific initiatives or events.

In some cases, private donors also support local initiatives.

Para sport financing in Armenia remains highly centralised and dependent on state budget allocations, with limited complementary support from local authorities or private donors. Stakeholders consistently report that available funding levels remain insufficient to support programme expansion, grassroots development, or long-term system sustainability.

Participation Pathways



⚠ **Transition Gap:** No formalised progression framework between initial participation and elite preparation has been identified.

Entry into Para sport in Armenia often occurs through informal referral pathways, including rehabilitation clinics, outreach activities conducted by the ANPC, or direct engagement through local sport clubs.

Access to participation varies across disciplines. For example, powerlifting demonstrates relatively higher participation levels, partly due to the availability of mainstream facilities such as private gyms.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport maintains a nationwide network of children's and youth sports schools. These institutions represent a mainstream entry infrastructure for sport participation; however, they are generally not accessible to persons with disabilities, limiting their role in Para sport recruitment.

Progression to elite and international levels is supported through Para sport federations and the ANPC.

Athletes placing within the top 24 at major international competitions receive monthly financial compensation for one year, together with their coaches. Additional financial rewards are awarded for medal-winning performances at the Paralympic Games and other international competitions.

However, structured athlete development pathways and systematic coaching development programmes remain limited.

Gender Inclusion

Stakeholders report that the participation of women with disabilities in Para sport in Armenia remains limited both in athlete participation and in governance structures. Available participation figures are not systematically disaggregated by gender, which reduces the visibility of participation gaps and makes it difficult for policymakers and sector stakeholders to monitor gender equality outcomes within Para sport programmes.

Existing evidence nevertheless suggests that women with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in organised Para sport activities and in national and international competition delegations. This pattern appears to be influenced by several structural factors. First, no targeted recruitment or retention programmes focusing on women and girls with disabilities have been identified within the current Para sport system. Outreach and athlete identification activities are largely general in nature and do not specifically address gender-related barriers to participation.

Second, women with disabilities may face compounded barriers associated with the intersection of disability, gender norms, and social expectations. Cultural perceptions surrounding disability and women's participation in sport, together with limited visibility of female role models in Para sport, may reduce interest and confidence among potential participants. Access constraints may also be more pronounced for women living outside major urban centres, where transportation barriers and limited availability of adapted sports programmes can further restrict participation opportunities.

Third, the absence of systematic gender-disaggregated monitoring within the Para sport sector limits the ability of institutions to assess participation patterns, identify structural barriers affecting women and girls, and design targeted policy responses. Strengthening gender-sensitive monitoring systems and introducing dedicated outreach initiatives could support a more balanced participation profile and contribute to broader equality objectives within Armenia's sport policy framework.

Data Collection and Monitoring

No unified national monitoring system consolidating Para sport participation data has been identified in Armenia. Available participation estimates are based primarily on administrative records maintained by the Armenian National Paralympic Committee (ANPC) and relevant Para sport federations.

The commonly cited figure of more than 200 individuals participating in Para sport, including approximately 60 athletes competing at international level, reflects athletes registered within national federation structures and competition programmes. These figures should therefore be understood as indicative estimates of competitive participation rather than a comprehensive measure of sport participation among persons with disabilities in the country.

Recreational and informal participation in sport by persons with disabilities is not systematically monitored at national level. Data disaggregated by gender, disability type, geographic region, or age group is also not publicly available. As a result, existing participation figures primarily capture organised Para sport activities and may not reflect the broader level of physical activity engagement among persons with disabilities.

Available information is held across multiple institutional sources, including the ANPC, discipline-specific Para sport federations, and public authorities responsible for sport and disability policy. However, the absence of a centralised national database or unified monitoring framework makes comprehensive participation data difficult to consolidate, verify, and compare over time.

This fragmentation of monitoring responsibilities may limit the ability of policymakers and sector stakeholders to track participation trends, assess programme effectiveness, and identify underrepresented groups within Para sport. The establishment of a coordinated national data collection and monitoring mechanism could therefore support more systematic planning of Para sport programmes and strengthen evidence-based policy development in the sector.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Stakeholders report that older facilities are generally insufficiently adapted and often lack full accessibility features, creating practical barriers for persons with disabilities. In contrast, newer sports venues are more likely to comply with updated building standards and accessibility requirements, resulting in improved physical access.

Key Analytical Observations

Armenia represents a centralised Paralympic Committee-led governance model in which national policy direction and financing are concentrated at ministerial level while operational delivery is carried out through the National Paralympic Committee and discipline-specific federations. The review indicates that the legal and policy framework for Para sport in Armenia remains relatively limited. While general provisions related to sport and disability rights exist, Para sport is only weakly reflected in legislation, by-laws, and strategic policy documents. The Physical Culture and Sports Strategy for 2024-2030 includes persons with disabilities within broader participation objectives but does not sufficiently address the specific needs and development challenges of the Para sport sector, limiting the ability to define focused priorities and plan resources effectively.

Financial constraints represent a major structural challenge. Compared with other countries covered in the assessment, public funding allocated to Para sport in Armenia appears critically limited and is reported by stakeholders to be insufficient even to cover basic operational needs. The implementation of activities partly relies on donor support. Local clubs receive little or no funding from the central budget and operate mainly through occasional and fragmented support from municipal sources. At the same time, the provision of financial compensation to

athletes placing within the top 24 at major international competitions represents a positive incentive mechanism within the system.

The armed conflict has also influenced the broader context of Para sport sector. The conflict has generated significant social expenditures and increased the number of persons with disabilities in the country. In this context, participation in sport can play an important role in supporting the rehabilitation, reintegration, and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Recruitment and engagement of persons with disabilities in Para sport remains a challenge, highlighting the importance of strengthening outreach and support mechanisms within the Para sport system.

Despite financial limitations, certain structural opportunities exist. Mainstream sports infrastructure can often be adapted for use in Para sport, and the country possesses a centralised training base that could potentially support athlete preparation more effectively if adequate financial resources were available.

At the institutional level, cooperation among organisations involved in Para sport development is generally reported to be constructive, although these coordination mechanisms remain largely informal. Stakeholders demonstrate a strong willingness to collaborate with public authorities to strengthen the Para sport system, and this expertise could be further utilised in the development of future sector policies and programmes.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches, identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, represent features of the Armenian Para sport system with transferable value for system strengthening.

- The 2021 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities codifies universal design and reasonable accommodation as statutory obligations. This establishes a legal basis for accessibility applying across all public spheres including sport, representing a structural shift from a medical toward a rights-based framework with direct implications for participation conditions.
- The Physical Culture and Sports Strategy for 2024-2030 names persons with disabilities as a target population and sets a measurable participation target of increasing engagement in healthy lifestyles from 3% to 5% by 2030. This converts a general policy commitment into a trackable obligation with a defined baseline and endpoint, providing an accountability mechanism that goes beyond declaratory non-discrimination provisions.
- Athletes placing within the top 24 at major international competitions receive monthly financial compensation for one year, together with their coaches; within a resource-constrained system, it supports sustained elite development and recognises the contribution of coaching staff alongside athletes.
- The national coordinating mechanism on the rights of persons with disabilities, established in line with CRPD Article 33(1), provides a cross-government platform linking multiple ministries and sectors on disability policy, including sport participation. This creates an institutional vision for intersectoral coordination that extends beyond the sport sector alone.

Key Challenges

Despite the presence of a functioning institutional framework, several structural and operational challenges continue to affect the development of Para sport in Armenia.

Structural system constraints

- Overall, financial resources for Para sport development remain significantly limited, including to support the operational strengthening and capacity development of existing Para sport organisations.

- The limited development of local sport clubs and the relatively modest level of public investment in grassroots Para sport appear to constrain the expansion of participation opportunities across the country. Institutional capacity for systematic athlete development and data monitoring remains limited.
- Although the Ministry maintains a nationwide network of children and youth sports schools, Para sport opportunities for persons with disabilities are largely not available across these institutions.

Participation barriers

- Recent armed conflict has increased the number of individuals who could potentially benefit from sport and rehabilitation programmes; however, willingness among persons with disabilities to engage in sport remains relatively low, which may be partly associated with insufficient promotion of Para sport opportunities and limited outreach activities, underscoring the need for expanded awareness-raising and inclusive participation initiatives.
- Participation of women with disabilities in Armenian Para sport remains extremely limited. Available evidence indicates that female athletes are significantly underrepresented within national federations and international delegations. Several structural factors contribute to this pattern. Participation data is not systematically disaggregated by gender, limiting the visibility of the gap for policymakers. No targeted recruitment or retention programmes focusing on women and girls with disabilities have been identified. In addition, women with disabilities may face compounded barriers related to disability stigma, gender norms, and limited access to sport opportunities outside urban areas.

Institutional capacity constraints

- Para sport organisations require stronger capacities in areas such as fundraising, governance, and sports management, with a need for additional professional training and technical support.
- Opportunities for specialised training and retraining of coaches in Para sport remain limited, which may constrain programme expansion and athlete development.

Governance and policy-process issues

- Stakeholders report that in the development of the Physical Culture and Sports Strategy for 2024-2030, together with its accompanying Action Plan (2023), the involvement of Para sport organisations was not ensured at an adequate level.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport:

develop and formally adopt a national Para sport athlete development pathway framework defining progression stages from entry-level participation to elite competition and clarifying the roles of the ANPC, federations, and sport clubs within this pathway.

Recommendation 2.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport:

promote the gradual introduction of Para sport opportunities within the nationwide network of children's and youth sports schools in order to expand entry points for participation.

Recommendation 3.

The Armenian National Paralympic Committee, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and disability organisations:

develop and implement a structured outreach initiative targeting individuals with disabilities in rehabilitation settings, schools, and community organisations.

Recommendation 4.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport:

establish a dedicated multi-year budget for Para sport development within the national state budget cycle.

Recommendation 5.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport:

introduce dedicated funding mechanisms within the national sport budget (such as small grants) to support the establishment and initial operational costs of new Para sport clubs, with priority given to regions outside Yerevan and clubs operating in cooperation with rehabilitation institutions.

Recommendation 6.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and the Armenian National Paralympic Committee:

develop targeted capacity-building programmes for Para sport organisations focusing on governance, organisational management, and resource mobilisation.

Recommendation 7.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, in cooperation with the Armenian National Paralympic Committee and relevant sport federations:

expand training and professional development opportunities for coaches working in adaptive sport.

Recommendation 8.

The Armenian National Paralympic Committee, in cooperation with Para sport federations and disability organisations:

develop targeted outreach and recruitment initiatives aimed at women and girls with disabilities and introduce systematic collection of gender-disaggregated participation data to support monitoring and policy development.

2. Cyprus

Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population	983,000
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	Approximately 19.2% of the population aged 16+, equivalent to around 189,000 persons (statistical estimate based on EU-SILC disability prevalence data; Cyprus does not maintain a unified national disability register)

Persons with disabilities in Para sport	No consolidated national estimate available. Administrative data is held by the Cyprus National Paralympic Committee (CNPC), sport federations, and the Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO), but these figures are not aggregated or publicly published at national level.
Paralympic Games 2024	3 athletes (1 man; 2 women); Medals – 2
Paralympic Games 2020	3 athletes (1 man; 2 women); Medals – 2
Paralympic Games 2016	2 athletes (1 man; 1 woman); Medals – 0

Population: Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT), end of 2024. Disability prevalence: Eurostat EU-SILC (hlth_silc_12). The absence of published Para sport participation data limits evidence-based planning and should be considered an institutional priority.

Legal and Policy Framework

Cyprus is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the CRPD, are partially reflected in national legislation and policy instruments.

The core legal framework governing sport in Cyprus is established by the Cyprus Sports Organisation Law (1969), which establishes the Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO/KOA) as the statutory national sport authority. The law defines the CSO's mandate to promote sport, organise mass participation programmes, supervise sport bodies, and administer state sport funding. The legislation includes a specific institutional anchor for Para sport through the explicit recognition of the Cyprus National Paralympic Committee (CNPC). Beyond the primary law, Para sport is mainly governed through **policy instruments and national plans** adopted by CSO. **CSO National Plans include the following:**⁴

- “Sport for Persons with Disabilities and Support for Vulnerable Population Groups” plan, which envisages grants to federations to ensure sporting opportunities for persons with disabilities and the provision of equipment to disability advocacy organisations
- The inclusion of Olympic and Paralympic sports in youth and talent development pathways
- A policy shift to include athletes with disabilities in the national High Performance framework from 2025

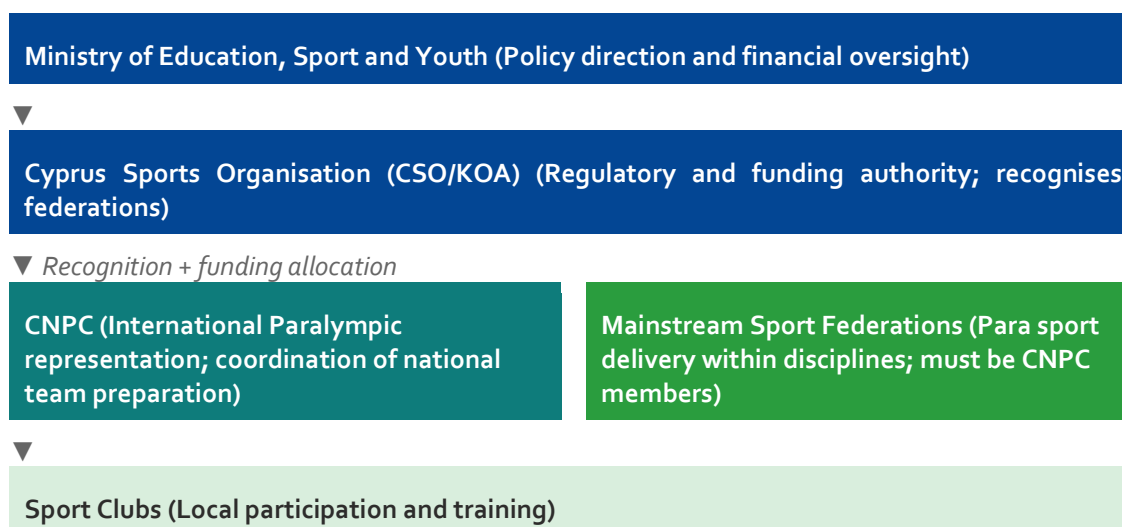
Within the broader disability rights framework, the Law to “Provide for Persons with Disabilities” (2000) recognises participation in “athletic and recreational activities” as the area where persons with disabilities should be supported.

At policy level, the **National Strategy and Action Plan on Disability 2024-2028**, provides an overarching disability policy framework and addresses sport within its Seventh Pillar, “Participation in Cultural Life, Entertainment, Leisure Activities and Sports.” This pillar refers to sport in relation to accessibility of facilities, opportunities for participation, and inclusion within existing cultural, recreational, and sporting structures.

The legal and policy framework in Cyprus provides formal recognition of Para sport within both the national sport system. Para sport is anchored in general sport legislation and complemented by national plans and disability and strategic policy instruments.

⁴ CSO National Plans (uploaded document)

Governance and Institutional Structure



In Cyprus, responsibility for sport at government level lies with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, under whose supervision the Cyprus Sports Organisation⁵ (CSO/KOA) operates as the statutory national sport authority responsible for promoting sport, recognising sport federations, and administering state sport funding.

The **Cyprus National Paralympic Committee**⁶ (CNPC) is the legally recognised national body responsible for representing Cyprus within the Paralympic Movement. According to its official mandate, the CNPC is responsible for the selection, preparation, and participation of Cypriot athletes with disabilities in the Paralympic Games and other international Paralympic competitions, in cooperation with the International Paralympic Committee. The Committee also works to promote the Paralympic Movement at national level and to support the development of Para sport in Cyprus through coordination with relevant stakeholders.

In Cyprus, Para sport is delivered primarily through mainstream sport federations that are responsible for individual sport disciplines and include Para sport within their structures. These federations must be members of the CNPC and be recognised by the CSO in order to operate within the national Para sport system and access public support. A limited number of disability-specific organisations operate outside the mainstream federation structure: the Pancyprrian Organisation of the Blind (affiliated with the International Blind Sports Federation, IBSA), the Cyprus Transplant Association (participating in transplant sport competitions), and the Cyprus Athletic Federation of the Deaf (operating as a dedicated federation for persons with hearing impairment within deaf sport competitions).

Overall, the governance structure reflects a coordinated model in which Para sport operates within the mainstream sport system under the supervision of the national sport authority. Institutional responsibilities are clearly defined, with the National Paralympic Committee functioning as the recognised representative body, while discipline-specific delivery is predominantly embedded within mainstream federations, with a limited number of disability-specific organisations operating independently within their respective international competition frameworks.

⁵ <https://cso.org.cy/>

⁶ <https://www.paralympic.org.cy/>

National Coordination

National coordination of Para sport in Cyprus is primarily organised through the institutional framework led by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO). The Ministry provides overall policy direction and allocates public resources to the sport sector, while the CSO acts as the central operational authority responsible for recognising sport federations, administering subsidies, and supervising programme implementation.

Within this structure, sport federations function as the main delivery bodies for Para sport disciplines and cooperate with the Cyprus National Paralympic Committee (CNPC) in matters related to international competition preparation, athlete eligibility verification, and compliance with international Paralympic regulations. The CNPC coordinates the participation of Cypriot athletes with disabilities in the Paralympic Games and other international competitions and represents Cyprus within the international Paralympic system.

Operational coordination between institutions takes place primarily through administrative and programme management processes. Sport federations submit annual activity plans and budget proposals to the CSO, which reviews programme priorities and allocates funding accordingly. Coordination between the CNPC and federations occurs particularly during the preparation of international competitions and athlete selection processes.

Although these mechanisms provide functional coordination channels within the national sport governance framework, no permanent multi-stakeholder coordination platform dedicated specifically to Para sport policy development or sector planning has been identified.

Funding and Resource Allocation

Organisation Fund (State subsidies, fees, lottery proceeds, other revenues)

▼ *Annual subsidies based on budgets and activity reports*

Sport Federations (Operational subsidies)

CNPC (International programme support)

▼

Sport Clubs (Indirect funding through federation structures)

The **Cyprus Sports Organisation** Law establishes an **Organisation Fund** into which multiple revenue streams flow, including state subsidies, fees, lottery-type proceeds, and other revenues. Competitive sport and sport institutions receive annual subsidies from this fund. Subsidised bodies, including sport federations and clubs, are required to submit budgets and activity reports, which are used as the basis for determining subsidy levels.

The National Plans of the **CSO** describe **programme-based funding within which athletes with disabilities who participate in internationally recognised Paralympic and Deaf sport competitions** and who demonstrate high performance or performance potential receive **the same support as athletes without disabilities**. Within the “Sport for Persons with Disabilities and Support for Vulnerable Population Groups” plan, the **CSO** provides grants to sports federations to ensure sporting opportunities for persons with disabilities, including physical, hearing, visual, and intellectual disabilities. These programmes also cover **adapted physical activity** and the **provision of sports equipment** to organisations of persons with disabilities.

Participation Pathways



⚠ Transition Gap: Limited national classification capacity creates delays and barriers to progression. While the CNPC hosts international classifiers every 2-3 years for local status, official IPC classification requires international travel, disproportionately affecting emerging athletes.

Entry into structured support pathways is primarily mediated through sport federations, including recommendation-based admission to youth and prospect schemes. Young athletes may enter through the **National Support Plan for Young Athletes with Prospects**, which supports early-stage development and participation in both Olympic and Paralympic sports. In parallel, **Scholarship Plans for Student-Athletes**, linked to **High Performance and Talent Programmes**, provide financial support to athletes with disabilities combining sport with education. Federations contribute to the identification of eligible athletes and their referral to these schemes, in accordance with predefined eligibility and performance criteria.

Progression from development to elite levels is governed by competitive performance and performance potential and is structured through the **High Performance/Elite Athlete Framework**, which explicitly includes athletes with disabilities from 2025. Admission to and progression within this framework are based on **Competitive Admission Criteria** aligned with international standards. Athletes with disabilities included in the framework receive structured transition support, including financial allowances, preparation support, insurance coverage, and participation in training camps, alongside corresponding support for coaches.

Athletes with disabilities achieving distinctions in major international competitions are eligible for recognition and benefits through national award mechanisms, including **financial award schemes** for sporting achievements. Athletes with international distinctions may also access the **Professional Reintegration Plan**, which provides support in the form of lump-sum grants or employment-related measures. From **1st of January 2025**, eligibility criteria and benefits under these award and reintegration schemes are equalised for Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

Gender Inclusion

Participation of women with disabilities in Para sport in Cyprus remains lower than that of men. While several high-profile Paralympic athletes have contributed to raising the visibility of the Paralympic movement nationally, this visibility has not yet translated into broader participation among women and girls with disabilities.

Several structural factors appear to contribute to this pattern. First, no targeted recruitment or retention programmes specifically focusing on women and girls with disabilities have been identified within existing Para sport development initiatives. Athlete identification activities are

primarily implemented through sport federations and tend to focus on general recruitment rather than addressing gender-related barriers to participation.

Second, women with disabilities may face compounded barriers associated with the intersection of disability, gender norms, and access to sport opportunities. Cultural perceptions surrounding disability and women's participation in sport may discourage engagement, particularly in contexts where opportunities for participation remain limited. Access constraints may also be more pronounced for women living outside major urban centres, where transportation barriers and the limited availability of adapted sport programmes can further restrict participation.

