Strasbourg, 19 November 2026 EPAS(2026)66

Mapping of sports facilities: Meeting 5 – "Accessibility and sports facilities – best practice and policy developments"

Organised jointly by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)
and the Mulier Institute

Wednesday 25 November 2026
9.30am – 12.30pm (CET)

Hybrid meeting:
Strasbourg, Council of Europe, meeting room No.16 Palais and online
Kudo link to join the meeting: https://vmeeting.coe.int/br/111114344644/join

Concept note and draft programme

Background

Sport facilities are essential components of inclusive and sustainable communities. They provide spaces for physical, sport participation, social interaction, health promotion and community life. The 2025 Mulier Institute/Council of Europe *White Paper on Social Sustainability and Sports Facilities* states that:

> "the social sustainability of sports facilities is about facilitating social relations, bringing all groups in society to the facilities. Sports facilities should also support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities. This requires access to sports facilities and use of sports facilities by all groups in society. Furthermore, sustainable funding models for sports facilities are essential to make them affordable and financially sustainable for the future. In addition, attention should be paid to the more topical areas to which social sustainability is often linked: sustainability itself (e.g. the climate)."

The European Sports Charter establishes in article 10 *The right to sport* and states that in order to safeguard and promote access to sport for all, it is necessary to:

- "make sure that everyone has ample opportunities to benefit from physical education and practise sport, develop physical literacy and physical fitness, acquire fundamental movement skills and attain a level of achievement in sport which corresponds to their abilities";
- "make sure that specific opportunities are available for young people, including children of pre-school age, for older people and for people with disabilities to enjoy education and sports programmes suited to their requirements";
- "ensure that all members of a local community have opportunities to take part in sport and that, where necessary, additional measures are taken aimed at enabling disadvantaged individuals or groups and people with disabilities to make effective use of such opportunities."

The Charter also stipulates on *Facilities and activities* that "appropriate steps should be taken by the owners of sports facilities to enable persons from disadvantaged groups, including persons with physical or mental disabilities, to have access to such facilities."

Despite these policy commitments, there is currently no comprehensive and consistent overview of the accessibility of sports facilities across EPAS and Council of Europe member states and there is no uniform over-arching policy in this area. Insight into different ways of ensuring accessibility of sport facilities is therefore of vital relevance.

In addition, the joint European Union – Council of Europe project "*Sport For All*" (2025-2026), which aimed to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sport while combating ableist discrimination, conducted a needs assessment of Para sport systems in 8 countries (Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine) across several domains, including accessibility. The study identified both existing good practices, including ministry-led funding calls for physical adaptations to sports facilities and embedding universal design and accessibility compliance within the standard building permit process, as well as persisting challenges, namely regional disparities in sporting infrastructure.

In this context, EPAS and the Mulier Institute will organise an online technical meeting on mapping sports facilities with a specific focus on their accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The meeting will explore how sport facilities can be mapped and assessed in a way that is meaningful for policymakers and useful to persons with disabilities, athletes, sport organisations, facility operators and local communities.

Objectives

This online meeting aims to:

- develop a common understanding of accessibility in the context of sports facilities;
- examine the policy importance of sports facilities and ensuring their accessibility;
- identify existing mapping initiatives and key indicators relating to the accessibility of sports facilities;
- share knowledge and examples of good practice in this field;
- bring together a diverse range of stakeholders to explore solutions for making sports facilities affordable, accessible and inclusive for all groups in society.

Thematic scope

The meeting will explore the following aspects:

- **Mapping accessibility across Europe:** To what extent, in what ways and by whom has the accessibility of sports facilities been mapped across Europe to date? Researchers will be invited to present the policy-relevant information that can be generated from their databases and other data sources. The meeting will also consider whether any future initiatives are planned to support comparative benchmarking in this area.

- **Good practices and effective mechanisms:** What examples of good practice and effective working mechanisms exist to improve the accessibility of sports facilities for persons with disabilities? This may include facilities with significant financial value or substantial social and community impact, as well as approaches involving universal design, facility adaptations, accessible equipment, staff training and inclusive programming.