Third, the limited visibility of female coaches, administrators, and athletes within the Para sport sector may reduce the availability of role models capable of encouraging participation among women and girls with disabilities.

Finally, the absence of systematically collected gender-disaggregated participation data limits the ability of policymakers and sport authorities to monitor gender equality outcomes within Para sport programmes. Strengthening gender-sensitive monitoring mechanisms and introducing targeted outreach initiatives could support more balanced participation and contribute to broader equality objectives within Cyprus's sport policy framework.

Data Collection and Monitoring

No unified national system consolidating participation data for Para sport in Cyprus has been identified. Administrative information related to Para sport participation is held across several institutions, including the Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO), the Cyprus National Paralympic Committee (CNPC), and individual sport federations.

Available data appears to be collected primarily for administrative and programme management purposes, including athlete registration, participation in competitions, and eligibility for national support schemes. However, this information is not systematically consolidated or publicly reported through a centralised national database.

As a result, comprehensive statistics on Para sport participation by disability type, gender, age group, or geographic distribution are not readily available. The absence of regularly published participation data limits the ability of policymakers and sport authorities to assess participation trends, monitor gender equality in Para sport, or evaluate the effectiveness of inclusion policies.

Strengthening national data collection and reporting mechanisms could therefore support evidence-based planning for Para sport development and improve the monitoring of participation outcomes within the broader sport policy framework.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Accessibility of sports infrastructure in Cyprus has improved over time, and most facilities are now described as accessible to athletes with disabilities. However, infrastructure capacity remains limited. Athletes with disabilities rely primarily on federation-owned or Olympic sport facilities, and stakeholders indicated that available venues are sometimes insufficient to fully meet training and development needs.

Stakeholders noted that the President of Cyprus announced that a centre in one of the major cities will be dedicated to Para sport, with the expectation that Paralympic athletes will be able to gather there for events and activities.

Key Analytical Observations

The review indicates that the legal and policy framework governing sport and Para sport in Cyprus remains relatively narrow in scope. The regulatory basis relies primarily on a single core law – the Cyprus Sports Organisation Law, complemented by programme-based instruments

administered by the CSO. While these mechanisms provide operational support to the Paralympic movement, the absence of a comprehensive national sport strategy or dedicated Para sport development framework limits the ability of authorities to articulate long-term priorities, coordinate sector stakeholders, and allocate resources strategically.

State institutions demonstrate visible support for the Paralympic movement, and the Cyprus National Paralympic Committee plays an active role in representing the country within the international Paralympic system. However, the absence of a clearly articulated long-term strategic framework for Para sport development, combined with limited financial resources, contributes to the persistence of structural constraints affecting participation growth and athlete development.

In particular, recruitment and engagement of new athletes remain difficult. Limited human resources and constrained financial capacity restrict the ability of sport organisations to conduct sustained outreach and awareness-raising activities aimed at identifying persons with disabilities interested in sport participation. As a result, the number of athletes competing at Paralympic level remains relatively small. This situation partly reflects the country's relatively small population size, but structural factors such as limited outreach capacity and constrained development pathways also influence participation levels.

Gender participation remains uneven. Women with disabilities are underrepresented in organised Para sport activities and international delegations. While prominent athletes such as Karolina Pelendritou have contributed significantly to the visibility of the Paralympic movement in Cyprus, this visibility has not yet translated into wider participation among women and girls with disabilities. This suggests that more structured and targeted initiatives are required to address participation barriers and strengthen gender inclusion within Para sport development programmes.

From an infrastructure perspective, Cyprus has made progress in improving accessibility of sports facilities. However, the available infrastructure base remains relatively small and does not always provide sufficient capacity to fully support athlete training and development. Athletes with disabilities frequently rely on facilities owned or managed by sport federations, which may not always provide optimal training conditions. In addition, the overall pool of specialised human resources involved in Para sport development, including trained coaches, technical specialists, and sport administrators remains limited, which may further constrain programme expansion.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches, identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, represent features of the Cypriot Para sport system with transferable value for system strengthening.

- From 1 January 2025, eligibility criteria and benefits, including allowances, insurance, preparation support, and professional reintegration measures, are formally equalised for Olympic and Paralympic athletes within the national high-performance framework. This represents a concrete parity mechanism, translating governance integration into material equivalence of support conditions.
- The policy shift to include Para athletes in the national High Performance framework from 2025, based on internationally recognised performance criteria, embeds Para sport within the same institutional support architecture as Olympic sport rather than maintaining a parallel or secondary performance system.

Key Challenges

The development of Para sport in Cyprus is supported by a structured national sport governance framework and dedicated athlete support programmes. However, stakeholders identified several structural constraints affecting the expansion of participation opportunities and the development of sustainable athlete pathways.

Participation and outreach constraints

- Engagement of persons with disabilities in sport in Cyprus remains limited. Stakeholders report that sustained outreach and awareness-raising activities are required in order to increase participation. Regular visits to rehabilitation institutions, schools, and disability organisations are considered important for identifying potential athletes and promoting participation opportunities. However, the absence of a dedicated outreach workforce and the limited availability of trained volunteers restrict the ability of sport organisations to systematically identify and recruit new athletes.

Gender participation gap

- Participation of women with disabilities in Para sport remains low. Available evidence indicates that female athletes are underrepresented within Para sport federations and national delegations. Although gender equality principles are formally reflected in the governance frameworks of the Cyprus Sports Organisation and the Cyprus National Paralympic Committee, no targeted recruitment or retention programmes focusing specifically on women and girls with disabilities have been identified. Structural barriers, including disability stigma, gender norms, and unequal access to sport opportunities, may contribute to this participation gap.

Funding and organisational capacity constraints

- Stakeholders report that financial resources available for Para sport development remain limited. Funding constraints affect the ability of federations and sport organisations to expand training programmes, support athlete development, and facilitate participation in international competitions. Limited funding also affects the organisational capacity of sport federations to conduct systematic outreach activities and strengthen grassroots participation structures.

Infrastructure and training capacity

- Training opportunities for Para athletes are constrained by the limited availability of suitable sports infrastructure. Athletes currently rely primarily on facilities owned or managed by sport federations, which may not always provide sufficient training capacity. Although accessibility improvements have been reported across parts of the national sport infrastructure, stakeholders indicated that facility availability remains insufficient to fully meet training needs. The absence of dedicated Para sport training centres at local level was also identified as a structural gap affecting the development of athlete training pathways.

Technical and classification capacity

- National capacity to conduct athlete classification remains limited, with no trained classifiers currently based in Cyprus. The CNPC arranges and hosts an international classifier approximately every two to three years for local-level classification of athletes with disabilities. However, official classification for international IPC competitions requires evaluation by a committee of classifiers at international events. As a result, athletes may be facing delays in obtaining classification status required for international competition pathways.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

Cyprus Sports Organisation:

review the allocation methodology of the Organisation Fund in order to strengthen support for grassroots Para sport development. Allocation criteria should include participation indicators and inclusion targets, and Para sport-specific funding should be reported annually within the Cyprus Sports Organisation's sport sector reporting.

Recommendation 2.

Cyprus Sports Organisation and Cyprus National Paralympic Committee:

strengthen national capacity for Para sport athlete classification through targeted training of national classifiers and cooperation with international sport bodies in order to expand classification opportunities within Cyprus.

Recommendation 3.

Cyprus Sports Organisation, Cyprus National Paralympic Committee and sport federations:

develop structured outreach programmes aimed at increasing participation of persons with disabilities in sport, including cooperation with schools, rehabilitation centres, and disability organisations for the purpose of identifying and supporting new athletes.

Recommendation 4.

Cyprus Sports Organisation and sport federations:

develop targeted initiatives to increase participation of women and girls with disabilities in Para sport, including gender-sensitive outreach programmes and systematic monitoring of gender-disaggregated participation data.

Recommendation 5.

Cyprus Sports Organisation:

strengthen access to sports infrastructure for Para sport training and competition by improving accessibility of existing facilities, increasing training capacity, and facilitating coordinated use of sport infrastructure by Para sport athletes.

Recommendation 6.

Cyprus Sports Organisation and sport federations:

Explore the development of regional Para sport training hubs in order to strengthen athlete development pathways and support athlete progression.

3. Greece

Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population (2021 Census)	10.48 million
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	10.2% (population aged 16+, severely limited in daily activities; Eurostat EU-SILC)
Persons with disabilities in Para sport	Roughly 1,500 to 2,500 registered athletes with disabilities (Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons

	with Disabilities and affiliated federations; range reflects variation across sources and registration criteria)
Paralympic Games 2024 (Paris)	37 athletes (24 men; 13 women) Medals – 13
Paralympic Games 2020 (Tokyo)	44 athletes (33 men; 11 women) Medals – 11
Paralympic Games 2016 (Rio)	60 athletes (44 men; 16 women); Medals – 13

Population: Hellenic Statistical Authority (2021 Census). Disability prevalence: Eurostat EU-SILC. Para sport participation figures are indicative and reflect registered competitive athletes; the range reflects differences in registration criteria across federations. Recreational participants are not captured.

While the number of participating athletes has gradually declined across the three Paralympic cycles, Greece has continued to secure medals at each Games. This pattern suggests the continued presence of a strong cohort of elite athletes, while the declining size of Paralympic delegations across recent cycles may indicate a narrowing pipeline of athletes progressing from national competition structures to the highest level of international competition.

Legal and Policy Framework

Greece is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the CRPD, are partially reflected in national legislation and policy documents.

At constitutional level, the Greek Constitution places sport under the protection and supervision of the State and recognises the right of persons with disabilities to participate fully in the social, economic and political life of the country.

The core legal framework governing sport in Greece is established by Law 2725/1999 ("Amateur and Professional Sport and Other Provisions"), which regulates the organisation and administration of sport.

Article 29 of Law 2725/1999 specifically addresses sport for persons with disabilities. It establishes the principles of equal participation, non-discrimination and inclusion, and regulates the organisation and functioning of sports clubs, unions and federations for persons with disabilities.

The law provides for:

- the establishment and operation of sports organisations for persons with disabilities
- the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities as the coordinating national federation
- the Hellenic Paralympic Committee, recognised as a private-law legal entity responsible for preparation and participation of Greek athletes in the Paralympic Games and other international competitions.

The Hellenic Paralympic Committee operates under the supervision of the competent authority for sport, while matters not expressly regulated under Article 29 are governed by the general provisions of the sport law.

Within the broader disability rights framework, Law 4488/2017 ("Pension and Social Security Provisions, Strengthening of Social Protection, Labour Relations and Other Provisions")

establishes general principles relating to equality, participation and inclusion, although sport is not addressed as a distinct policy area.

At policy level, the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2024–2030 (“One Greece with Everyone, for Everyone”) provides an overarching framework for disability inclusion across public policy domains, including sport participation.

The legal framework embeds Para sport within the general sport governance system rather than regulating it through a fully separate institutional regime. Para sport governance therefore operates within the broader sport administration architecture, while disability policy frameworks provide complementary inclusion objectives. However, the absence of a dedicated Para sport strategy or sector-specific action plan limits the ability to articulate long-term development priorities and coordinate targeted measures aimed at expanding participation.

Governance and Institutional Structure

Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport General Secretariat of Sports (GSS)

▼ *Regulatory authority + funding allocation*

Hellenic Paralympic Committee (HPC)
(International representation; Paralympic team preparation)

Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities (Domestic competitions; club supervision; athlete development)

▼ *Coordination for national team selection*

Other Federations: Deaf Sports, Wheelchair Basketball, Kidney Patients & Transplants



Sport Clubs (Mainstream, discipline-based; Para sport integrated within structures)

Two core organisations play central roles within the Para sport system: the Hellenic Paralympic Committee (HPC) and the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities. The Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities functions as the main domestic governing body responsible for the organisation of national Para sport activities. Its responsibilities include supervising affiliated clubs, organising national competitions, managing athlete registration processes, and supporting the development of grassroots participation across multiple disciplines.

The Hellenic Paralympic Committee performs a complementary role focused primarily on international representation and elite competition. It coordinates the preparation and participation of Greek teams in Paralympic Games and international qualification events and represents the country within the international Paralympic movement. Athlete selection for Paralympic participation therefore occurs through cooperation between the Hellenic Paralympic Committee and the relevant sport federation structures responsible for athlete development at national level. Its activities span multiple sport disciplines, with priorities determined by the federation’s leadership. **In addition, several other federations operate in the country, such as the Hellenic Wheelchair Basketball Federation (which is a member of the Hellenic Paralympic Committee), Hellenic Athletic Federation of the Deaf and the Sports Federation of Kidney Patients & Transplants of Greece.**

Across Greece, Para sport clubs operate according to disciplines. Clubs are responsible for **organising training, employing licensed coaches, and registering athletes.** To operate legally, clubs must be **registered with the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport,**

meet formal requirements and be **affiliated with a recognised federation**. Only athletes registered through such clubs are eligible to participate in official Para sport competitions and national championships organised by the federations.

Athletes must hold an Athlete Health Card in order to register with federations and sport clubs and to participate in training and competitions.

Local government involvement in the support of Para sport is weak and largely limited to the provision of material infrastructure.

Overall, the governance structure of Para sport in Greece is clearly defined and institutionally embedded within the national sport system, with regulatory authority exercised by the General Secretariat of Sports and operational responsibilities divided between the Hellenic Paralympic Committee and recognised sport federation. Compared to several other countries, Greece presents a somewhat distinct model in that a single multi-sport federation for persons with disabilities oversees the majority of Para sport disciplines at national level, rather than operating through fully separate sport-specific federations.

National Coordination

Coordination within the sport sector is primarily exercised through the General Secretariat of Sports (GSS), which functions as the central administrative authority responsible for supervising recognised sport bodies and allocating public funding. Sport organisations, including the Hellenic Paralympic Committee and the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities, interact directly with the GSS in relation to regulatory compliance, programme implementation, and funding allocation.

Operational coordination between Para sport organisations occurs mainly through institutional processes related to competition planning, athlete registration, and preparation for international events. In practice, the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities manages the organisation of domestic competitions and athlete development activities, while the Hellenic Paralympic Committee coordinates participation in international competitions and Paralympic Games.

In addition, Greece has established a national Coordinating Mechanism on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in line with Article 33(1) of the UN CRPD, which brings together multiple ministries to oversee implementation of the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This mechanism operates as a horizontal disability policy platform rather than a sport-specific coordination structure. The involvement of sport authorities within this mechanism primarily relates to accessibility of sport infrastructure and participation opportunities for persons with disabilities.⁷

Funding and Resource Allocation

Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport through General Secretariat of Sports
(General State Budget + Betting Tax)

▼ Direct funding

HPC + Hellenic Sports Federation for
Persons with Disabilities (State budget +
betting tax)

Other Federations (Deaf, Wheelchair
Basketball, Transplants) (State budget +
betting tax)

▼ Ad hoc supplementary support (not guaranteed)

⁷ <https://amea.gov.gr/coordination>

Sport Clubs (Direct limited funding from betting tax; criteria include registered athletes, coaches, activity)

Central government represents the primary source of funding for Para sport in Greece. Financial resources are provided through two main channels: allocations from the general state budget and revenues derived from sports betting taxation. The distribution of the regular grant to the four Federations of Persons with Disabilities is administered through the CHILON system, which benchmarks federations on four general criteria: size, activity, distinctions, and governance, analysed through individual indicators, providing a basis for determining annual grant allocations.

Hellenic Paralympic Committee, Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities and other recognised federations receive funding directly from the central government through a combination of state budget allocations and earmarked betting tax revenues. Para sport clubs receive direct financial support through allocations derived from betting tax revenues, which are distributed to approximately 6,400 clubs nationally based on a rating system. Within this system, clubs for persons with disabilities receive a 50% increase in their calculated rating, resulting in correspondingly higher funding. Additional allocation criteria include the number of registered athletes, licensed coaches, and the overall level of organisational activity within each club. In addition, the Hellenic Paralympic Committee may provide ad hoc supplementary support to the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities, and the Federation may also provide ad hoc support to sport clubs, particularly to help cover costs related to competitions, equipment, or training camps. Such support, however, is discretionary, not legally mandated, and not provided on a systematic basis, and is subject to the decisions of the Paralympic Committee and the Federation.

Local authorities do not provide direct financial support for Para sport. Their involvement is primarily confined to the maintenance and provision of access to sports facilities, with occasional support for specific activities or events.

Stakeholders also indicate participation in European sport projects.

Participation Pathways



⚠ Transition Gap: *The concentration of Para sport clubs, specialised coaching capacity, and competition structures in major urban centres limits access to development opportunities for athletes living in rural areas and island regions. This geographic imbalance may disrupt progression from entry-level participation to sustained training and competition pathways.*

Para sport clubs are described as the primary formal entry point into organised Para sport, as participation in competitions requires registration with recognised Para sport clubs; athlete recruitment is also supported through outreach activities, including visits to mainstream and special schools for persons with disabilities to provide information on opportunities for engagement in Para sport and its potential benefits.

Athletes who have achieved specified distinctions in Paralympic Games and other major international competitions are entitled to certain benefits, including appointment to positions in the public or wider public sector. Such appointments are made outside the standard competitive recruitment procedures.

Coaching in Para sports may be exercised only by individuals holding a valid coaching licence. Recognised qualification pathways include training through the **National School of Coaches** and coaching schools of the **General Secretariat of Sports**. Distinguished athletes with disabilities may obtain a first-level coaching licence under specified conditions. The law further clarifies that licensed coaches of sports for persons with disabilities may be employed in sports clubs for persons with disabilities as well as in clubs of non-disabled athletes in the corresponding sport.

In Greece, Paralympic medal achievements are recognised on an equal basis with Olympic medal achievements for the purposes of state awards, distinctions, and athlete benefits.

Gender Inclusion

Stakeholders report that overall participation of persons with disabilities in sport in Greece remains relatively limited, and women's participation within this already small participation base is comparatively low. This imbalance is also visible at the elite level, where female representation within Greek Paralympic delegations has remained significantly lower than that of male athletes across recent Paralympic cycles.

Several structural factors may contribute to this pattern. No dedicated national programmes specifically targeting women and girls with disabilities in Para sport have been identified. Athlete recruitment and outreach activities are generally organised through sport clubs and federations and tend to focus on overall participation rather than addressing gender-specific barriers.

Women with disabilities may also encounter compounded barriers related to disability stigma, gender norms, and unequal access to sport opportunities. These barriers may be particularly pronounced in regions where access to Para sport clubs and specialised coaching capacity is limited. In addition, the limited visibility of female athletes and coaches within the Para sport sector may reduce the availability of role models encouraging participation among women and girls.

Existing governance rules require gender representation within sport federation boards, mandating that at least one-third of board members must be from one gender. While this measure contributes to improving gender balance in governance structures, it has not yet translated into broader participation of women with disabilities in organised Para sport activities. Strengthening gender-sensitive outreach initiatives and improving gender-disaggregated monitoring of participation could support a more balanced participation profile.

Data Collection and Monitoring

Greece operates a centralised sport registry system known as "e-Kouros", managed by the General Secretariat of Sports.

The system records:

- recognised sport federations and clubs;

- registered athletes;
- licensed coaches;
- participation data, including athletes with disabilities.

Monitoring of sport bodies is conducted through a performance-based evaluation framework used by the Ministry to assess sport organisations and inform funding allocations.

According to stakeholders, the government evaluates sport bodies based on indicators such as:

- number of clubs and registered athletes;
- international sporting performance;
- level of organisational activity;
- governance practices.

Evaluation scores influence future funding allocations. Participation monitoring is further supported through the mandatory Athlete Health Card system, which allows authorities to maintain a national register of athletes by sport, age and gender.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Accessibility remains one of the main structural challenges in Greece. While new sports facilities are required by building regulations to be accessible, older infrastructure presents significant limitations. According to the stakeholders, the Ministry has conducted inspections of national sports centres, including assessments involving engineers and Paralympic athletes, and is in the process of prioritising necessary accessibility interventions. However, accessibility barriers extend beyond sports venues themselves; broader issues related to urban infrastructure, transportation, and public space accessibility affect the ability of persons with disabilities to reach and use sports facilities. These systemic accessibility constraints were identified as one of the key challenges impacting Para sport development.

Key Analytical Observations

The legal framework in Greece provides a relatively detailed basis for the governance of Para sport, with relevant provisions embedded within the general sport legislation rather than regulated through a separate legal regime. The system is further supported by centralised monitoring and data collection tools, including the e-Kouros sport registry system and the mandatory athlete health card, which facilitate the collection of participation data and provide a mechanism for oversight of the sport system.

Despite this institutional framework, the absence of a dedicated national sport or Para sport strategy and action plan represents a notable gap in the current system. Such a framework could help define clear priority areas, establish measurable implementation indicators, strengthen monitoring mechanisms, and support a more focused and cost-effective use of available funding. It could also contribute to addressing low participation rates among women and young persons with disabilities in Para sport.

At the same time, participation at the elite level has shown a gradual decline across recent Paralympic cycles. Strengthening strategic planning and coordination mechanisms could help reinforce the capacity of sport clubs and contribute to expanding the pipeline of athletes progressing to national and international competitions.

Financial constraints appear to affect the sustainability of regional sport clubs, which in some cases operate largely on a voluntary basis. In this context, existing funding mechanisms may not always provide sufficient support for the stable functioning and development of local Para sport structures.

Finally, while the athlete health card system provides a mechanism for registering athletes, linking this system with individualised support programmes based on athletes' needs could further strengthen athlete development pathways.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches, identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, represent features of the Greek Para sport system with transferable value for system strengthening.

- The e-Kouros centralised sport registry, managed by the General Secretariat of Sports, records recognised federations, clubs, registered athletes, and licensed coaches including persons with disabilities. The mandatory Athlete Health Card linked to this system enables national-level athlete registration by sport, age and gender, providing a data infrastructure that supports both eligibility management and participation monitoring across the system.
- The performance-based evaluation framework used by the Ministry to assess sport organisations, covering registered athletes, licensed coaches, governance practices, and level of organisational activity, links evaluation scores to future funding allocations. This creates a structured accountability mechanism that incentivises sport organisations, including Para sport bodies, to maintain and develop their activity base.
- Paralympic medal achievements in Greece are recognised on an equal basis with Olympic medal achievements for the purposes of state awards, distinctions, and athlete benefits, including appointment to public sector positions. This formal parity signals institutional commitment to equal recognition of Para sport performance within the national sport system.
- Under Law 4726/2020, the Hellenic Paralympic Committee holds a statutory monitoring mandate over the modernisation and accessibility of older sports venues. While accessibility gaps in older infrastructure remain, a challenge identified elsewhere in this report, the assignment of this mandate within governance rather than leaving it to discretionary project-based initiatives, establishes a continuous institutional responsibility for infrastructure improvement over time.

Key Challenges

Several structural and operational factors currently affect the development and accessibility of Para sport participation in Greece.

- The absence of a dedicated national sport or Para sport policy framework limits the strategic direction guiding the development of disability sport in Greece. While Para sport operates within the broader national sport system, there is no dedicated policy instrument or national action plan specifically addressing Para sport development. This limits the capacity for coordinated planning and structured implementation across institutions responsible for sport and disability policy.
- Stakeholders have indicated that the current governance model for Para sport development may require further clarification and strengthening. In particular, the operational division of responsibilities between key institutions and the concentration of decision-making primarily at national level may affect coordination and responsiveness within the system.
- Regional sport clubs serving athletes with disabilities may not always be formally recognised by the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities. Where such recognition is absent, athletes affiliated with these clubs may encounter barriers to participation in nationally organised competitions and progression within the official Para sport system.
- Financial resources available for Para sport development remain limited relative to the operational needs of sport federations and clubs. Funding constraints affect athlete preparation,

participation in competitions, access to specialised equipment, and the implementation of broader development activities.

- Accessibility barriers persist in sports infrastructure, particularly in older facilities. In addition, transport-related barriers between home and training venues may restrict participation opportunities for athletes with disabilities, especially in geographically remote areas.
- The geographic concentration of sport clubs, competitions, and specialised coaching capacity in major urban centres limits access to organised Para sport activities for individuals living in rural areas and island regions. This geographic imbalance affects the continuity of athlete development pathways and contributes to lower participation levels.
- Promotion and outreach mechanisms aimed at encouraging participation in Para sport remain limited. Information pathways connecting hospitals, rehabilitation centres, schools, and sport organisations are not systematically developed, which may reduce awareness of available participation opportunities among persons with disabilities.
- Participation of women with disabilities in Para sport remains low. Participation data are not systematically disaggregated by gender within existing administrative systems, which limits the visibility of gender disparities. Targeted outreach or recruitment initiatives aimed specifically at women and girls with disabilities have not been systematically identified.
- The availability of specialised coaches trained to work with athletes with disabilities remains uneven across the country. In several regions, limited coaching capacity affects the sustainability of sport programmes and the ability of clubs to expand participation opportunities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

General Secretariat of Sports (GSS):

establish a national working group on sport and Para sport in consultation with organisations of persons with disabilities, sport federations, and relevant stakeholders. The working group should lead the development of a dedicated national sport or Para sport policy or action plan.

Recommendation 2.

General Secretariat of Sports (GSS), in cooperation with the Hellenic Paralympic Committee and the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities:

introduce provisions requiring meaningful representation of persons with disabilities, including athletes, within the governance and decision-making bodies of national sport federations.

Recommendation 3.

General Secretariat of Sports (GSS):

review and, where necessary, amend regulations governing the recognition of sport clubs and athlete registration to remove barriers that may limit participation in nationally organised Para sport competitions.

Recommendation 4.

General Secretariat of Sports (GSS), in cooperation with national Para sport federations:

conduct a structured review of the current Para sport governance model in order to clarify institutional responsibilities and strengthen coordination mechanisms within the national sport system.

Recommendation 5.

General Secretariat of Sports (GSS):

develop a dedicated Para sport budget line within national sport financing programmes, including strengthening the participation of local authorities in supporting sport activities for persons with disabilities.

Recommendation 6.

Hellenic Paralympic Committee, in cooperation with the Hellenic Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities:

develop and implement structured outreach initiatives promoting participation in Para sport through cooperation with schools, hospitals, and rehabilitation centres, including targeted measures encouraging the participation of women and girls with disabilities.

Recommendation 7.

General Secretariat of Sports (GSS):

incorporate dedicated measures addressing the training, retraining, and retention of coaches and referees working in Para sport within future national sport development planning, such as a dedicated Para sport coaching certification modules within the National School of Coaches.

Recommendation 8.

General Secretariat of Sports (GSS), in cooperation with the Ministry of Infrastructure and relevant local authorities:

assess the feasibility of transport support measures for athletes with disabilities travelling to training venues, particularly in island and rural regions.

4. Ireland

Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population (2022 Census)	5,458,600 (CSO, April 2025 estimate) ⁸
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	Approximately 1.1 million (22% of the population; Census 2022) ⁹
Persons with disabilities participating in sport	32% of persons with a disability participated in sport in the previous 7 days (Sport Ireland ISM 2024). Note: this figure captures self-reported general sport participation, not exclusively organised Para sport; it may include recreational and informal physical activity. ¹⁰
Paralympic Games 2024 (Paris)	29 athletes (9 men; 20 women); Medals – 6
Paralympic Games 2020 (Tokyo)	27 athletes (13 men; 14 women); Medals – 7

⁸ Ireland's estimated Usually Resident Population as of April 2025:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2025/>

⁹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2022/figurestable/>

¹⁰ <https://www.sportireland.ie/ism-2024>; The indicated number might not only include participation in organized Para sport but general participation in sport.

Population: CSO Population and Migration Estimates (April 2025). Disability prevalence: Census 2022. The 32% participation rate from the ISM 2024 reflects broad sport participation and may not exclusively represent participation in organised Para sport programmes.

Ireland's Paralympic delegation size has declined compared to Rio 2016; however, athlete numbers have remained relatively stable across the last two Games cycles, alongside a notable improvement in women's participation.

Legal and Policy Framework

Ireland is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), signed on 30 March 2007 and ratified on 20 March 2018. Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the CRPD, are reflected in national legislation and policy documents.

The core legal framework constituting legal basis for State involvement in sport is The Sport Ireland Act 2015,¹¹ which establishes Sport Ireland as the national statutory authority responsible for sport development, participation, coordination, and excellence. The Act does not reference Para sports or persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, it provides the statutory mandate under which Para sport-related policies, funding programmes, and institutional arrangements are developed and implemented.

The primary policy instrument guiding Para sports in Ireland is the National Sports Policy 2018-2027.¹² This policy sets out long-term objectives for sport participation, high performance, and governance and explicitly recognises participation "gradients,"¹³ including disability. Implementation of the National Sports Policy is operationalised through action plans, most recently the Sports Action Plan 2024-2027,¹⁴ which defines Para sport broadly to include informal and wellbeing-oriented physical activity, identifies an enduring disability participation gradient, and highlights the challenge of achieving the 40% participation target for persons with disabilities by 2027.¹⁵ Within this framework, Sport Ireland's Disability Inclusion in Sport: Statement of Commitment and Action¹⁶ (2024) sets out Sport Ireland's dedication to increasing participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities and frames its approach to disability inclusion across the sport sector.¹⁷ It also assigns Sport Ireland a leadership role in ensuring that the commitments and actions set out in the Statement are delivered across the sport sector.¹⁸

Within the broader disability rights framework, **The Disability Act 2005 imposes obligations on public bodies to ensure access to public buildings, services and information¹⁹ and to facilitate general access by persons with disabilities to services and employment.** While not sport-specific, the Act has implications for **publicly funded sport facilities and sport services delivered or supported by public authorities. The Equal Status Act 2000 (as amended) prohibits discrimination in access to goods and services, including facilities and services related to "entertainment [and] recreation."**²⁰ It establishes enforceable obligations relating

¹¹ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/15/enacted/en/html>

¹² https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-10/national-sports-policy-2018-2027_0.pdf

¹³ Chapter 2, page 21

¹⁴ <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-02/Sports%20Action%20Plan%20%28English%29.pdf>

¹⁵ p. 9, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

¹⁶ <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2024-11/Disability%20Inclusion%20in%20Sport%20Statement%20of%20Commitment%20and%20Action.pdf>

¹⁷ Page 8.

¹⁸ Page 4.

¹⁹ Part 3, Access to Buildings and Services.

²⁰ Sections 2, 3, 4, 5.

to non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation **but does not contain sport-specific provisions. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (as amended) establishes a public sector equality and human rights duty, requiring public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and human rights in the performance of their functions.**²¹ It does not explicitly mention sports, however, may be applied to **sport-related policy, in terms of funding and service provision** by public authorities. At the policy level, Ireland's **National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030**²² establishes a whole-of-government framework to advance the rights and full participation of disabled people and, under **Pillar 3: Independent Living and Active Participation in Society**, includes commitments to promote accessibility and increase participation of disabled people in sport as part of broader community inclusion policies.

The Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport 2023²³ sets out Sport Ireland's vision for women in sport as one where women have "an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, while enjoying lifelong participation and involvement in sport," and identifies four key target areas: Leadership and Governance, Active Participation, Coaching and Officiating, and Visibility. It states that "women" is inclusive of all characteristics and recognises the intersectionality of women and girls in Ireland but does not contain disability-specific or Para sport-specific objectives or actions.

Ireland's legal and policy framework governing Para sport is comprehensive and embedded within the broader sport and disability rights architecture rather than regulated through a standalone Para sport-specific law. The statutory framework establishes a national authority responsible for sport development, participation, coordination, and high performance, under which Para sport-related funding, inclusion measures, and institutional arrangements are implemented. National sport strategies explicitly recognise disability participation gradients and set measurable inclusion targets, while broader equality and accessibility legislation imposes binding obligations on public bodies regarding non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, and access to public services, including sport facilities. Although this architecture demonstrates strong formal alignment with inclusion principles and embeds Para sport within mainstream sport governance structures, participation rates among persons with disabilities remain comparatively low, indicating that implementation and access challenges persist despite the strength of the policy framework.

Governance and Institutional Structure

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Central government authority)

▼ Policy direction + funding

Sport Ireland (Statutory authority for sport development, participation, coordination, excellence)

▼ Funding + governance oversight

65 National Governing Bodies (NGBs)

Paralympics Ireland (Elite Para sport)

29 Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs)

²¹ Section 42(1).

²² <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/campaigns/the-national-human-rights-strategy-for-disabled-people-2025-2030/>

²³ <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2023-11/Sport%20Ireland%20Policy%20on%20WIS%20%282023%20Final%29.pdf>

Sports Clubs (Grassroots participation)

Active Disability Ireland + other funded bodies (Capacity building, training)

Responsibility for sport policy in Ireland lies with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Under the **Sport Ireland Act 2015**, **Sport Ireland** is established as the statutory authority responsible for developing sport participation strategies, coordinating implementation across publicly funded sport bodies, and supporting both recreational and high-performance sport.²⁴ In fulfilling this mandate, **Sport Ireland works with 65 National Governing Bodies (NGBs), 29 Local Sports Partnerships, and 10 other funded bodies, including Paralympics Ireland.** The policy instrument *Disability Inclusion in Sport: Statement of Commitment and Action (2024)* assigns Sport Ireland a sector-wide leadership role in promoting accessibility and the participation of persons with disabilities, including the appointment of a dedicated **Disability Inclusion in Sport Lead (2025)** to coordinate and oversee implementation across the sector.

Elite Para sport in Ireland is governed by Paralympics Ireland, which is recognised as the country's National Paralympic Committee. Paralympics Ireland's remit is centred on high-performance sport, including the preparation and management of the Irish team at the Paralympic Games, and it is the sole body responsible for communication with the International Paralympic Committee and for entry of participants to IPC-sanctioned events.²⁵

Responsibility for the ongoing development of Paralympic sport rests with the various NGBs that form part of Paralympics Ireland's membership.²⁶ NGBs are key delivery agencies within Ireland's sport system and are recognised by Sport Ireland as central to the organisation and development of sport nationally. They are responsible for administering and developing their respective sports through affiliated clubs, including training coaches and officials, organising competitions, and providing participation opportunities and athlete pathways from local to national levels.²⁷ **In this framework, Para sport is delivered primarily through mainstream sport federations i.e. NGBs responsible for the development and governance of Para disciplines within their respective sports.**

In parallel, stakeholders report that a transition process is underway whereby certain Para sport disciplines (such as athletics and cycling), athletes, and related functions previously managed by Paralympics Ireland are being gradually transferred to the respective NGBs, embedding athletes with disabilities within the same sport-specific governance, development pathways, and performance systems as those used across the mainstream sport structure.

Sports clubs form the grassroots foundation of the sport system, they are mainstream clubs covering Para sports, providing local participation opportunities, training environments, and community engagement in sport. Affiliated with NGBs, clubs play a key role in introducing participants to sport and supporting progression along athlete development pathways.

Grassroots Para sport participation in Ireland is supported through the nationwide network of approximately 29 **Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs)**, which operate at county and city level to promote community-based sport participation, particularly among underrepresented groups, including persons with disabilities. Within this structure, 29 **Sports Inclusion Disability Officers (SIDOs)** work locally with clubs, schools, community organisations, and governing bodies to support inclusive programme delivery, provide training and accessibility guidance, and connect

²⁴ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/15/enacted/en/html> (Section 7 and 8).

²⁵ <https://paralympics.ie/wp-content/uploads/Paralympics-Ireland-Participant-Rules.pdf>

²⁶ <https://paralympics.ie/general-policies-and-downloads-2/>

²⁷ <https://www.sportireland.ie/national-governing-bodies/ngb-overview>

participants with sport opportunities. LSPs and SIDOs cooperate with Sport Ireland, NGBs, disability inclusion organisations, and local authorities. In addition, five regional sports inclusion hubs bring together local clubs to offer persons with disabilities opportunities to try multiple sports in a single location, with SIDOs coordinating participation and links to relevant coaches and organisations.

Local authorities play a supporting role in the development of Para sport primarily through their involvement in LSPs. They also are responsible for developing municipal sport plans that guide the expansion of local sport opportunities, facilities, and participation.

Ireland's Para sport system includes disability-focused inclusion organisations such as **Active Disability Ireland**, which is a national pan-disability sport organisation working to increase sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.²⁸ Active Disability Ireland operates in partnership with Sport Ireland, NGBs and the wider sport sector to support participation and inclusion,²⁹ providing training, education, and practical inclusion tools for clubs, coaches, and sport organisations, thereby strengthening the system's overall capacity to deliver inclusive sport.

Ireland administers Para sport within the broader national sport governance framework rather than through a separate system, with Sport Ireland providing funding, governance, and policy oversight across all sports, including Para sport. Para sport disciplines are progressively being integrated into the respective NGBs, and, in principle, athletes with disabilities are intended to access the same participation, development, and high-performance pathways as those available within the mainstream sport system. This reflects a strongly integrated governance approach, but the extent to which these structures translate into actual participation and progression opportunities continues to vary across sports and regions.

National Coordination

Coordination of Para sport is mainstreamed within the general sport system, with Para sport administered as part of the overall sport governance framework rather than through a fully separate Para sport-specific coordination model.

Sport Ireland provides the statutory anchor for coordination, overseeing funding, governance, and strategic implementation across the sport sector, with Para sport coordination integrated within its broader system-wide responsibilities.

The Sports Leadership Group (SLG) operates as a cross-sector leadership and coordination mechanism convened during the development of national sport policy and action plans, bringing together stakeholders from across the sport sector to provide coordinated policy input, including on Para sport-related matters.

The Disability Sports Group (DSG) functions as a formal collaboration forum linking disability-focused organisations, sport governing bodies, and public institutions to support coordination, information exchange, and the advancement of disability inclusion in sport.

The Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (SIDO) network, operating through Local Sports Partnerships, provides a structured national-to-local coordination mechanism focused on participation, linking community programmes, clubs, schools, governing bodies, and disability advocacy organisations to deliver inclusive sport initiatives at local level.

Paralympics Ireland coordinates elite-level Para sport representation, international relations with the International Paralympic Committee, and Paralympic team preparation, while sport-specific development pathways and programme delivery responsibilities are increasingly allocated to the respective NGBs.

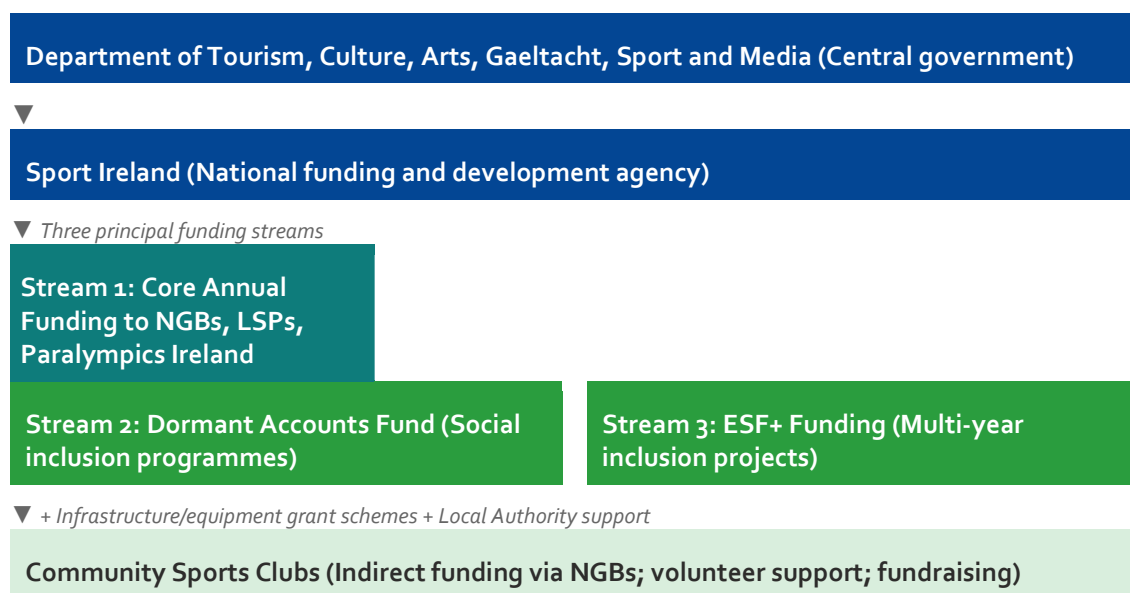
²⁸ <https://www.sportireland.ie/participation/other-funded-bodies/active-disability-ireland>

²⁹ <https://activedisability.ie/>

In addition, horizontal (cross-sectoral) coordination linked to the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People is carried out through interdepartmental working groups. These cross-government working groups bring together representatives from the relevant government departments and Sport Ireland, with Sport Ireland officials participating to provide sport-sector input and to ensure that sport-related considerations are reflected in the strategy and its associated action plan.

National coordination of Para sport in Ireland is comprehensive and institutionally embedded within the mainstream sport governance framework rather than operating through a separate Para sport-specific model. A central statutory authority provides overall coordination through funding oversight, strategic implementation, and governance supervision, while structured coordination mechanisms operate at multiple levels, including cross-sector leadership groups, disability-focused collaboration forums, and a national network linking local participation structures to national bodies. This multi-layered architecture demonstrates strong institutional commitment and provides multiple coordination channels. At the same time, the number of actors involved increases the importance of clearly defined mandates and role clarity in order to avoid duplication, maintain strategic coherence, and ensure that implementation responsibilities remain well understood across the system.

Funding and Resource Allocation



Public funding for Para sport in Ireland is provided primarily through the state budget, allocated via the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to Sport Ireland, which acts as the central funding and development agency. Sport Ireland distributes core annual funding to National Governing Bodies (including Paralympics Ireland), Local Sports Partnerships, and disability-focused sport organisations, including allocations supporting high-performance sport for Paralympic athletes. This core investment supports strategic plan implementation, participation programmes, staffing, events, coach development, and administration. Funding levels vary across organisations according to size, operational scale, and programme scope.

A second financing stream is provided through the Dormant Accounts Fund, a non-recurring source derived from inactive personal bank accounts and redirected to social-support initiatives, including Para sport-related activities. These funds are distributed by Sport Ireland

through a competitive application process and may support participation initiatives, inclusion programmes, training and education, equipment, and accessibility-related projects. Because this funding depends on annual availability, it is less predictable than core budget allocations.

Para sport participation initiatives in Ireland also benefit from European funding, particularly through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), which provides multi-year project-based support for inclusion and participation programmes and complements national funding streams.