- **Indicators for policymaking:** Which indicators would be most useful to policymakers at local, regional and national levels? The discussion will consider what should be measured in relation to accessibility, including the availability and geographical distribution of facilities, physical and sensory accessibility, accessible services and equipment, affordability, transport and communication, staff capacity, and the actual participation and experience of persons with disabilities.

  An accessible sports facility is not simply a facility that can be entered. It is a facility in which a person with a disability can find information, travel to the site, enter, move around, use the relevant services and spaces, participate safely and affordably, and do so with dignity and as much independence as possible.

- **Financial investment and sustainability:** What financial investments and funding mechanisms are available to support the accessibility of sports facilities? The meeting will examine how accessibility can be integrated into public funding, renovation and construction programmes, procurement procedures and longer-term approaches to the financial, social and environmental sustainability of sports facilities.
- **Common understanding of accessibility:** What should be understood by an accessible sports facility? Particular attention will be paid to the distinction between formal compliance with accessibility standards and effective accessibility in practice, including the ability of persons with different disabilities to access, use and participate in activities safely, independently, affordably and with dignity.
- **Next steps and partnerships:** What should the next steps be, and which partners should be involved? The meeting will consider opportunities for cooperation between public authorities, researchers, sports organisations, facility owners and operators, architects, disability organisations and athletes, including possible follow-up work on mapping, benchmarking and the development of indicators.

Speakers

The online meeting will be co-chaired and co-moderated by Prof. Dr. Remco Hoekman, Director of the Mulier Institute and Céline Guth, Senior Project Officer at EPAS.

Speakers will include researchers, policy-making experts, para-athletes and other experts in this field as well as the wider sports movement.

Draft agenda

9.30-9.40am **Opening words**

Remco Hoekman, Director, Mulier Institute

Céline Guth, Senior Project Officer, EPAS, Council of Europe

Introduction to the purpose of the meeting and specific focus on accessibility for persons with disabilities

9.40-10.20am **Session 1: What do we mean by an accessible sports facility?**

- Policy and research overview: Remco Hoekman, Director, Mulier Institute
- Sport sector perspective: Raymon Blondel, Director, European Paralympic Committee
- Practical sport and stadium perspective: Michael Rice, Operations Manager, AccessibAll (online)

10.20-10.30am **Questions and answers**

Moderated discussion with participants, including athletes, disability organisations, facility operators and policymakers.

10.30-10.45am **Break**

10.45-11.25am **Session 2: Mapping and indicators for policy purposes**

- Finnish LIPAS database representative: Tapani Laakso, Project Manager, Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Jyväskylä
- Local level perspective, Poland: Dr Adam Omorczyk, Sociologist and lecturer, Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education, Warsaw
- National level perspective, Ireland: Geraldine McTavish, 'Disability in Sport' Lead at Sport Ireland (online)

11.25-11.55pm **Examples of good practices and ongoing work**

Sharing examples, best practices and ongoing work from other countries (round the table and online participants).

- Kairis Ulp, Sports Data and Information Systems Expert, Founding member and former Head of the Estonian Sports Register (online)
- Sandro D. Araújo, Vice-President of the Portuguese Paralympic Committee (online)
- Caroline van Lindert, Mulier Institute, Netherlands (online)

11.55-12.20pm **Questions and answers**

Discussion about:

- *Indicators*
- *Policy relevance*

12.20-12.30pm	**Conclusions and next steps** *Remco Hoekman*, Director, Mulier Institute *Stanislas Frossard*, Executive Secretary of EPAS, Head of Sport Division, Council of Europe
12.30-14.00pm	**Lunch – Fer à Cheval, Palais de l'Europe**

Structure and practical arrangements of the webinar

The online meeting is scheduled to last three hours with a fifteen-minute break. As this is an online meeting, participants will be invited to pose questions through the chat function of the online platform to be asked to speakers at the end of each section.

The working language of the online meeting will be English.