In addition to programme funding, sports infrastructure and equipment grant schemes provide capital investment for facility development, accessibility improvements, and adapted equipment through competitive mechanisms available to sport organisations, NGBs, and community clubs. At local level, Local Authorities also contribute by supporting certain facility, programme delivery, and community participation costs.³⁰

Community sports clubs generally access public funding indirectly through NGB programmes or infrastructure grants and continue to rely significantly on volunteer support, local fundraising, and community initiative.

Overall, Ireland's Para sport financing framework is structured and diversified, with core public funding channelled through a central statutory agency and complemented by social-support funds, European project finance, infrastructure grants, and local authority contributions. This provides a relatively broad financial base for participation, accessibility, and high-performance sport. However, despite increasing investment in recent years, participation levels among persons with disabilities remain comparatively low, suggesting that stronger financial inputs alone do not automatically translate into broader participation growth without equally strong implementation mechanisms at local level.³¹

Participation Pathways



⚠ Transition Gap: Ireland's policy and funding architecture for disability inclusion is comparatively well developed, but this does not consistently translate into increased participation and progression outcomes. The main challenge lies in converting formal inclusion commitments and local programme availability into sustained athlete movement from community participation to structured development and elite pathways.

Entry into Para sport for persons with disabilities occurs primarily through community sport clubs affiliated with NGBs, LSPs delivering inclusive participation programmes, and rehabilitation centres where individuals may be introduced to sport during recovery processes.

³⁰ https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-03/invest_25_ENGLISH.pdf

³¹ https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-03/invest_25_ENGLISH.pdf

Additional entry routes include outreach and recruitment activities conducted by Paralympics Ireland and other sport organisations that promote participation and identify new athletes.

For the encouragement and facilitation of the participation of persons with disabilities in sport and physical activity, **LSPs and the SIDO network perform key roles**, delivering inclusive participation programmes at community level.

Athlete pathways in the Irish Para sport system operate through a progression from **community participation and club-level activity to NGB development programmes and ultimately high-performance Paralympic pathways**. Responsibility for developing and managing these pathways lies primarily with the **sport-specific NGBs**, which oversee athlete identification, development programmes, and competition structures within each sport, while **Paralympics Ireland** is responsible for the **high-performance stage**, including preparation and selection of athletes for Paralympic competition. **Sport Ireland** supports the system through funding, policy direction, and coordination across the sport sector, helping ensure alignment between participation, development, and elite performance pathways.

Ireland operates a **carding pathway**, a national high-performance athlete support mechanism available to both Olympic and Paralympic athletes competing at international level. Athletes who progress through high-performance pathways and meet international performance criteria may be designated as carded athletes, which provides financial assistance and access to the national high-performance training system. Carded athletes benefit from integrated performance supports, including access to high-performance training centres, specialist services such as coaching, physiotherapy, and nutrition support, athlete development programmes, training facilities, and, in some cases, accommodation during training periods.

Ireland does not provide direct cash rewards for winning Olympic or Paralympic medals. Instead, athletes receive **ongoing state support through grants, carding schemes, and high-performance funding throughout their training and competition cycle**, which is intended to support them in reaching and sustaining elite performance levels.

Coach education in Ireland is led nationally by Sport Ireland Coaching, which develops the overall coaching system in partnership with NGBs and provides training, certification, and development supports across the sector. The **Coaching Development Programme for Ireland (CDPI)** establishes national frameworks defining competencies, learning outcomes, and qualification pathways.^{32 33} **Active Disability Ireland** contributes to the process by delivering pan-disability inclusion training courses for coaches.

Ireland's Para sport pathway reflects a structured and multi-level system that integrates community participation, sport-specific development, and high-performance progression within the broader national sport framework. Entry points are diverse, spanning community clubs, LSPs, rehabilitation settings, and outreach initiatives, while the SIDO network has a significant role in facilitating inclusive grassroots participation. Athlete progression is largely sport-led, with NGBs responsible for identification and development, and the national Paralympic body overseeing elite preparation and international representation. The existence of a unified high-performance "carding" system, available to both Olympic and Paralympic athletes, demonstrates formal equality within elite sport support structures. Notably, Ireland is among the relatively few countries that does not provide direct monetary rewards for Olympic or Paralympic medal winners.

³² <https://www.sportireland.ie/coaching>

³³ <https://www.sportireland.ie/coaching/coaching-development-programme-for-ireland/coaching-development-programme-for-ireland>

Gender Inclusion

Women's participation in Para sport in Ireland is addressed primarily within the broader equality, diversity and inclusion framework rather than through a fully separate disability-specific gender strategy. Interviewees indicated that inclusion, including gender inclusion, has gained increased policy attention in recent years, supported by stronger institutional focus within Sport Ireland and across governing bodies. However, similar to disability inclusion more broadly, the key challenge lies not only in policy presence but in effective implementation on the ground, where participation outcomes have not always shifted at the desired pace.

Several structural factors may contribute to this pattern. While general women-in-sport policies exist, they do not consistently translate into measures specifically addressing the participation of women and girls with disabilities. Recruitment pathways, local participation opportunities, and progression mechanisms are generally designed within mainstream inclusion structures and may not adequately respond to the combined barriers associated with disability, gender, transport access, and local programme availability. These constraints may be more pronounced outside stronger regional sport ecosystems, where participation opportunities are less consistent.

At the same time, representation at elite level has improved, with women comprising a larger share of Ireland's most recent Paralympic delegation. This suggests that progress is possible where structured pathways, visibility, and institutional support are present. However, ensuring that women with disabilities are more consistently represented across grassroots participation, athlete development pathways, coaching, and decision-making structures remains an ongoing area for development.

Data Collection and Monitoring

Ireland uses a centralised participation monitoring system primarily through Sport Ireland's **Irish Sport Monitor (ISM)**, a national survey instrument that regularly collects data on sport and physical activity participation among individuals aged 16 and over, including disability-related participation and gender differences. The ISM provides annual headline indicators on overall participation, physical activity levels, and the disability participation gap, with data disaggregated by gender and disability status, and tracks participation trends over time using a consistent baseline measure. Additional thematic survey modules may be included periodically to collect more detailed information on specific areas such as disability-specific sport engagement or Paralympic participation.³⁴

Monitoring of the Para sport system in Ireland is carried out mainly through governance and funding oversight by Sport Ireland. National governing bodies and disability sport organisations, including Paralympics Ireland and Special Olympics Ireland, receive public funding through Sport Ireland and must comply with its governance requirements, standards, and guidelines in order to maintain funding and recognition within the national sport system.

These monitoring arrangements provide stronger national participation data than in many systems, but their strategic value depends on how effectively the information is used to identify participation gaps, assess progression patterns, and inform targeted policy, and funding decisions.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

The accessibility and infrastructure in Ireland are described as having improved over time, particularly in newer facilities where accessibility features are more likely to be incorporated. However, challenges remain, especially in older buildings and long-established infrastructures

³⁴ ISM 2024 hub – <https://www.sportireland.ie/ism-2024>; ISM 2023 hub – <https://www.sportireland.ie/ism-2023>

where adapting facilities can be difficult and not always fully achievable. Accessibility also varies depending on the type of disability and the specific location, meaning that experiences are not uniform across the country. In addition to facility-related barriers, transportation was explicitly identified as a practical constraint, as difficulties in accessing suitable transport can limit participation opportunities, even where sports facilities themselves are relatively accessible. Together, these factors indicate that while progress has been made, physical access and transport infrastructure continue to influence the extent to which persons with disabilities can consistently engage in sport.

Key Analytical Observations

The overall picture suggests that Ireland has a well-developed legal and policy framework for disability inclusion in sport, with governance arrangements broadly aligned to these foundations. The appointment of a Disability Inclusion Lead within Sport Ireland, together with increased public investment in recent years, demonstrates a clear institutional commitment to inclusive sport participation.

At the same time, the relationship between policy strength and participation outcomes appears uneven. Available indicators suggest that strong institutional foundations and increased funding have not yet translated into the scale of participation growth that policy frameworks appear to anticipate. This may partly reflect the fact that several reforms and investments are relatively recent and may require time to influence participation patterns and athlete pipelines more visibly.

The system appears to place substantial emphasis on broad participation and inclusion within mainstream sport structures, supported by Local Sports Partnerships, the Sports Inclusion Disability Officer network, and disability-focused organisations. This creates a comparatively strong entry and inclusion architecture. However, the modest and fluctuating size of Ireland's Paralympic delegation may indicate that the translation of broad participation structures into sustained elite athlete development remains uneven across sports.

From a governance perspective, the Irish model combines strong vertical coordination through Sport Ireland with horizontal collaboration across multiple organisations involved in sport and disability inclusion. This architecture supports inclusive delivery, but the number of actors involved can create complexity around strategic focus, coordination, and role clarity. In addition, limited representation of persons with disabilities within leadership and decision-making structures suggests that lived experience is not always fully embedded in programme design and system governance.

Another distinctive feature of the Irish system is the absence of direct financial rewards for Paralympic medal achievements. Although authorities emphasise long-term athlete support through carding and high-performance funding, the lack of visible award-based recognition may influence perceptions of prestige, motivation, and elite pathway attractiveness, particularly when combined with more limited commercial sponsorship opportunities than in Olympic sport.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches, identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, represent features of the Irish Para sport system with transferable value for system strengthening.

- The Sports Action Plan 2024-2027 sets a 40% sport participation target for persons with disabilities, with implementation accountability assigned to Sport Ireland as the statutory sport authority. While this report notes that the participation gap has widened slightly in recent years, the value of this mechanism lies in the approach itself: embedding a measurable, time-bound target with named institutional accountability within a multi-year

national plan provides a framework for tracking progress and identifying implementation gaps that many systems lack.

- A national network of 29 Sports Inclusion Disability Officers, embedded within Local Sports Partnerships at county and city level, functions as a direct interface between persons with disabilities and sport clubs. Supported by five regional sport inclusion hubs where participants can access multiple sports in a single location, this network represents a structural investment in placing inclusion capacity at the point of community delivery rather than concentrating it at national level.
- The national carding system that is providing integrated access to high-performance training centres, specialist services, and athlete development programmes is available to both Olympic and Paralympic athletes on the same basis. This establishes formal equality within elite sport support structures, ensuring that Para sport athletes can access the same high-performance resources as their Olympic counterparts.
- The Irish Sport Monitor provides annual nationally representative data on sport participation disaggregated by disability status and gender, enabling authorities to track the disability participation gap over time. The availability of this consistent baseline measure represents a monitoring instrument that allows policy interventions to be evaluated against evidence rather than assumption.

Key Challenges

Despite the presence of an established institutional framework and sustained public investment, several structural and operational challenges continue to affect the development of Para sport participation in Ireland.

Implementation gap between policy commitments and participation outcomes

- Ireland has adopted a comprehensive policy framework promoting sport participation among persons with disabilities. However, participation outcomes have not increased at the pace expected, indicating challenges in translating policy commitments into measurable participation growth at community level.
- While participation among persons with disabilities remains relatively stable in national surveys, the disability participation gap has widened slightly in recent years, indicating that overall gains in sport participation have not been matched evenly across the population.

Governance and coordination complexity

- The Para sport system involves multiple actors, including Sport Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Paralympics Ireland, Local Sports Partnerships, and disability sport organisations. While coordination mechanisms exist, stakeholders report that the multiplicity of actors and overlapping mandates can sometimes lead to unclear roles or duplication of activities.

Participation barriers

- Transport remains a significant barrier, particularly in rural areas where reaching sport facilities and training locations may require long travel distances.
- Access to sport opportunities also varies geographically, as the availability and capacity of community sport clubs differ between regions.

Institutional capacity constraints

- Some coaches and sport personnel report limited confidence or training in working with persons with disabilities, indicating a need for additional education and professional development focused on inclusive coaching practices.

- Financial barriers may also affect participation at early development stages, when athletes and families often cover travel, training, or equipment costs before accessing structured high-performance support.

Inclusion and representation gaps

- Participation of women with disabilities remains limited within organised Para sport structures. While gender equality policies exist within the sport sector, specific measures addressing the intersection of gender and disability are not consistently integrated within sport programmes.
- Representation of persons with disabilities within leadership and decision-making roles across sport organisations remains limited, reducing the influence of lived experience in programme design and governance.

Visibility and recognition

- Paralympic sport receives lower public visibility and commercial exposure compared with Olympic sport, which may affect sponsorship opportunities, media coverage, and broader public awareness of Para sport achievements.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

Sport Ireland, in cooperation with Paralympics Ireland, National Governing Bodies, and Local Sports Partnerships:

establish a clearer coordination framework defining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making mechanisms for Para sport development across national and local levels.

Recommendation 2.

Sport Ireland in cooperation with Paralympics Ireland, National Governing Bodies, and Local Sports Partnerships:

develop a structured national Para sport participation pathway clarifying progression from community-level participation through development programmes to elite preparation within the high-performance system.

Recommendation 3.

Sport Ireland, together with Active Disability Ireland and National Governing Bodies:

expand targeted coach education and professional development programmes focusing on inclusive coaching practices and disability-specific training.

Recommendation 4.

Sport Ireland with support of Local Authorities, Department of Education, Health Services Executive (HSE). Cooperation and alignment of Coimisiún na Meán sports strategy with Sport Ireland's visibility pillar:

improve transparency of Para sport financing by clearly mapping funding flows between national programmes, National Governing Bodies, Local Sports Partnerships, and community sport initiatives.

Recommendation 5.

Local Sports Partnerships:

expand community-level Para sport opportunities by strengthening partnerships with schools, disability organisations, and local sport clubs, particularly in regions where participation opportunities remain limited.

Recommendation 6.

Sport Ireland and National Governing Bodies:

strengthen the collection and analytical use of participation data on persons with disabilities, including gender-disaggregated indicators, to support monitoring of participation trends and evidence-based policy planning.

5. Portugal

Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population (estimate)	10.75 Million (Statistics Portugal, December 2024)
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	Approximately 10% of the population (1.0–1.1 million; Census 2021 estimate)
Persons with disabilities in Para sport	Approximately 5,062 (as of 2024)
Paralympic Games 2024 (Paris)	27 athletes (17 men; 10 women) Medals – 6
Paralympic Games 2020 (Tokyo)	33 athletes (23 men; 10 women) Medals – 2
Paralympic Games 2016 (Rio)	37 athletes (25 men; 12 women) Medals – 4

Population: Statistics Portugal (INE), December 2024. Disability prevalence: estimate based on Census 2021 and EU-SILC data. Para sport participation: athletes with disabilities registered across multiple federations - (Source: IPDJ institutional statistics (<https://ipdj.gov.pt/estatisticas>) Note the declining trend in Paralympic delegation size: 37 (2016) → 33 (2020) → 27 (2024).

Legal and Policy Framework

Portugal is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the Convention, are reflected in the national legislative and policy framework governing sport and disability inclusion.

At constitutional level, the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic recognises both the rights of persons with disabilities and the right of all citizens to physical culture and sport. It establishes the responsibility of the State to promote participation, including through policies supporting prevention, rehabilitation, integration, and inclusion.

The core legal framework governing sport in Portugal is established by the Law on Physical Activity and Sport (Law No. 5/2007), which defines the principles of public sports policy and the

responsibilities of public authorities. Within this framework, sport for persons with disabilities is integrated into the general sport system, with provisions promoting participation through adapted means, specific support measures, and the prevention of discrimination.

Decree-Law No. 272/2009 establishes the legal regime for high-performance sport, including public support mechanisms linked to elite participation. It includes provisions applicable to athletes with disabilities, including eligibility criteria based on performance in Paralympic, Deaflympic, world, and European competitions, as well as a differentiated registration system. The framework also stipulates consultation with the Institute for the Rights of People with Disabilities in matters affecting athletes with disabilities.

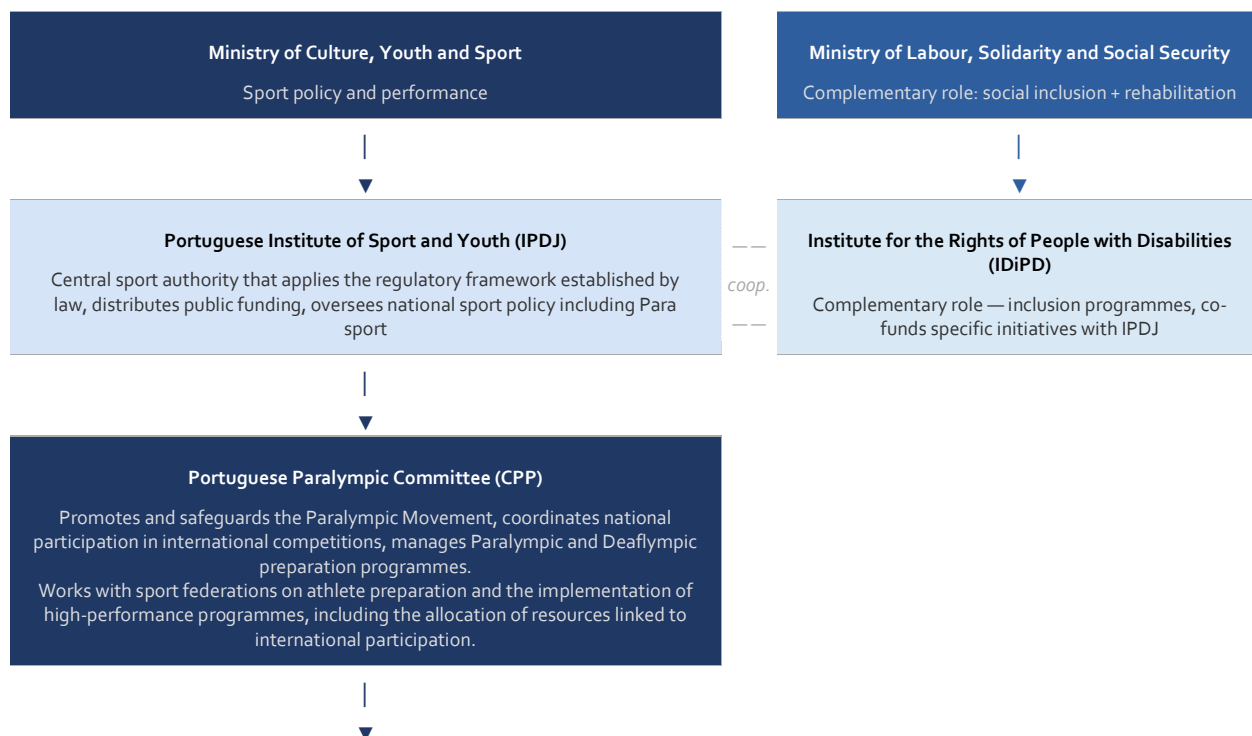
Additional instruments define support measures for high-performance athletes. Ministerial Order No. 103/2014 establishes the regime for awarding sports merit prizes, including provisions applicable to Para sport disciplines. Ordinance No. 332-A/2018 updates this framework, and Law No. 13/2024 introduces post-career support measures for Olympic, Paralympic, and Deaflympic athletes, including employment quotas, reintegration support, and access to education.

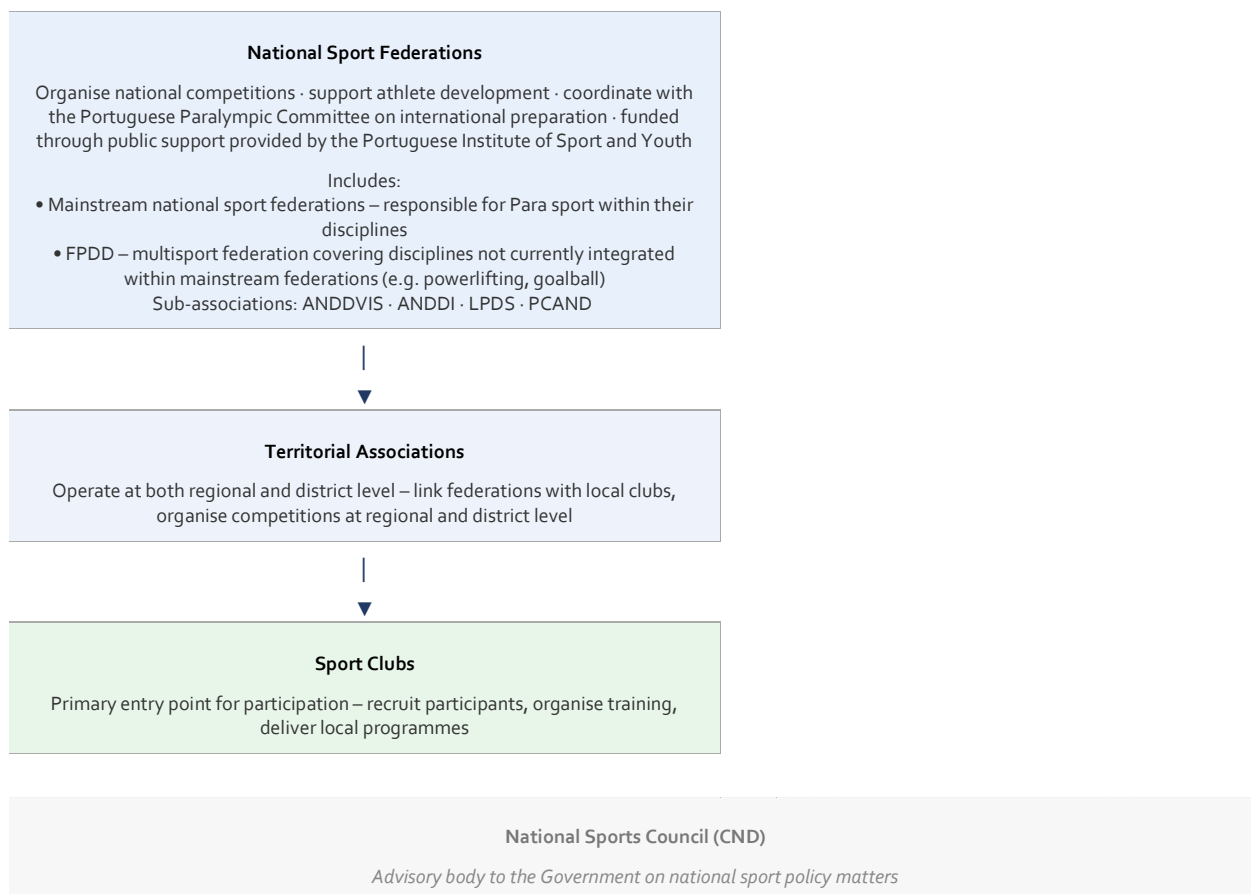
Within the broader disability rights framework, the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 38/2004) establishes the legal basis for prevention, facilitation, rehabilitation, and participation in social life, including sport.

At policy level, the National Strategy for the Promotion of Physical Activity, Health and Well-being (2016–2025) promotes increased participation in physical activity, including among persons with disabilities. The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2025 sets cross-sector objectives, including measures to increase participation in both recreational and competitive sport.

Taken together, the Portuguese legal and policy framework establishes participation in sport as a general right and integrates disability sport within both the national sport system and the wider disability inclusion framework.

Governance and Institutional Structure





Para sport governance in Portugal operates within a framework involving the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. Within this structure, sport policy and disability inclusion policy are addressed through separate but complementary institutional roles.

The Ministry responsible for Culture, Youth and Sport oversees Para sport primarily through the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, which serves as the central public authority for sport. It applies the regulatory framework established by law, distributes public funding, and oversees the implementation of national sport policy, including measures supporting Para sport participation and athlete development.

The Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security contributes through disability inclusion policies implemented by the Institute for the Rights of People with Disabilities. The IDiPD collaborates with sport institutions on specific inclusion programmes supporting the participation of persons with disabilities in sport.

The Portuguese Paralympic Committee is the nationally recognised body responsible for promoting and safeguarding the Paralympic Movement, coordinating national participation in international competitions, and managing Paralympic and Deaflympic preparation programmes. It works with sport federations on athlete preparation and the implementation of high-performance programmes.

At federation level, Portugal combines disability-specific and mainstream structures. The Portuguese Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities (FPDD) governs selected disciplines not currently integrated within mainstream federations, while mainstream national sport federations are responsible for Para sport within their respective sports. These federations organise national competitions, support athlete development, and implement sport programmes.

Below national level, territorial associations link federations with local clubs and organise competitions and structures at regional and district level. At local level, sport clubs represent the primary participation base, delivering training and local programmes and recruiting participants.

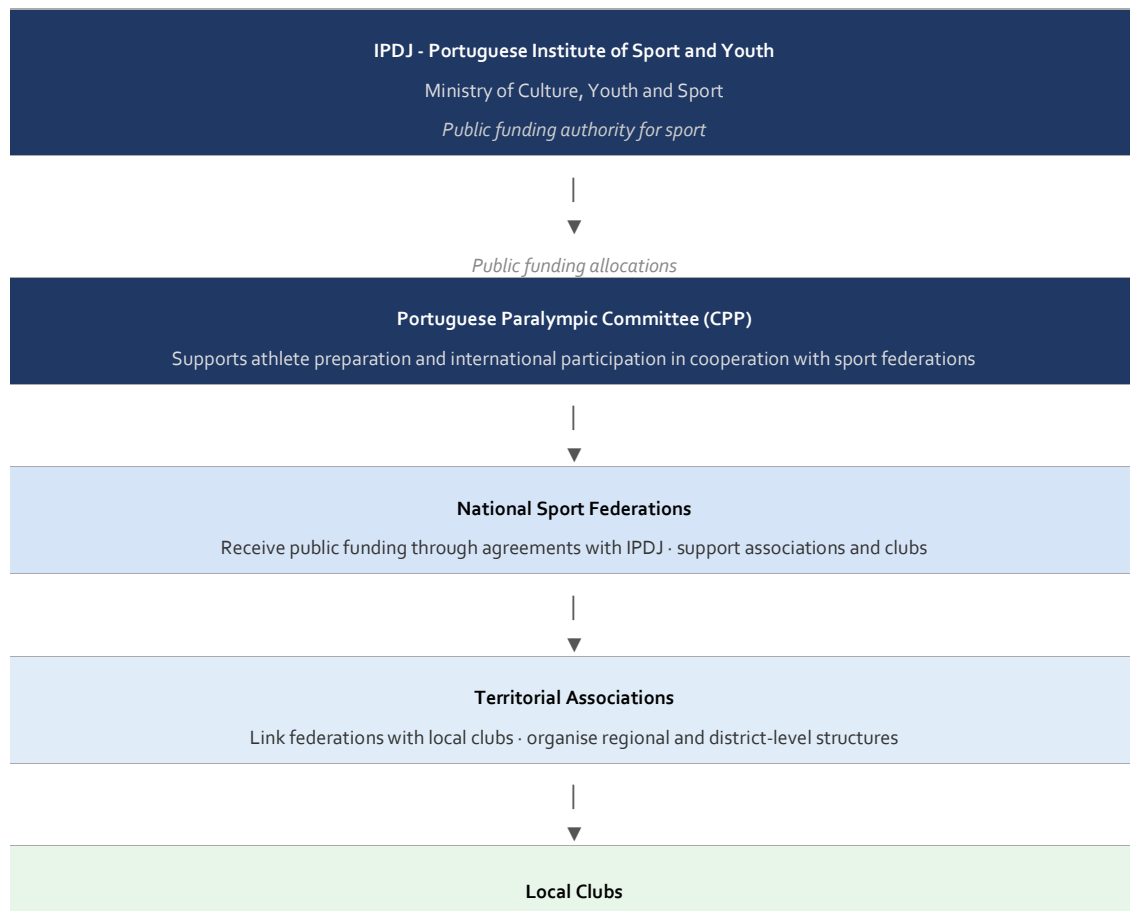
The Portuguese Paralympic Committee operates the Sports Inclusion Map, an online platform identifying clubs and organisations offering adapted sport opportunities across the country, supporting access to participation.

National Coordination

Coordination in Portugal is structured across multiple institutional levels. At national level, the National Sports Council is an advisory body to the Government on sport policy matters, established under Law No. 5/2007. It brings together representatives of public administration and the sport movement, including the Portuguese Paralympic Committee.

Operational coordination within the Para sport system is carried out primarily through the interaction of the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, the Institute for the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Portuguese Paralympic Committee, and the relevant sport federations. The Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth coordinates sport governance and funding arrangements. The Institute for the Rights of People with Disabilities collaborates on inclusion-related programmes. The Portuguese Paralympic Committee links these institutional actors with the federation system through its role in athlete preparation and international representation.

Funding and Resource Allocation



Funding for Para sport in Portugal is predominantly provided through central government resources channelled via the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth. The IPDJ concludes formal agreements with national sport federations and supports the Portuguese Paralympic Committee in the implementation of high-performance programmes and international participation.

The Portuguese Paralympic Committee receives public funding complemented by private sponsorship. It works with sport federations on athlete preparation and the implementation of high-performance programmes.

National sport federations receive public funding through agreements with the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth and use these resources to support national competitions, athlete development, and grassroots initiatives.

At subnational level, territorial associations link federations with local clubs and organise competition structures at regional and district level. Local sport clubs may access funding through project-based programmes managed by federations, initiatives supported by the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, and support schemes provided by local authorities.

Public financing for Para sport is concentrated at central level, with national institutions playing a primary role in supporting sport development, complemented by contributions from local authorities.

Participation Pathways



⚠ Transition Gap: Grassroots participation development is uneven across the country; insufficient recruitment programmes and limited participation infrastructure in interior regions may constrain entry and sustained engagement.

Entry into Para sport in Portugal occurs through multiple pathways. Persons with disabilities are often introduced to sport following medical recommendations, through family encouragement or personal initiative, or via school-based awareness activities. Local sport clubs are considered a primary participation entry point. The Portuguese Paralympic Committee Sports Inclusion Map supports referrals by helping schools, rehabilitation facilities, local authorities, and federations identify nearby clubs and programmes by region and sport discipline.

Athletes who demonstrate competitive potential progress through the sport club → territorial association → national federation pathway. They participate in local and regional competitions organised by associations and then progress to national-level competitions managed by sport federations.

Elite preparation is coordinated by the Portuguese Paralympic Committee in cooperation with sport federations, while the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth oversees the high-performance policy framework. Coaching pathways are regulated through a national certification system supervised by the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, with federations responsible for delivering coach education programmes. The system also includes dual-career support measures enabling athletes to combine sport with education and employment. Olympic, Paralympic, and Deaflympic athletes receive equal monetary prizes, training conditions, and preparation support, and high-performance athletes may receive monthly financial assistance through government sport programmes.

Gender Inclusion

Participation of women with disabilities in Para sport in Portugal appears lower than that of men. Although gender equality is reflected within national sport policies and leadership initiatives, no dedicated and structured programme specifically targeting the recruitment, retention, and progression of women and girls with disabilities in Para sport was identified.

This pattern is also reflected at elite level, where women have represented a smaller share of Portugal's Paralympic delegation across recent Paralympic Games. Available information indicates that comprehensive gender-disaggregated data beyond federated sport structures, particularly regarding grassroots and non-affiliated participation, is limited. As a result, it is difficult to assess participation patterns across disciplines, regions, and stages of the athlete pathway.

Women with disabilities may face multiple barriers related to disability, gender norms, geographic access, and the visibility of role models within Para sport. These factors may affect participation across different stages of engagement.

Data Collection and Monitoring

Portugal does not currently maintain a unified national database providing comprehensive statistics on persons with disabilities participating in sport. Data is held across multiple sources, including sport federations, the Portuguese Paralympic Committee, and other institutional actors, but is not consolidated within a single national monitoring framework. The Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth statistics portal (<https://ipdj.gov.pt>, Estatísticas section) provides data on participation within federated sport structures, disaggregated by district, sports federation, and gender. The commonly cited figure of approximately 5,062 persons with disabilities participating in Para sport reflects registered participation within these structures.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Accessibility challenges within the Portuguese Para sport system are associated with regional disparities and transportation barriers.

Para sport opportunities are more concentrated in coastal regions, where population density, institutional capacity, and sport infrastructure are higher, while interior regions have more limited access to clubs, specialised coaching capacity, and adapted sport facilities.

Limited availability of local sport programmes and transport constraints may affect access to participation opportunities for persons with disabilities in interior regions. These factors may also influence continuity of participation and progression within sport pathways.

Key Analytical Observations

Portugal has established a structured and legally grounded framework for Para sport development, supported by coordinated governance arrangements and predominantly public financing mechanisms. The governance model brings together sport policy and disability inclusion through collaboration between sport authorities and disability-sector institutions.

At the same time, the absence of a unified participation monitoring system and the presence of regional disparities suggest that participation opportunities are not evenly distributed across the country.

Available indicators show a decline in the number of athletes representing Portugal at recent Paralympic Games. While the causes of this trend cannot be determined within the scope of this study, it highlights the relevance of examining athlete recruitment, development pathways, and retention within the high-performance system.

Geographic disparities are also evident in the distribution of participation opportunities. Para sport clubs and programmes are more concentrated in coastal regions, while interior regions have more limited access to facilities, coaching, and organised activities. These differences may affect access to participation and progression within sport pathways.

The Portuguese Para sport system is largely supported by public funding, with more limited private-sector engagement. While public financing provides a stable basis for system operation, the structure of funding may influence the scope for expansion of participation opportunities.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches were identified through desk research and key informant interviews as features of the Portuguese Para sport system.

- The Portuguese Paralympic Committee operates an online Sports Inclusion Map platform identifying clubs and organisations offering adapted sport opportunities across the country by region and sport discipline. The platform supports referrals from schools, rehabilitation centres, sport federations, and local authorities.
- Olympic, Paralympic, and Deaflympic athletes receive equal monetary prizes, training conditions, and preparation support under the national high-performance regime. The legal framework also requires consultation of the Institute for the Rights of People with Disabilities in matters affecting athletes with disabilities.
- Development contracts provide financial, material, and logistical support, with eligibility extending to clubs, federations, and the Portuguese Paralympic Committee.
- Law No. 13/2024 introduced post-career support measures for Paralympic and Deaflympic athletes, including employment quotas, reintegration subsidies, financial support mechanisms, and access to higher education.

Key Challenges

Despite the existence of a structured legal and institutional framework, several structural and operational challenges continue to affect the development of Para sport in Portugal.

Geographic access and participation barriers

- The geographic distribution of Para sport opportunities is uneven. Interior regions are underserved in terms of clubs, coaches, and programmes, which may constrain both entry into Para sport and sustained participation at grassroots level.

- Accessible transportation is a barrier for persons with disabilities seeking to reach training and competition venues on a regular basis. This constraint is particularly relevant in areas with limited public transport and contributes to unequal access to sport opportunities.
- Grassroots recruitment and participation initiatives may be insufficient in several parts of the country. Limited local outreach, uneven club infrastructure, and weak recruitment mechanisms may reduce the continuity of athlete pathways from community participation to competitive sport.

Inclusion and representation gaps

- The participation of women with disabilities in Para sport is low. Contributing factors include the lack of systematic gender-disaggregated data beyond federated structures, particularly regarding grassroots and non-affiliated participation, the lack of identified recruitment initiatives specifically targeting women and girls with disabilities, and limited visibility of participation patterns by discipline.

Institutional and federation capacity constraints

- Capacity-building needs remain evident within sport federations, particularly regarding the effective integration and development of Para sport across disciplines. Differences in institutional capacity affect the extent to which federations are able to support athlete development, grassroots expansion, and competition structures.

Monitoring and data limitations

- Portugal does not yet have a unified national monitoring system providing comprehensive statistics on participation of persons with disabilities in sport. Available figures primarily reflect registered competitive athletes and do not capture recreational or community-level participation, which may limit the ability to assess participation trends, regional disparities, and programme effectiveness.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, in cooperation with the Portuguese Paralympic Committee and national sport federations:

consider measures to improve the geographic distribution of Para sport opportunities, particularly in interior regions, including support for the development of sport programmes, identification of suitable facilities for adapted sport, and incentives to attract and retain qualified coaches and sport personnel.

Recommendation 2.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, local authorities, and relevant transport actors:

consider measures to improve accessibility of transport for persons with disabilities travelling to training and competition venues, including local support schemes for adapted transport services or financial assistance.

Recommendation 3.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, national sport federations, and territorial associations:

consider expanding grassroots recruitment and community-based sport initiatives, particularly in regions with more limited participation opportunities.

Recommendation 4.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, Portuguese Paralympic Committee, and national sport federations:

consider targeted initiatives to increase participation of women and girls with disabilities in Para sport, including outreach measures, improved gender-disaggregated monitoring, and clearer participation pathways.

Recommendation 5.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth and national sport federations:

consider capacity-building measures to support the integration and development of Para sport across disciplines, including access to specialised equipment and training for coaches working with athletes with disabilities.

Recommendation 6.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth and relevant stakeholders:

consider structured dialogue on governance arrangements within the sport system, including the relationship between Olympic and Paralympic structures.

Recommendation 7.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth and relevant public authorities:

consider the development of a unified national monitoring system for participation of persons with disabilities in sport, including indicators allowing analysis by region, gender, and level of participation.

Recommendation 8.

Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth, Portuguese Paralympic Committee, and national sport federations:

consider approaches to strengthen the participation of persons with disabilities in governance and decision-making processes within Para sport.

6. Serbia

Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population (estimate)	6.59 million (Statistical Office, 2024)
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	356,404 (5.5% of population; UNFPA, 2022)
Persons with disabilities in Para sport	4,033 (of whom 1,728 are women); 651 athletes in Paralympic disciplines (of whom 36 are women) (Ministry of Sports, 2024)
Paralympic Games 2024 (Paris)	22 athletes (15 men; 7 women); Medals – 6

Paralympic Games 2020 (Tokyo)	20 athletes (13 men; 7 women); Medals – 6
Paralympic Games 2016 (Rio)	16 athletes (13 men; 3 women); Medals – 9

Population: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2024 estimate). Disability prevalence: UNFPA (2022). Para sport participation: Ministry of Sports (2024). Figures reflect registered athletes; recreational and informal participants are not captured.

While the number of athletes has increased gradually across recent Paralympic cycles, elite representation remains limited relative to the broader pool of persons with disabilities participating in organised Para sport. This suggests that Serbia has a wider base of organised participation than its Paralympic delegation size would imply, but that progression from grassroots and club-level engagement into high-performance pathways remains relatively narrow.

Legal and Policy Framework

Serbia is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the CRPD, are reflected in national legislation and policy documents.

The core legal framework governing sport in Serbia is the Law on Sports (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 10/2016), which establishes the principles of non-discrimination and guarantees access to sport for all citizens under equal conditions, including regardless of disability. The Law recognises the promotion of participation of children, youth, women, and persons with disabilities as a matter of general interest in sport, requires public authorities and sports organisations to take measures to increase the participation of persons with disabilities, and includes the preparation for and participation in the Paralympic Games, as well as the development of the Serbian Paralympic Committee and relevant national sport associations, among activities of general interest in sport. The implementation of the Law is further supported by numerous by-laws and rulebooks that regulate specific organisational, financial, and operational aspects of sport governance. The rulebooks apply uniformly to all sport organisations, including those operating in the Para sport sector, and do not constitute a separate disability-specific legislative framework; rather, Para sport organisations are governed within the same mainstream regulatory system as all other sport entities.

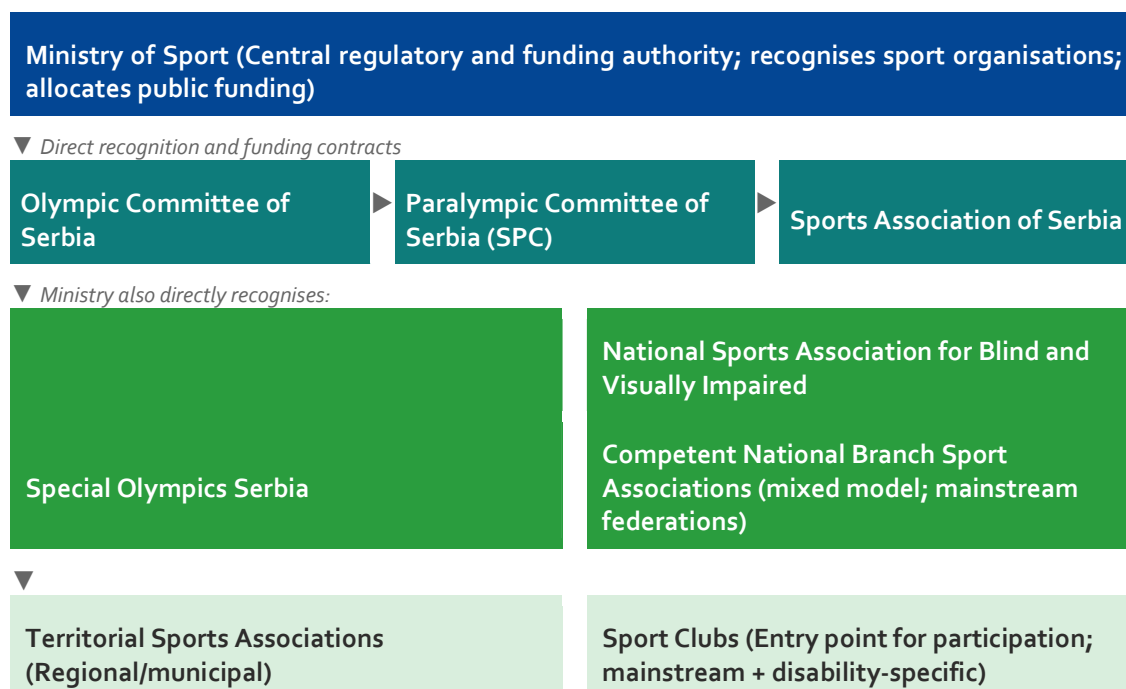
At policy level, the National Sport Development Strategy (2026–2035) is currently being prepared by a dedicated multi-stakeholder working group and is in its final phase before adoption by the government, as reported by stakeholders. The representatives of Para sport organisations, including the Paralympic Committee of Serbia and Para sport federations, participate in relevant subgroups of the Working Group. On this basis, Para sport-related objectives are expected to be reflected in the forthcoming strategy and action plan.

Law on Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (2006) (Official Gazette No. 33/06 and 13/16) describes obligations of local self-government units to take measures to ensure equal participation of persons with disabilities in cultural, sporting and religious life of the community.

Serbia has an established legal and policy framework that incorporates Para sport within the broader sport governance system. The core legal framework guarantees non-discrimination and recognises the participation of persons with disabilities, as well as preparation for the Paralympic Games, as activities of general interest. In addition to the primary legislation, numerous by-laws and rulebooks regulate the organisational, financial, and operational aspects of sport, applying equally to Para sport organisations. The forthcoming National Sport Development Strategy therefore represents less a correction of legislative gaps than an

opportunity to strengthen policy coherence, implementation direction, and measurable objectives for inclusive sport development.

Governance and Institutional Structure



Responsibility for sport and Para sport at the ministerial level in Serbia lies with the Ministry of Sports, whose role involves implementing the Law on Sport and the National Sports Development Strategy. It recognises national sport federations, approves their annual programs, allocates funding, and concludes separate annual contracts with each recognised federation.

Serbia's national sport system operates under a three-pillar structure: (1) the Olympic Committee of Serbia for Olympic sports, (2) the Paralympic Committee of Serbia for Paralympic sports, and (3) the Sports Association of Serbia for non-Olympic and non-Paralympic sports. Each pillar functions as a national umbrella body within its respective domain and is recognised by the Ministry of Sport.

The Ministry directly recognises and finances four key Para sport-related legal entities: the Paralympic Committee of Serbia, the Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Serbia, the National Sports Association for Blind and Visually Impaired in Serbia, and the Special Olympics of Serbia.

The Paralympic Committee of Serbia (SPC) is Serbia's officially recognised National Paralympic Committee. It functions as the umbrella body for specific Paralympic sport branches. It coordinates approximately twelve Paralympic disciplines, including athletics, swimming, judo, boccia, goalball, wheelchair fencing, powerlifting, wheelchair rugby, skiing, football 5-a-side, ice hockey, and biathlon. The Paralympic Committee of Serbia collects annual programme proposals from its member sport bodies and submits them to the Ministry. Its Assembly includes representatives of recognised Para sport organisations and, where applicable, independent Para sport branches within mainstream federations. Paralympic Committee of Serbia holds the same legal status as the Olympic Committee, meaning that Para athletes and

Para sport organisations are granted the same rights, responsibilities, and institutional recognition as their Olympic sport counterparts.

The governance model of Para sport in Serbia is described as mixed. Many sport-specific activities that were previously administered directly by the Paralympic Committee of Serbia have gradually been transferred to dedicated Competent National Branch Sport Associations, some of which manage Para sport disciplines either through independent affiliated Para sport bodies or within integrated sport structures. At the national level, these associations are responsible for governing individual sport disciplines, implementing sport-specific development programmes, organising competitions, managing athlete development pathways, and preparing their own development strategies aligned with the national sport strategy. Competent National Branch Sport Associations can be members of the Paralympic Committee of Serbia, but only when they include a recognised Para sport structure in Paralympic sport discipline.

The Sports Association of Serbia serves as the umbrella body for non-Olympic and non-Paralympic sports. Its members include National Branch Sport Associations that do not fall under the Olympic or Paralympic pillars, as well as Territorial Sport Associations (regional, city, and municipal). It brings together both sport-discipline and territorial structures within a single national framework.

The Disability Sport Association of Serbia is a national umbrella organisation that brings together sport and recreation organisations for persons with disabilities across the country. Its role is to promote participation among persons with disabilities in sport and recreational activities and support their social inclusion through organised programmes.

Territorial Sports Associations are recognised within Serbia's sports system as sports associations established at the level of autonomous provinces, local self-government units, and city municipalities and are responsible for coordinating sport activities within their territory, participating in the implementation of local public-interest sport programmes, and representing local sport organisations within the national sports system. They are members of the Serbian Sports Association.

Sport clubs represent the foundational level of the Serbian sport system and may operate either as mainstream clubs or as clubs dedicated specifically to persons with disabilities. Clubs are members of their respective national branch sport federations and may simultaneously belong to territorial (municipal or regional) sport associations.

Local self-government units in Serbia are responsible for implementing sport programmes of public interest at the local level and may finance sport activities, infrastructure, and organisations from municipal budgets.

Local self-governments and Competent National Branch Sport Associations are responsible for developing and adopting sport strategies that are aligned with and implemented in accordance with the National Sports Development Strategy.

Serbia operates a mixed governance model for Para sport, combining central regulatory oversight with decentralised sport-discipline management. The Ministry of Sport retains regulatory authority and contractual control through recognition and annual funding mechanisms. The Paralympic Committee of Serbia holds institutional status equivalent to the Olympic Committee and functions as the recognised umbrella body for Paralympic sport. At the same time, sport-specific development responsibilities are increasingly exercised by Competent National Branch Sport Associations, meaning that the practical organisation of athlete development varies across disciplines. Territorial sport associations, municipalities, and local clubs provide the local delivery layer of the system. This creates a governance model with clear formal recognition at national level, but variable development conditions in practice depending on the organisational strength of individual federations and local structures.

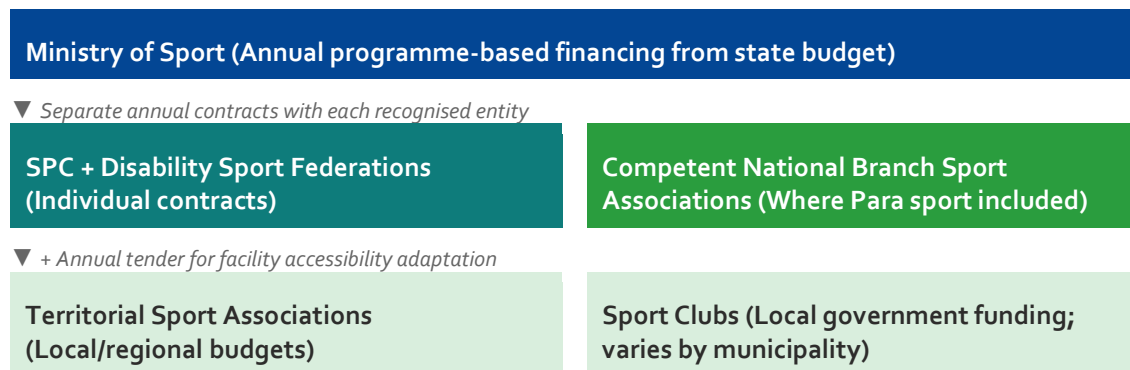
National Coordination

National coordination of Para sport in Serbia is structured primarily through the Ministry of Sport's direct contractual relationships with recognised Para sport organisations. The Ministry concludes separate annual agreements with the Paralympic Committee of Serbia, the Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the National Sports Association for Blind and Visually Impaired Persons, Special Olympics Serbia, and other recognised entities. Each body submits annual programme proposals and reports independently on implementation and use of funds.

Within this structure, the Paralympic Committee coordinates the Paralympic disciplines that fall under its competence, while certain Para sport disciplines are governed through mainstream national branch sport federations. In parallel, the Sports Association of Serbia brings together territorial sport federations and non-Olympic and non-Paralympic structures, creating an additional coordination layer for parts of the sport system outside the Paralympic and Olympic pillars.

Serbia also has a cross-governmental disability coordination mechanism led through the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, in which the Ministry of Sport participates alongside other sectors. This mechanism addresses disability inclusion more broadly and is not dedicated specifically to sport. As a result, Para sport coordination in Serbia combines a formal sport-sector structure based on annual contractual relations with a wider horizontal disability-policy framework. This arrangement provides institutional coverage, but it also means that coordination can become complex because responsibilities are distributed across multiple recognised entities, branch federations, territorial associations, and local authorities.

Funding and Resource Allocation



At the national level, public funding for sport, including Para sport, is allocated by the Ministry of Sport through annual programme-based financing. Recognised federations, including the Paralympic Committee of Serbia, the **Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Serbia**, the **National Sports Association for Blind and Visually Impaired in Serbia**, and the **Special Olympics Serbia**, submit annual programme proposals to the Ministry. The Ministry evaluates these proposals, approves funding amounts, and concludes separate contracts with each federation. Although programme proposals for Paralympic disciplines may be coordinated through the Paralympic Committee, funding agreements are concluded individually with each recognised entity, which remains directly accountable for financial reporting and implementation.

At the subnational level, Territorial Sport Associations and Sport Clubs may receive funding from local or regional government budgets. These funds are managed independently from national allocations.

In addition to the above, each year, the Ministry of Sport announces a dedicated tender aimed at the adaptation and construction of sports facilities to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities. The projects are submitted exclusively by local self-government units (municipalities), which apply directly to the Ministry. The Ministry evaluates the proposals and allocates funding accordingly, while the implementation takes place at the local level.

The stakeholders mention that the SPC also participates in European sport projects, primarily through Erasmus+ sport projects, typically engaging in one to three projects annually.

This financing structure provides formal institutional support at national level, but the separation between national contracts and uneven local government funding contributes to variable participation conditions between municipalities and sports.

Participation Pathways



△ Transition Gap: No officially defined or standardised athlete pathway exists in Serbian Para sport. Progression depends largely on the specific sport, the organisational capacity of the relevant federation, and the availability of local club structures able to support sustained athlete development.

There is no officially defined or standardised athlete pathway in Serbian Para sport. Entry is decentralised and varies by sport, with recruitment typically occurring through sport associations and local clubs, while disability-related organisations mainly perform a referral function. Athletes commonly enter through clubs that may be either disability-specific or mainstream clubs integrating athletes with disabilities. The Disability Sport Association of Serbia was originally intended to strengthen grassroots recruitment and serve as an additional entry point, but capacity and membership challenges have limited its practical role within the wider system.

Athlete development is determined largely at federation level, with each federation establishing its own criteria and progression systems depending on the level of sport development. The Paralympic Committee mainly supports high-performance athletes through national team preparation and targeted funding. Coach qualification requirements are governed through the general sport system, with coaches in Para sport required to obtain the same type of licence as in the corresponding mainstream discipline.

The absence of a clearly defined national pathway reflects several structural features of the current system: decentralised recruitment, uneven organisational capacity across sports, and limited institutional mechanisms connecting community-level participation to more structured development stages. In practice, progression depends heavily on the initiative and strength of individual clubs and federations rather than on a system-wide pathway ensuring continuity from entry level to elite competition.

Gender Inclusion

Women's participation in Para sport in Serbia remains very low. Stakeholders reported that women account for less than 10% of total membership within Paralympic Committee structures, and this imbalance is also reflected at elite level, where women have consistently represented a relatively small share of Serbia's Paralympic delegations across recent Games cycles.

The issue appears to be structural rather than simply representational. Very low female participation at both athlete and governance level suggests that women with disabilities face weaker recruitment pathways, lower visibility of sport opportunities, fewer role models within the system, and insufficient targeted support to remain engaged over time. These constraints are likely reinforced by the broader weaknesses already visible in the system, including decentralised recruitment, uneven local club capacity, and limited grassroots support.

Efforts have been made to encourage greater women's representation, including direct outreach to female athletes and officials and attempts to increase women's participation in governing bodies in response to international recommendations on gender balance. However, the persistence of very low participation indicates that isolated outreach measures have not yet been sufficient to address broader structural barriers affecting recruitment, retention, and progression of women and girls with disabilities in sport.

Data Collection and Monitoring

At state level, Serbia does not maintain a unified national portal consolidating data on participation, athletes, and activities across the Para sport sector. Information on participation is maintained separately by the Ministry of Sport, individual sport associations, and the Paralympic Committee of Serbia for operational and programme management purposes.

Monitoring of Para sport organisations is carried out mainly through evaluation and reporting procedures linked to public funding. National federations, including the Paralympic Committee and recognised disability sport federations, submit annual programme proposals with financial plans to the Ministry of Sport. These proposals are evaluated using predefined criteria, and funded organisations must then report in accordance with their contractual obligations. At local level, territorial sport associations report primarily to the local administrations that finance them rather than to the Ministry.

This means that Serbia's monitoring system is stronger for financial accountability and programme administration than for strategic analysis of participation patterns. Existing data reflects registered athletes within organised sport structures, but recreational participation, local-level trends, retention patterns, and broader progression dynamics are not systematically captured. As a result, policymakers and sport organisations have only a partial evidence base for assessing where participation is expanding, where athlete pathways are weakening, and which groups remain underrepresented.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

According to the stakeholders, sports facilities themselves are generally not considered the primary barrier, as it was noted that throughout the past decade sports halls have been adapted to accommodate persons with disabilities. Instead, key obstacles relate to financial disparities at local level. Additional practical costs, such as transportation for wheelchair users, were highlighted as challenges, particularly in areas with limited local funding. Furthermore, many clubs operate on a volunteer basis and lack stable human resources, which affects sustainability. Overall, while physical accessibility of venues has improved, financial constraints and local capacity gaps were identified as more significant barriers to participation.

Key Analytical Observations

Serbia has a well-established legal and regulatory framework governing Para sport, with the Law on Sports and accompanying rulebooks providing a structured basis for sport governance. Stakeholders do not identify major legislative gaps within the existing framework. The forthcoming National Sport Development Strategy 2026–2035 therefore represents less an opportunity to correct legal deficiencies than to strengthen policy coherence, implementation direction, and measurable objectives for inclusive sport development. In this context, it will be important that the strategy includes clearly defined participation objectives, measurable indicators, designated responsible institutions, and realistic budget expectations, and that persons with disabilities and relevant Para sport actors are meaningfully involved in its finalisation and implementation.

Despite the relatively large number of individuals engaged in organised Para sport disciplines, elite international representation remains modest. This suggests that participation does not yet translate efficiently into high-performance outcomes and points to weaknesses in athlete development pathways, transition mechanisms, or support systems connecting broader participation to elite preparation.

Recruitment and participation of persons with disabilities in sport remain structurally challenging. The available information suggests that this does not result from a single institutional gap, but from the combined effects of decentralised entry points, uneven local organisational capacity, volunteer dependence, and disparities in municipal-level support. In practice, this means that participation growth often depends on isolated sport-specific initiatives rather than on a consistently structured national recruitment and retention system.

Women's participation remains particularly low, indicating that broader recruitment weaknesses are compounded by gender-specific barriers. These appear to include lower visibility of Para sport opportunities for women, weaker targeted outreach, and limited female representation within athlete and governance structures.

Finally, while the system provides formal institutional parity between Olympic and Paralympic sport, strengthening the public visibility of Para sport through media engagement and awareness-raising could help improve recognition of athletes with disabilities and support wider participation and long-term sector development.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches, identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, represent features of the Serbian Para sport system with transferable value for system strengthening.

- The Law on Sports designates preparation for and participation in the Paralympic Games, and the development of the Serbian Paralympic Committee, as activities of general interest in sport. This provides a statutory basis for sustained public financing embedded within the core legal architecture of the sport system, making Para sport financing less dependent on annual discretionary decisions than in systems relying solely on programme-based allocations.
- The Paralympic Committee of Serbia holds institutional status equivalent to the Olympic Committee of Serbia under national legislation, with Para athletes and Para sport organisations granted the same rights, responsibilities, and institutional recognition as their Olympic sport counterparts. This formal parity provides a strong legal foundation for equal treatment within the governance system.
- The Ministry of Sport operates an annual dedicated tender specifically financing the adaptation and construction of sports facilities to improve accessibility for persons with

disabilities. Applications are submitted by local self-government units directly to the Ministry, and documented adaptations have included platform lifts, adapted sanitary facilities, and accessible pool equipment. This operationalises accessibility obligations through concrete, funded implementation at local level rather than leaving compliance to individual facility operators.

- The legal framework enables Para sport financing from national, provincial, and municipal budget levels simultaneously. While this report identifies uneven municipal delivery as a challenge, the legal architecture enabling multi-level co-financing provides a structural basis for territorial distribution of resources that is more flexible than systems relying exclusively on central allocation.

Key Challenges

Despite the presence of a functioning institutional framework, several structural and operational challenges continue to affect the development of Para sport in Serbia.

Structural system constraints

- Public funding for Para sport is structured at national level, but local support varies significantly between municipalities. This contributes to unequal conditions for clubs and affects the development of grassroots participation across different parts of the country.
- Local clubs and some associations face capacity constraints, relying heavily on volunteers and lacking sufficient professional management and administrative support. These limitations reduce their ability to sustain programmes, recruit participants, and support athlete progression.

Participation barriers

- Grassroots recruitment remains weak and depends largely on sport-specific initiatives, disability organisations, and informal networks. The absence of a structured national referral mechanism linking schools, rehabilitation services, and sport organisations limits systematic entry into Para sport.
- Participation of women with disabilities remains low. Contributing factors include limited visibility of female Para sport athletes, weak targeted outreach, and the general capacity constraints of local clubs and organisations.

Athlete pathway constraints

- No clearly defined national athlete development pathway exists specifying progression stages, institutional responsibilities, and support mechanisms from grassroots participation to elite sport. As a result, athlete development depends largely on discipline-specific arrangements and the organisational capacity of individual federations.
- Declining athlete numbers can be observed in some Para sport disciplines, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of the athlete pipeline and the adequacy of transition mechanisms between development and elite levels.

Institutional capacity constraints

- Differences in capacity across federations and local sport structures affect the consistency of Para sport development between disciplines. In practice, some sports are better able to organise recruitment, training, and competition pathways than others.

Monitoring and coordination issues

- Serbia does not maintain a unified national monitoring system consolidating participation data across Para sport. Existing figures reflect registered athletes within organised sport

structures, while recreational participation, local-level trends, and broader participation patterns are not systematically captured.

- Coordination within the system remains complex because responsibilities are distributed across the Ministry, the Paralympic Committee of Serbia, recognised disability sport bodies, branch federations, territorial associations, and municipalities. This can make the overall governance structure difficult to navigate and may reduce coherence in athlete development and participation planning.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

The Ministry of Sport, in cooperation with the Paralympic Committee of Serbia, recognised disability sport bodies, and Competent National Branch Sport Associations:

develop and formally adopt a national Para sport athlete development pathway defining progression stages from grassroots participation to elite competition and clarifying institutional roles at each stage.

Recommendation 2.

The Ministry of Sport, in cooperation with recognised Para sport organisations, local self-government units, and community services:

establish more structured referral and recruitment mechanisms linking schools, rehabilitation settings, disability organisations, and sport clubs in order to strengthen grassroots entry into Para sport.

Recommendation 3.

The Paralympic Committee of Serbia, in cooperation with branch federations and relevant disability sport bodies:

conduct a structured analysis of declining athlete numbers in affected Para sport disciplines and use the findings to strengthen athlete pipeline development.

Recommendation 4.

The Paralympic Committee of Serbia, in cooperation with recognised sport federations and disability sport organisations:

develop targeted outreach and recruitment measures aimed at increasing the participation of women and girls with disabilities and introduce systematic collection of gender-disaggregated participation data.

Recommendation 5.

The Ministry of Sport and local self-government units:

promote more balanced local funding arrangements for Para sport clubs and programmes to reduce disparities in access to participation opportunities between municipalities.

Recommendation 6.

The Ministry of Sport, in cooperation with the Paralympic Committee of Serbia, recognised federations, and Territorial Sports Associations:

develop targeted capacity-building measures for local clubs and associations focusing on organisational management, programme delivery, and athlete support.

Recommendation 7.

The Ministry of Sport, in cooperation with recognised sport organisations and local administrations:
strengthen coordination of Para sport monitoring and reporting in order to improve the availability of national data on participation, local trends, and programme reach.

Recommendation 8.

Disability sport organisations and Para sport stakeholders:
actively engage in the development of the National Sport Development Strategy 2026-2035 to ensure that Para sport priorities, participation objectives, and governance needs are explicitly reflected in the new strategy and action plan.

7. Türkiye
Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population (estimate)	85.7 million (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2024)
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	Approximately 5 million (unverified; various sources estimate 6-7% of population)
Licensed athletes with disabilities	Approximately 52,861 athletes licensed within four national disability-specific federations: 8,996 (physically disabled, 22 branches); 24,914 (special athletes, 15 branches); 12,047 (deaf athletes, 24 branches); 6,904 (visually impaired). These are formally licensed competitive athletes; recreational and informal participants are not captured.
Paralympic Games 2024 (Paris)	94 athletes (46 men, 48 women); Medals – 28
Paralympic Games 2020 (Tokyo)	87 athletes (43 men, 44 women); Medals – 15
Paralympic Games 2016 (Rio)	81 athletes (48 men, 33 women); Medals – 9

Population: Turkish Statistical Institute (2024). Licensed athletes: Ministry of Youth and Sports administrative records via disability-specific federations. Note: the disability prevalence estimate varies across sources and methodologies; the 5 million figure is unverified. With 94 athletes at Paris 2024 and 28 medals, Türkiye fields one of the largest and most successful Paralympic delegations among the countries reviewed.

Türkiye has built a large licensed competitive base and a strong elite Paralympic presence, reflected in steady growth in athlete numbers and medal performance across the last three Paralympic cycles. At the same time, the absence of a verified national disability prevalence figure and the lack of consolidated public participation data make it difficult to assess how far this elite success reflects broader participation across disability groups and regions. The February 2023 earthquake is also relevant to the future development of Para sport, as the scale of amputation- and prosthesis-related needs indicates likely implications for rehabilitation-linked sport participation, service demand, and infrastructure pressure in the affected provinces.

Legal and Policy Framework

Türkiye is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the CRPD, are partially reflected in national legislation and policy documents. At the constitutional level, the Turkish Constitution recognises the rights of persons with disabilities through provisions on equality and positive measures, while on the other hand requiring the State to promote participation in sport and improve all citizens' physical and mental health.

The core legal framework governing sport in Türkiye is **Law No. 7405 Law on Sports Clubs and Sports Federations (2022)**, which regulates the establishment, organisation, finances, and oversight of sports clubs and federations. The Law defines **Paralympic and Deaflympic sports** as those recognised by the respective international committees and establishes conditions under which sports clubs may obtain public-benefit status, including requirements related to participation in Olympic, Paralympic, or Deaflympic sports branches.

Presidential Decree No. 1 on the Presidential Organisation (2018) provides the legal basis for disability-inclusive sport policy by assigning the General Directorate of Sports Services responsibility for promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in sport and ensuring accessible facilities, training programmes, equipment provision, and cooperation with relevant organisations.

Law No. 3289 on Youth and Sports Services Law (1986) establishes the institutional, organisational, and financial framework for youth and sport services in Türkiye and provides the general legal basis for the organisation, funding, governance, and operation of sports services across all sport branches.

At policy level, the National Sports Policy Document³⁵ (2012) sets out **policy objectives across youth and sport**, including sport-related areas such as sports management, sports culture, training elite athletes, disadvantaged people and sports, and athlete health.

Within the broader disability rights framework, **Law No. 5378 on Disabled People (2005)** promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities and includes provisions to support their participation in sport, requiring the promotion of Para sport, adaptation of sports facilities for accessibility, and measures to enable access to sporting infrastructure.

Further, the **First National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023–2025)**, coordinated by the Ministry of Family and Social Services, includes actions to strengthen participation of persons with disabilities in sport through improved accessibility and diversified services.

Overall, Türkiye's legal and policy framework situates Para sport within the broader sport and disability governance system rather than regulating it through a separate standalone regime. Constitutional principles, sector-specific sport legislation, and disability-focused laws collectively provide a formal basis for inclusion, accessibility, and participation. At the same time, the framework appears stronger in establishing legal authority and institutional responsibilities than in providing a clearly updated strategic roadmap for long-term Para sport development across the sector.

Governance and Institutional Structure

Ministry of Youth and Sports General Directorate of Sports Services (Policy, promotion, facility oversight)

³⁵ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/turkiye/13-national-youth-strategy>

▼ *Funding + oversight*

Turkish National Paralympic Committee (TNPC) (International representation; national team coordination)

Four disability-specific federations and the mainstream federations with Paralympic disciplines

▼ *Provincial directorates ensure local implementation*

Ministry Provincial Directorates (Local delivery and coordination)

Sport Clubs (Affiliated with federations; training and competitions)

Para sport in Türkiye is governed within the mainstream national sport administration under the leadership of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the General Directorate of Sports Services, which are responsible for promoting participation of persons with disabilities in sport, supporting accessible facilities, and overseeing training and equipment provision.

At national level, the Turkish National Paralympic Committee represents Türkiye within the international Paralympic movement and coordinates national team preparation and international representation. Sport-specific governance is undertaken by national federations, including four disability-specific bodies, such as the Turkish Blind Sports Federation, the Turkish Deaf Sports Federation, the Turkish Sports Federation for the Physically Disabled, and the Turkish Sports Federation for Special Athletes, as well as mainstream federations administering Paralympic disciplines within their respective sports.

At operational level, disability-inclusive sport programmes are implemented through the Ministry's provincial directorates, while affiliated sport clubs provide the main grassroots training and competition environment. Administratively, clubs are affiliated with and responsible to the provincial youth and sports directorates, while in sport-specific terms they are affiliated with the relevant federations. Provincial directorates therefore function as the territorial extension of the central governance system, linking ministerial policy with local sport delivery.

Overall, the Turkish model reflects a centrally coordinated but institutionally plural system. Para sport is embedded within mainstream sport administration, but implementation is distributed across multiple disability-specific and sport-specific federations. This arrangement can support specialised expertise and representation of different disability groups, but it also creates a coordination challenge: pathway management, data collection, and strategic planning may develop unevenly unless stronger cross-federation mechanisms are maintained.

National Coordination

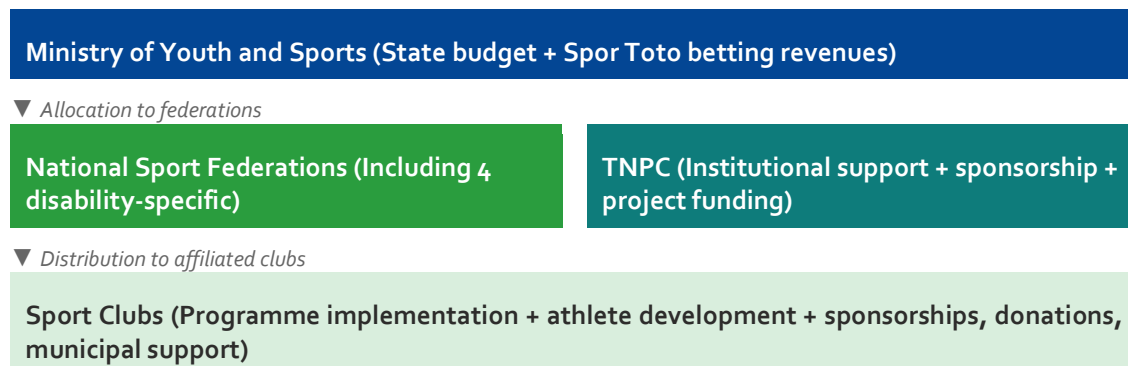
National coordination of Para sport in Türkiye is organised primarily through the Ministry of Youth and Sports, while the Turkish National Paralympic Committee coordinates Paralympic sport at national level in cooperation with the relevant sport federations. This creates a centrally coordinated model in which overall authority is concentrated within the Ministry, while sport-specific implementation is distributed across federations and provincial directorates.

At operational level, the Ministry's provincial directorates provide the key link between national policy and local implementation, supporting sport programmes, local delivery, and athlete development at territorial level. The Turkish National Paralympic Committee works with disability-specific and mainstream federations in relation to national team preparation and international competition structures.

An important coordination issue within this model is the extent to which the coexistence of several disability-specific federations and mainstream federations produces a unified

development approach rather than parallel sub-systems. The available information indicates that the system functions effectively in supporting national and international representation, but it is less clear whether coordination across federations is sufficiently structured to ensure consistency in athlete pathways, data practices, and strategic planning across the whole sector.

Funding and Resource Allocation



Para sport funding in Türkiye is primarily centralised, with the Ministry of Youth and Sports acting as the main funding authority through state budget appropriations and earmarked revenues from sports betting mechanisms (e.g., Spor Toto), which are allocated to national sport federations, including Para sport federations, and subsequently distributed to affiliated sport clubs for programme implementation and athlete development. The TNPC receives institutional support from the Ministry and supplements this with sponsorships and project funding for high-performance programmes and athlete preparation. Additional financing is generated through sponsorships, donations, advertising, broadcasting, and other commercial revenues, while municipal support and local resources may provide supplementary funding, particularly for clubs and grassroots-level activities.

Funding for Para sport in Türkiye is largely centralised and state-driven, with allocations channelled through the Ministry to national federations and subsequently to affiliated clubs. Supplementary revenues from sponsorship and commercial sources exist, but the primary financial architecture remains based on central public funding. This model appears strong in sustaining institutional continuity and elite representation. At the same time, the absence of consolidated public data on broader participation and programme outcomes makes it difficult to assess how effectively these funding flows translate into participation growth across regions, disability groups, and stages of the athlete pathway.

Participation Pathways



⚠ Transition Gap: Türkiye has a comparatively structured entry and orientation system, but progression from initial identification into sustained club participation, development pathways, and elite preparation remains uneven across provinces. Facility access, coaching capacity, and local programme strength vary, which may affect continuity of athlete development outside stronger regional sport ecosystems.

Entry into Para sport in Türkiye is supported through Ministry-led Accessible Sports Schools, which encourage persons with disabilities to engage in sport and help build athlete pools for paralympic clubs and federations. Additional entry routes are provided through the Sports Talent Screening and Sports Orientation Programme and the Sportive Talent Screening Service for Individuals with Special Training Needs, which identify students with disabilities and direct them, based on results and disability classification, to the relevant federation and sport branch.

Development is supported through the issuance of a Sports Report Card, which identifies suitable sport disciplines and enables students and their families to apply to Athlete Training Centres (SEM) through provincial directorates. Where appropriate sports are not available at these centres, provincial directorate staff provide guidance intended to support continuity. Athlete progression then depends on club structures, federation development systems, and local institutional capacity.

Elite preparation is coordinated by the Turkish National Paralympic Committee in cooperation with the relevant sport federations. Professional pathways for coaches are managed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which trains coaches in cooperation with federations and enables licensed coaches to enter Para sport branches through additional practical training without repeating basic certification requirements. These arrangements indicate that Türkiye has a stronger formal entry and orientation architecture than many systems. However, the absence of a unified national monitoring system makes it difficult to assess how consistently these mechanisms translate into sustained development across sports, disability groups, and regions.

Gender Inclusion

Women's participation in Para sport in Türkiye has improved visibly at elite level, with female athlete representation increasing across recent Paralympic Games and approaching parity in the 2024 delegation. This suggests that women are increasingly present within the upper end of the athlete pathway.

At the same time, the available information does not indicate the existence of a dedicated national recruitment or participation strategy specifically targeting women and girls with disabilities in Para sport. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether improved elite representation reflects broader participation growth or stronger progression among a relatively narrow group of athletes already within the system.

Women and girls with disabilities may face compounded barriers related to disability, gender norms, transport access, family support, and uneven local programme availability. These barriers may be more pronounced in provinces where sport infrastructure, coaching capacity, and club opportunities are already limited. In the absence of stronger gender-disaggregated monitoring and targeted outreach measures, it remains difficult to assess where female participation is strongest, where dropout risks are highest, and whether current pathway structures are equally accessible to women and girls across the country.

Data Collection and Monitoring

At state level, no unified national portal or centralised database could be identified that consolidates data on participation, athletes, and activities across the Para sport sector in Türkiye. Administrative information on participation is maintained through the Provincial and

District Youth and Sports Directorates, which issue sport licences based on criteria set by the relevant federations, and by the federations and the Turkish National Paralympic Committee for operational and programme management purposes. Licensing records are held in a digital database administered by the directorates.

This represents an important information gap in an otherwise relatively structured system. Strong international performance and a large, licensed athlete base is not matched by an equally visible national data architecture capable of tracking participation breadth, regional distribution, gender patterns, or progression through athlete pathways.

In practice, this limits the ability of policymakers and sport organisations to assess whether current entry mechanisms, funding structures, and participation programmes are producing balanced development across regions and disability groups. Without a consolidated national monitoring framework, it remains difficult to move from administrative reporting to more strategic analysis of participation gaps and system performance.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Accessibility and infrastructure in Türkiye are characterised by a strong formal legal framework but uneven implementation in practice.

The Turkish Disability Act (Law No. 5378 of 2005) and the Presidential Decree on the Presidential Organisation (Decree No. 1) assigns the General Directorate of Sports Services responsibility to:

- Promote participation of persons with disabilities in sport
- Make sports facilities suitable for persons with disabilities
- Provide equipment and supportive technologies
- Train athletes and cooperate with relevant organisations

The CRPD Committee in its Concluding Observations (2019) expresses concern about serious enforcement gaps in Türkiye's accessibility regime. It notes limited progress in meeting legally established accessibility deadlines under the Turkish Disability Act and the national action plan, a lack of reliable and comprehensive public data on sanctions for non-compliance, and reports that accessibility monitoring and audit commissions are not fulfilling their legal obligations, with imposed sanctions not being applied in practice.³⁶ This suggests a clear distinction between the existence of formal legal obligations and the effectiveness of their implementation. In other words, the accessibility framework appears relatively strong on paper, but enforcement gaps may limit the extent to which legal commitments translate into consistently accessible sport environments in practice.

Key Analytical Observations

Türkiye has a relatively strong formal architecture for Para sport development, combining central ministerial authority, multiple disability-specific federations, provincial implementation structures, and a comparatively large, licensed athlete base. The system also demonstrates strong elite performance, reflected in both delegation size and medal growth across recent Paralympic cycles. This suggests that Türkiye has succeeded in building a visible and institutionally supported high-performance Para sport structure.

At the same time, the strength of elite performance does not necessarily mean that the wider participation system is equally coherent or well evidenced. The absence of a unified national monitoring framework limits the ability to assess whether broad participation, pathway

³⁶https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/TUR/C/O/1&Lang=En

continuity, and regional equity are developing at the same pace as elite success. In this sense, the system appears stronger in visible representation and formal institutional structure than in consolidated public evidence on participation breadth and progression dynamics.

A second structural feature of the Turkish model is its combination of central coordination with institutional plurality. The coexistence of several disability-specific federations alongside mainstream federations responsible for Paralympic disciplines can support targeted expertise and representation, but it also creates a need for stronger cross-federation coordination. Without this, different parts of the system may evolve unevenly in relation to data practices, athlete pathways, and strategic priorities.

The available information also suggests that Türkiye has invested in relatively structured entry and orientation mechanisms, including Accessible Sports Schools and talent-screening processes. However, the continuity of progression beyond entry depends heavily on local institutional strength, coaching capacity, and facility access. This means that the system may perform more strongly in athlete identification than in ensuring equally robust progression opportunities across provinces.

Finally, the 2023 earthquake is not only a humanitarian context factor but also a Para sport system issue. Its implications for rehabilitation-linked participation, prosthetic support, regional infrastructure demand, and future participation pathways in affected provinces remain insufficiently visible in the current public policy and data framework.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches, identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, represent features of the Turkish Para sport system with transferable value for system strengthening.

- The Ministry of Youth and Sports operates Accessible Sports Schools through provincial directorates, providing disability-inclusive training that links directly to disability sports federations. As an entry mechanism, this programme creates a structured national approach to expanding participation pipelines from community level to federation-level development. This report notes that continuity of progression beyond entry remains uneven across provinces, but the entry architecture itself represents a replicable model.
- The Sports Talent Screening and Sports Orientation Programme identifies students with disabilities and issues a Sports Report Card directing them to relevant federations and sport branches through provincial directorates. This formalises the identification and referral pathway from early detection to organised sport, reducing reliance on informal or ad hoc entry routes.
- Disability sport competencies are integrated into mainstream coach certification pathways rather than treated as a separate or optional qualification stream. Licensed coaches can enter Para sport branches through additional practical training without repeating basic certification requirements, building Para sport coaching capacity across the general sport workforce without requiring a parallel certification system.

Key Challenges

Despite the presence of a structured legal and institutional framework, several structural and operational challenges continue to affect the development of Para sport in Türkiye.

Data and monitoring constraints

- The national estimate of approximately 5 million persons with disabilities remains unverified and varies across sources and methodologies. This limits the reliability of

participation rate calculations and weakens the evidence base for planning and target-setting.

- Although licensed athlete data is available, monitoring remains fragmented across disability-specific federations and other relevant sport bodies. No unified national system consolidates participation, accessibility, and programme data across the Para sport sector.

Athlete pathway constraints

- The transition from grassroots participation programmes into sustained club participation, federation development pathways, and Athlete Training Centres is uneven across the country. Facility access, coaching capacity, and programme availability vary significantly by province, which may constrain development opportunities outside larger urban centres.
- Although entry and talent identification mechanisms exist, continuity of progression toward elite preparation depends heavily on local institutional capacity and the presence of active clubs. This creates uneven athlete development conditions between regions and disciplines.

Inclusion and accessibility barriers

- Participation of women with disabilities in Para sport remains associated with structural barriers. No dedicated national outreach or recruitment programme targeting women and girls with disabilities has been identified, and general gender equality provisions do not translate into Para sport-specific measures.
- Accessibility of sports infrastructure remains inconsistent. Not all facilities meet accessibility requirements, and monitoring and enforcement mechanisms may need strengthening to support compliance by sport organisations and facility operators.

Coordination and system-development issues

- A dedicated sport-specific coordination mechanism bringing together the Ministry, the Turkish National Paralympic Committee, disability-specific federations, and mainstream federations governing Paralympic disciplines has not been identified. This may limit coordination on cross-cutting issues such as classification, shared infrastructure, and unified data reporting.

Context-specific pressures

- The longer-term rehabilitation and participation implications of the 2023 earthquake for affected provinces have not yet been fully assessed. Targeted support for newly disabled persons may need to be more clearly integrated into Para sport planning in the affected areas.
- **The long-term implications of the 2023 earthquake for rehabilitation-linked participation pathways and regional infrastructure demand remain insufficiently visible within the current publicly available policy and data framework.**

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports:

review and update the national sports policy framework to include measurable participation targets and disability inclusion objectives for Para sport.

Recommendation 2.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cooperation with relevant public authorities and sport organisations:

strengthen monitoring and enforcement of accessibility standards in sport facilities and support facility operators in meeting accessibility requirements.

Recommendation 3.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cooperation with the Turkish National Paralympic Committee and relevant sport federations:

develop a coordinated national monitoring framework for Para sport participation, accessibility, and programme outcomes, including stronger data sharing across federations.

Recommendation 4.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cooperation with the Turkish National Paralympic Committee and relevant sport federations:

strengthen the transition from entry-level programmes to federation development pathways by improving links between Accessible Sports Schools, provincial directorates, clubs, and Athlete Training Centres.

Recommendation 5.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports and relevant sport federations:

develop targeted outreach and participation measures aimed at increasing the engagement of women, girls, and young persons with disabilities in Para sport.

Recommendation 6.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cooperation with the Turkish National Paralympic Committee, disability-specific federations, and mainstream federations governing Paralympic disciplines:

establish a more structured coordination mechanism for addressing cross-cutting issues including classification, shared infrastructure, and unified reporting.

Recommendation 7.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports and relevant local authorities:

prioritise investment in accessible sport infrastructure, adaptive equipment, and assistive technologies, particularly in provinces where facility access and programme availability remain limited.

Recommendation 8.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cooperation with relevant public authorities and sport organisations:

assess the longer-term rehabilitation and participation implications of the 2023 earthquake and integrate targeted support for newly disabled persons into Para sport planning in affected provinces.

8. Ukraine

Country Context Overview

Indicator	Data
Population (estimate)	39 million (UNFPA, 2025)
Estimated number of persons with disabilities	Over 6 million (Estimate as of June 2025); 3 million are formally recognized (ACAPS, 2025), significant rise from 2.7 million (UNDP, 2021 data)
Persons with disabilities in Para sport	Approximately 60,000 (National Sports Committee for Sports for the Disabled of Ukraine; includes participants across competitive and Invasport network activities)
Paralympic Games 2024 (Paris)	138 athletes (95 men; 43 women); Medals – 82
Paralympic Games 2020 (Tokyo)	137 athletes (79 men; 58 women); Medals – 98
Paralympic Games 2016 (Rio)	168 (91 men; 77 women); Medals – 117

Population: UNFPA Ukraine Population 2025. Disability prevalence: UNDP (2024) Report on Experiences of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine. Para sport participation: National Sports Committee for Sports for the Disabled of Ukraine. The 60,000 figure covers participants across the Invasport network and competitive structures; it may include both competitive and recreational engagement. Gender-disaggregated breakdown is not currently published.

Within the Ukrainian context, disability sport is best understood as comprising three interconnected pathways: Para sport, which constitutes the core of high-performance Paralympic and Deaflympic sport; adaptive sport, which increasingly serves as an entry point for participation, rehabilitation, and community-based activity, particularly for persons acquiring disabilities later in life; and sport for veterans, which has developed as a distinct pathway focused on recovery, reintegration, and long-term engagement in physical activity, with bridges toward competitive sport. These three components ensure continuity within the system and respond to the scale and nature of needs arising from the ongoing armed conflict.

Although the number of athletes has gradually decreased across recent Paralympic cycles, Ukraine has maintained a high level of international representation despite the ongoing war context. This indicates both a sustained institutional commitment to Para sport and the resilience of existing athlete support structures. At the same time, the downward trajectory in delegation size suggests that wartime disruption, infrastructure loss, and pressure on athlete development conditions may already be affecting the long-term depth of the high-performance pipeline.

Within the Ukrainian sport system, Para sport remains one of the most institutionally developed sectors, reflected in consistently strong performance in Paralympic and Deaflympic competitions. The full-scale war has also made Para sport strategically more significant beyond elite sport alone. The substantial increase in the number of persons living with disabilities, together with rising rehabilitation needs and pressure on public services, means that Para sport is increasingly relevant not only as a competitive system but also as a mechanism for rehabilitation, social inclusion, and reintegration. Even if the precise increase in disability prevalence attributable to the war cannot be established through a single consolidated public source, the available estimates clearly indicate that the war is directly relevant to future participation demand, rehabilitation-linked pathways, and service planning within the Para sport sector.

Legal and Policy Framework

Ukraine is a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provisions related to participation in sport, as set out in Article 30 of the CRPD, are reflected in national legislation.

In accordance with Article 9 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the provisions of the CRPD form an integral part of the national legislation of Ukraine.

The core legal framework governing sport in Ukraine is established by the Law “On Physical Culture and Sports” (1994), which defines the general legal, organisational, and social principles of the sports sector and applies to all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities. The Law establishes the general right of every individual to engage in physical culture and sports and recognises sport for persons with disabilities as a distinct area within the national sports system. Amendments to the Law adopted in 2025 formally introduced the concept of “adaptive sports”, recognising it as a specific form of sports activity designed to reflect the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities and establishing a unified terminological basis for further regulation. Legal regulation of adaptive sports is therefore implemented through the Law itself, complementary legislation on social protection and rehabilitation, and subordinate regulatory acts governing institutional arrangements and programme delivery. This legislative development also reflects the broader institutional recognition of three interconnected pathways: Para sport, adaptive sport, and sport for veterans as components of a system.

The Law “On Support for the Olympic and Paralympic Movement and Elite Sports in Ukraine” is a specialised regulatory act establishing the legal foundations of state support for the Olympic and Paralympic movements and elite (high-performance) sports. In relation to persons with disabilities, the Law regulates exclusively Paralympic and elite sports and does not extend to mass or inclusive sports. It defines the principles governing entities involved in Paralympic sport, as well as the financial, organisational, and material-technical mechanisms supporting athlete preparation and participation in international competitions, including the establishment and maintenance of Olympic and Paralympic training bases. The Law constitutes a specialised segment of sports legislation and does not replace the broader regulation provided by the Law “On Physical Culture and Sports.”

The Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” establishes the legal framework of the rehabilitation system and recognises physical culture and sports rehabilitation as one of its components, alongside medical, psychological, social, and vocational rehabilitation. It allows physical activity and sport to be included in individual rehabilitation programmes, thereby providing the legal basis for organising sports activities in a rehabilitation context.

Within the broader disability rights framework, the Law of Ukraine “On the Fundamentals of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” establishes the general legal and organisational principles of state disability policy and guarantees equal opportunities and social integration. Although it does not directly regulate physical culture and sports, it provides the overarching legal framework within which participation in sport is recognised as a tool for inclusion, adaptation, and social integration.

Subordinate regulation constitutes the extensive layer of Ukraine’s legal framework for sport for persons with disabilities, implementing national legislation through presidential decrees, Cabinet resolutions, and ministerial orders that collectively govern institutional structures, financing, incentives, and operational procedures, including the “Invasport” system and rehabilitation-related support. Key bylaws include Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 766 of 20 July 2011 “On Certain Issues of the Centres for Physical Culture and Sports of Persons with Disabilities ‘Invasport’”; and the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 1059/2001 “On the Development and Support of the Paralympic Movement in Ukraine”, which

establishes state-level priorities for promoting and strengthening the Paralympic movement by mandating governmental support for the development of sport for persons with disabilities, the preparation of national Paralympic teams, and the improvement of organisational, financial, and training conditions for athletes. It also provides the basis for coordination among state authorities, sport organisations, and rehabilitation institutions to expand participation opportunities, enhance high-performance training systems, and ensure Ukraine's representation in international Paralympic competitions.

Ukraine has one more noteworthy initiative entitled "Barrier-Free initiative" which is a national programme aimed at improving accessibility for persons with disabilities and other population groups across different sectors, including physical activity and sport. In the sport context, the programme supports the development of accessible sport and recreational spaces, inclusive physical activity opportunities, and training activities for professionals, contributing to improved access to sport and physical activity environments.

Ukraine has developed a comprehensive and multi-layered legal framework that embeds Para sport within both general sports legislation and disability-related law, while also establishing a specialised regulatory segment for Paralympic and elite sport. The framework is reinforced by extensive subordinate legislation and national initiatives, creating a structured formal basis for adaptive sport, rehabilitation, and high-performance development. At the same time, the strength of the legal framework places greater emphasis on the challenge of implementation under wartime conditions, including coordination, financing, infrastructure continuity, and equitable access across territories.

Governance and Institutional Structure



Responsibility for sport policy, funding, and programme oversight lies with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine. In parallel, the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity supports the rehabilitation and social inclusion dimensions of Para sport, linking disability sport with broader rehabilitation and inclusion systems.

In the current wartime context, the Ministry for Veterans Affairs of Ukraine has also become an increasingly important institutional actor. Sport for war veterans has developed as a distinct and rapidly expanding area linked to recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The Ministry functions as a cross-cutting actor whose role is relevant to governance, programme implementation, support measures, and the broader policy framework for veterans' reintegration, with implications for financing flows and responsibility distribution within the system.

The central coordinating body for the Paralympic movement is the National Sports Committee for Sports for the Disabled of Ukraine, which performs the role of the National Paralympic Committee and coordinates the development of the Paralympic and Deaflympic movement. The Committee includes four recognised national sport federations: the federations for persons with musculoskeletal disorders, the deaf, the blind, and persons with intellectual and physical development disorders.

A defining feature of the Ukrainian model is the Invasport network, jointly supervised by the Ministry and the National Sports Committee. This network includes the Ukrainian Centre "Invasport", regional and local centres, youth sports schools, specialised reserve schools, and national teams. It functions not only as an implementation mechanism but also as a territorial pathway structure linking grassroots participation, sport-rehabilitation activity, athlete identification, youth reserve development, and elite preparation.

The four national federations remain responsible for sport-specific development within their target groups, including competition organisation, athlete preparation, and national team participation in international events. They operate through regional branches and cooperate with Invasport centres and territorial actors in implementing grassroots initiatives and athlete development activities.

Overall, the Ukrainian model combines strong ministerial oversight, a central coordinating Paralympic body, and a territorially embedded Invasport network. This creates a more institutionalised pathway system than in many countries and gives the Para sport sector unusually strong territorial reach. At the same time, the model depends heavily on transparent coordination and resource distribution across national, regional, and local levels, especially under wartime conditions.

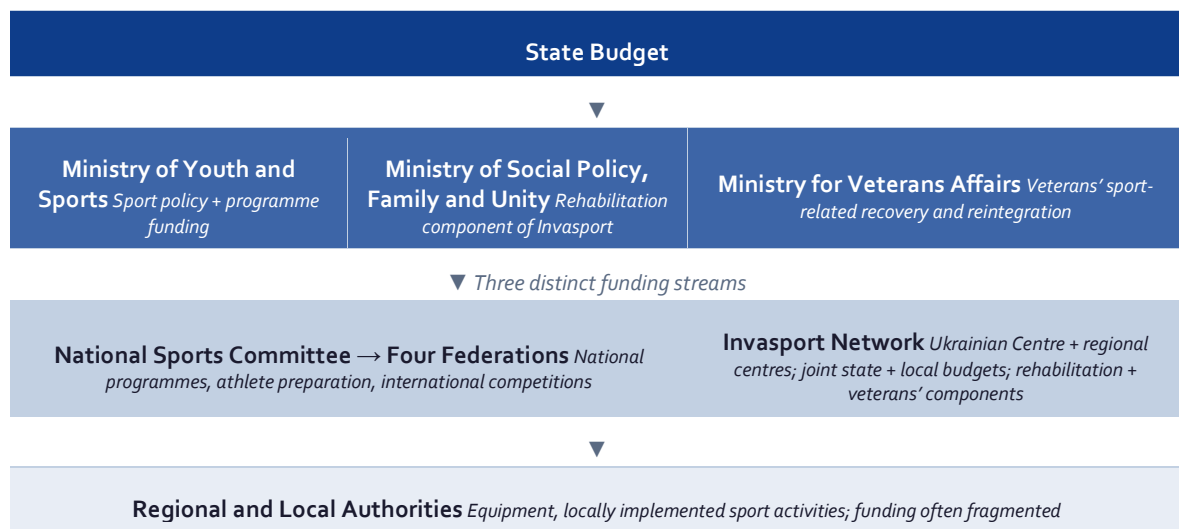
National Coordination

National coordination of Para sport in Ukraine is established through the Law on Physical Culture and Sport and related governmental regulations, which assign overall policy formation and programme coordination to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, while implementation is carried out in cooperation with the National Sports Committee for Sports for the Disabled of Ukraine, the four national sport federations for persons with disabilities, and other relevant executive authorities.

Operational coordination at territorial level is ensured through the Invasport system, which links the national centre, regional and local centres, specialised sport schools, reserve schools, and national teams into a unified nationwide structure. Regional and local authorities participate in this coordination by financing territorial implementation and working with federations, sport organisations, and rehabilitation institutions to support grassroots participation, athlete development, and sport-rehabilitation activities.

This territorial coordination logic is one of the most distinctive features of the Ukrainian model. It allows Para sport governance to operate not only through national representation structures but also through an embedded service and training network extending into regions and localities. At the same time, the effectiveness of this model depends heavily on communication, trust, and transparency across governance levels. Stakeholder concerns regarding limited involvement of regional actors in decision-making and resource allocation suggest that the same vertical integration that strengthens system continuity may also generate tensions around openness, accountability, and regional inclusion.

Funding and Resource Allocation



Funding for Para sport in Ukraine is primarily provided from the state budget through two linked but distinct institutional streams.

The first stream is channelled through the Ministry of Youth and Sports to the National Sports Committee for the Disabled of Ukraine and the four National Sport Federations of Persons with Disabilities. This stream supports national sport programmes, high-performance athlete preparation, and national team participation in international competitions.

The second stream supports the Invasport system. National, regional, and local Invasport centres are financed through a combination of state and local budgets, with regional and municipal authorities responsible for supporting territorial centres, sports schools for persons with disabilities, and grassroots sport and rehabilitation activities. The Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity also contributes to this stream, particularly for rehabilitation-related components of the network's work.

At regional level, sports equipment procurement and many locally implemented sport activities are financed from regional and municipal budgets, although these resources are often fragmented and unevenly distributed.

This two-stream financing model reflects the dual character of the Ukrainian system: one stream supports national representation and elite preparation, while the other sustains a territorially embedded participation and rehabilitation network. In principle, this creates stronger structural continuity between grassroots and elite sport than in many systems. In practice, however, wartime pressures, fragmented local funding, and stakeholder concerns

regarding transparency in allocation decisions affect how evenly these resources are distributed and how effectively they support the full pathway.

Participation Pathways

ENTRY	DEVELOPMENT	ELITE
PATHWAY 1: ADAPTIVE SPORT Rehabilitation institutions; community-based activity; persons acquiring disabilities later in life PATHWAY 2: SPORT FOR VETERANS NEW Recovery, reintegration, long-term engagement; Ministry for Veterans Affairs coordination PATHWAY 3: YOUTH / INVASPORT Youth sports schools for PwD; Invasport grassroots programmes; local clubs; Spartakiad ⚠ Gap: Transport barriers; coordination across three pathways requires institutional linkages	~100 youth sport schools for PwD: state-funded, multiple disciplines 4 national federations + regional Invasport branches: coordinate clubs, training, competitions National championships across all Paralympic and Deaflympic disciplines Presidential scholarships for children with disabilities ⚠ Gap: Insufficient trained coaches; funding ~50% reduced	NSCDU coordinates national teams Athletes receive salaries as national team members Paralympic = Olympic state awards Presidential scholarships for elite athletes ⚠ Gap: 800+ damaged facilities; 2025 procurement restrictions
⚠ TRANSITION GAP: Wartime disruptions have reduced capacity and territorial coverage, creating new transition challenges. The emergence of sport for veterans as a distinct pathway alongside Para sport and adaptive sport creates additional coordination requirements across the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry for Veterans Affairs, and the National Sports Committee.		

Entry into Para sport in Ukraine typically occurs through rehabilitation institutions, youth sports schools for persons with disabilities, grassroots programmes implemented through the Invasport network, local sport clubs, and sport federations. These structures identify and develop athletes at regional level before progression to national competitions and high-performance programmes.

Development is supported through a dense institutional network. Youth sports schools for children and young persons with disabilities play a central role in ensuring entry of new athletes into the system. Since 1994, the All-Ukrainian Spartakiad "Believe in Yourself" has served as a major talent-identification competition covering 24 sports disciplines and contributing significantly to reserve pools for national Paralympic and Deaflympic teams. Presidential scholarships for children with disabilities and their coaches provide additional support at this stage, while national championships are regularly organised across Paralympic and Deaflympic disciplines.

Elite preparation is coordinated by the National Sports Committee in cooperation with the federations and the Invasport network. Athletes advancing to elite level may be included in national teams and receive state-supported training conditions, stipends, salaries through national team positions, and performance-based awards. Paralympic and Deaflympic medal achievements are recognised on an equal basis with Olympic achievements for state awards, and some regional authorities also provide supplementary rewards.

Coaching is regulated within the national sport system. Coaches are required to meet formal professional and qualification standards, with education and retraining delivered through higher education institutions and specialised sport training programmes, while federations and the Invasport network provide practical sport-specific deployment and support.

The Ukrainian model creates a structured institutional pathway by linking rehabilitation, youth entry, reserve development, and elite preparation through one territorially embedded system. However, wartime damage to infrastructure, reduced territorial coverage in some areas, and broader system pressures have increased the fragility of these transitions.

Data Collection

At state level, no unified national portal or centralised database could be located that consolidates data on participation, athletes, and activities across the Para sport sector in Ukraine. Administrative information on participation is maintained separately by the National Sports Committee for the Disabled of Ukraine, the four National Sports Federations for Persons with Disabilities, and the Invasport network for operational and programme management purposes.

The absence of a single public-facing national data portal is particularly notable. It limits external visibility of participation patterns, territorial disparities, gender distribution, and pathway outcomes across the network. In practice, this means that a system which is highly structured institutionally remains only partially visible analytically. This also reduces the ability of policymakers, regional actors, and external stakeholders to assess where participation is expanding, where rehabilitation-linked demand is increasing, which territories face the greatest service pressure, and how effectively the pathway from local participation to elite preparation is functioning under wartime conditions.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Ukraine maintains a network of approximately 90 Olympic training bases, historically used for both Olympic and Paralympic athlete preparation, although some are currently inaccessible due to the security situation. Russia's armed aggression has significantly damaged the sports infrastructure, affecting over 800 sports facilities, including 21 Olympic, Paralympic, and Deaflympic training bases, and the loss of the former major rehabilitation and training base in Crimea has further complicated athlete preparation and rehabilitation processes.

In Ukraine, the inclusive sports television channel EQUALYMPIC promotes Paralympic and Deaflympic sports through content primarily dedicated to athletes with disabilities and ensures full accessibility for persons with hearing impairments through sign language interpretation in all broadcasts.

Key Analytical Observations

Ukraine has developed one of the most institutionally dense Para sport systems in the region, reflected in strong international performance and a governance model that links rehabilitation, participation, youth development, and elite preparation through territorially embedded structures. The combination of the National Sports Committee, the four federations, and the Invasport network creates a more institutionalised pathway system than in many national contexts and gives Para sport unusually strong territorial reach.

A core strength of the system lies in its vertical integration. Rather than relying primarily on autonomous clubs or project-based delivery, Ukraine has built a state-supported network of centres, schools, and federated structures that connects local participation with reserve development and high-performance preparation. In principle, this gives the system stronger continuity than many models that depend more heavily on independent local initiative.

At the same time, this same vertical integration also creates governance tensions. Stakeholder consultations suggest that some clubs and regional organisations operating outside the core Invasport and National Sports Committee framework perceive limited transparency in expenditure decisions and weak involvement in budget formation and resource allocation. This indicates that the institutional strength of the system is accompanied by a governance

challenge: the more centralised and integrated the model becomes, the greater the need for openness, communication, and regional inclusion in decision-making.

The war has intensified these pressures. Ukraine has lost major training and rehabilitation assets, including the former base in Crimea, while damage to infrastructure, energy disruption, and funding pressures have affected both local programme delivery and elite preparation. At the same time, the war has increased the number of persons with newly acquired disabilities, creating a growing overlap between rehabilitation demand and future Para sport participation pathways. This reinforces the strategic relevance of Para sport not only as a high-performance sector but also as a mechanism of rehabilitation, inclusion, and long-term reintegration.

Despite these pressures, Ukraine maintained strong representation and results at the 2024 Paralympic Games. This demonstrates considerable system resilience. However, it should not obscure the fact that long-term sustainability will depend on whether the sector can preserve territorial reach, restore infrastructure, widen participation, and adapt its governance and financing structures to wartime and post-war realities.

Key Good Practices

The following approaches, identified through the desk research and key informant interviews, represent features of the Ukrainian Para sport system with transferable value for system strengthening.

- The Invasport system provides a vertically integrated territorial delivery architecture connecting national, regional and local centres, youth sports schools for persons with disabilities, specialised reserve schools, and national teams under a unified institutional framework. The Key Analytical Observations in this report identify this vertical integration as a core system strength that provides continuity between grassroots participation, reserve development, and elite preparation. The model also demonstrates resilience under crisis conditions, with Ukraine maintaining strong international representation despite ongoing armed conflict. The report also notes that vertical integration requires transparent governance and meaningful regional involvement to function effectively.
- The "Believe in Yourself" Spartakiad has since 1994 provided structured national youth competition for persons with disabilities across 24 sport disciplines. It functions simultaneously as a participation entry mechanism and a talent identification pathway, linking early competitive experience directly to reserve pools for national Paralympic and Deaflympic teams.
- Presidential scholarships for children with disabilities and their coaches provide financial support at the youth development stage of the athlete pathway. This mechanism recognises the interdependence between athlete development and coaching capacity, supporting both simultaneously within a single instrument.
- Paralympic and Deaflympic medal achievements are recognised on an equal basis with Olympic achievements for state awards, with some regional authorities providing supplementary recognition. This formal parity reinforces the institutional legitimacy of Para sport within the broader national sport system.
- The EQUALYMPIC inclusive sports television channel broadcasts content dedicated to Paralympic and Deaflympic sport with full sign language interpretation in all broadcasts, ensuring accessibility for persons with hearing impairments. This represents a media inclusion mechanism that extends the reach and visibility of Para sport beyond competition venues.
- Adaptive sport is integrated within the national Barrier-Free Environment Strategy, providing a cross-governmental policy anchor that connects Para sport to broader social

inclusion and rehabilitation policy objectives. This whole-of-government framing supports intersectoral coordination in ways that sport-sector governance alone cannot achieve.

Key Challenges

Despite the existence of a highly institutionalised Para sport system, several structural and operational challenges continue to affect participation, athlete development, and system sustainability in Ukraine.

Wartime system pressures

- Since the onset of the war, overall public funding for Para sport has reportedly been reduced significantly, while the loss or damage of training facilities and other material infrastructure has affected both athlete preparation and local programme delivery.
- Recent restrictions on capital procurement have further constrained equipment acquisition and infrastructure investment, limiting the system's ability to replace damaged facilities and maintain training conditions.

Infrastructure and access constraints

- The availability and condition of training facilities remain a major constraint. Damage to sports infrastructure, reduced access to some training bases, and delays in the completion of newly planned facilities continue to affect participation and preparation.
- Not all sport facilities are fully accessible for persons with disabilities, which limits participation opportunities and reduces the practical reach of programmes.
- Limited availability of accessible transportation remains an obstacle to regular participation in training and competitions, particularly where athletes depend on territorial mobility between centres, schools, and competition venues.

Regional coordination and territorial disparities

- Challenges are reported in regional-level coordination, communication, and information sharing, including limited transparency regarding funding decisions and resource allocation processes.
- Regional sport organisations are reported to have limited involvement in decision-making and financial allocation processes, while the development of sport disciplines remains uneven across regions, with some areas offering only a narrow range of sport options.

Institutional and workforce capacity constraints

- The number of trained coaches is reported to be insufficient, affecting the delivery, expansion, and continuity of sport programmes.
- There are also concerns regarding comparatively low remuneration levels for athletes, coaches, and sport personnel, which may affect retention and long-term system capacity.

Outreach and participation barriers

- Stakeholders report limited outreach and awareness, with funding opportunities and participation programmes reaching a relatively narrow group of beneficiaries. This may reduce the ability of the system to widen participation and identify new athletes.

Monitoring and data limitations

- There is no unified national portal collecting and publishing data on participation of persons with disabilities in sport, limiting the availability of consolidated information on the reach and performance of the system.

- Gender-disaggregated Para sport participation data is not systematically published. As a result, potential disparities in participation, access, and progression for women and girls with disabilities remain difficult to identify and address through policy or programme measures.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, in cooperation with the National Sports Committee for Sports for the Disabled of Ukraine, the Invasport network, and regional authorities:

maintain continuity support measures for the Para sport sector, including protection of essential operational funding for training centres, sport institutions, and athlete preparation under wartime conditions.

Recommendation 2.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, in cooperation with regional and local authorities:

strengthen regional coordination by improving the involvement of territorial sport organisations in planning, decision-making, and resource allocation processes and by expanding information sharing across governance levels.

Recommendation 3.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, in cooperation with the National Sports Committee, the Invasport network, and relevant education and sport institutions:

expand coach education, retraining, and professional development measures in order to increase the number of qualified coaches working in Para sport.

Recommendation 4.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, in cooperation with regional and local authorities and relevant transport and social service actors:

develop accessible transport solutions to support regular participation of persons with disabilities in training and competitions, particularly in regions with limited transport availability.

Recommendation 5.

The National Sports Committee for Sports for the Disabled of Ukraine, in cooperation with the Invasport network, federations, and regional authorities:

strengthen outreach, information, and awareness-raising activities so that participation programmes, funding opportunities, and support services reach a broader group of beneficiaries across regions.

Recommendation 6.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, in cooperation with the National Sports Committee, the four national federations, and the Invasport network:

establish the collection and publication of more consistent participation data, including gender-disaggregated information, in order to improve monitoring of territorial coverage, participation patterns, and gender disparities.

Recommendation 7.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, in cooperation with relevant public authorities and sport organisations:

prioritise restoration, accessibility improvement, and flexible use of training facilities and equipment within the Para sport system, taking into account wartime damage and current restrictions on capital investment.

Recommendation 8.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, in cooperation with the National Sports Committee, regional authorities, and post-conflict recovery actors:

integrate gender inclusion and broader participation objectives into reconstruction and recovery planning for the sport sector so that women, girls, and newly disabled persons are more effectively reached through future Para sport programmes.

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