

DISCKids Inclusion Guidelines for Disc Golf

A Practical Tool for Disc Golf Clubs

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Foreword

Inclusion is a highly topical issue in our society. We all want to, and should be able to participate equally in the various areas of life. This includes sport and therefore also the sport of disc golf. This guide is aimed at clubs and organisations to provide them with orientation and initial resources for ensuring inclusive practice in children's disc golf. This is an ongoing process that requires the commitment of many stakeholders. Every small step in this process makes our society fairer and more liveable for everyone. At this stage of the Erasmus+ programme and given the complexity of the topic of inclusion, the guide cannot offer any ready-made recipes. The guide shows possibilities, tools and strategies that can facilitate the entry into inclusive practices.

What is inclusion?

The term "inclusion" originally comes from the natural sciences. It assumes that a larger group also contains subgroups. In education and sociology, this refers to subgroups of people and their respective integration into society as a whole or an existing structure within it. In the inclusive sense, it is the form of integration that matters. It should be organised in such a way that equal participation is possible for everyone, meaning all aspects of life, from education to the world of work, leisure activities and the private sphere. This equal participation should be made possible for all people, regardless of physical and mental limitations, disadvantages or other individual characteristics. Inclusion is often mistakenly associated or equated with the integration of people with a disability. Although this is an important aspect of inclusion, it does not cover the entire spectrum of inclusion. Social disadvantages can arise due to various conditions. These are illustrated in the model of diversity dimensions and briefly mentioned here for a better understanding:

- Social background
- Physical and mental disability
- Gender and gender identity
- Generational diversity and age
- Religion and worldview
- Ethnic origin and nationality
- Sexual diversity and identity

Applied inclusion in sport means creating equal access for all people and thus to the positive effects on health and psyche. Unfortunately, the aforementioned characteristics form various barriers that can make access to sports programmes more difficult or prevent them altogether. The aim of inclusion in sport must therefore be to identify these barriers and use strategies to find solutions that remove or at least initially mitigate them.

Inclusion in children's disc golf

Disc golf has the potential to function as an individual sport for people with a wide range of abilities, even at a very young age. Due to its low physical and financial access thresholds, it is ideally suited for inclusive practice in order to develop attractive inclusive programmes.

The existing structural conditions faced by the interested club or organisation have a decisive influence on whether and how a disc golf offer can be designed to be inclusive. However, the benchmark for the feasibility of an inclusive programme is not necessarily a location that is barrier-free in every respect. Ensuring that certain otherwise disadvantaged groups of children also have access to disc golf activities is already a pioneering step towards inclusion. To make this possible, the creativity and flexibility of those involved is often required.

The aim of such an inclusive sports programme is first and foremost to enable the equal participation of children with as many different conditions as possible, who would not be able to participate without the provision of low-barrier conditions, i.e. would be excluded. Possible areas for inclusion in a youth disc golf programme are, for example

- Children with a history of migration
- Children from economically disadvantaged households
- Young people in the LGBTQIA+ sector
- Disabled children and young people
- Children and young people with mental or physical illnesses

The aspirations for inclusion appear high for some of these groups. However, inclusion is a process and the steps along the way already bring participation for the groups mentioned and therefore inclusion in the club. Even seemingly small steps can change a lot for the club's local society.

These guidelines are intended to encourage people to try out disc golf activities as a tool for a more inclusive and fairer world of sport and, on a small scale, to have a positive impact on other areas in the same social environment. The ideas and solutions on the way to an inclusive programme can be as individual as necessary. So far, there is no recipe for success for inclusive individual sport. The DISCKids Erasmus+ project is attempting to develop and implement practical solutions together with the participating clubs and associations.

Steps towards inclusive children's disc golf

Take stock

Regardless of whether it is an existing disc golf offer or a new offer is being developed, a first important step on the way to breaking down barriers is to take stock of the existing conditions. How inclusive is my club or programme already? What opportunities do we have to break down barriers? At the same time, existing strengths and potential can also be identified. For example, many club structures may already have resources from other projects, sports or people involved already have contacts or experience in inclusive areas. If this is the case, it is worth starting there and utilising the synergies. It would be ideal to document the current situation in order to visualise your own development and make potential development measurable. This way, inclusive development is not only dependent on those directly involved, but can also serve as an example for subsequent initiators. And finally, the positive results and development are also simply a reason to spread the word and celebrate them. The initial stocktaking can be organised as a workshop for several interested parties. Creating inclusive structures and then revitalising them can become a communal activity of club life and lead to a stronger club identity. Possible questions and approaches in the stocktaking process are, for example:

- What is your idea of inclusion and what is your experience with inclusion?
- Do you know of any projects or other programmes with inclusive aspects or have you even been part of them?
- What options do we already have to enable people to participate in the programme? (Barrier-free sports facilities, social tariffs, trainers who speak several languages...)
- Which aspect of inclusion fits your organisation's profile or interests you the most?
- Are there specific ideas for inclusion within the organisation that have not yet been put on the agenda?
- Are there contact persons, possibly experts, in the club or in the neighbourhood who could support you in inclusion issues or processes?

Set goals

Once the current situation and future inclusive potential have been recorded, the first goals can be set. It should now be clear whether and how the club can get involved in inclusive disc golf for children. When setting initial goals, it is not important to formulate overly ambitious plans. Goals that are too ambitious can quickly lead to frustration if achieving them seems like a huge task and a long way off. Small initial goals with a manageable time perspective are more likely to maintain motivation if they can be achieved through small,

successful steps. Formulating goals in terms of weeks or a few months is recommended on the path to inclusion. Initial goals could be, for example

- Reaching new target groups (communication and contact with children's and youth leisure facilities, refugee shelters, interest groups)
- Intro events that focus on specific inclusive aspects (e.g. at primary schools, neighbourhood sports festivals, youth facilities with a special focus)
- Cooperation with organisations that are already active in an inclusive area (youth welfare office, state sports association, disabled sports associations, other sports clubs)
- Develop improved methods through training or by involving experts in the inclusive field (e.g. visiting clubs that already work inclusively in other sports, organising exchanges of experience)

These are just a few examples of initial goals. In conjunction with the inventory, this can be the start of the process towards inclusive services.

The 3 aspects of inclusive club life

The implementation or transformation towards an inclusive sports programme in everyday life is a process that is based on various factors. In a schematic representation, three aspects of inclusive club work can be depicted in an "inclusion triangle":

- Creating your own inclusive culture
- Establishing the right inclusive structures
- Developing appropriate inclusive practices

The success of inclusive work depends on the balance and interaction of the three aspects. This means that there will always be changes on the three levels during the process. These adjustments, as often as they may seem necessary, are positive and important for the entire inclusive process.

Creating an inclusive culture

The club culture defines our interaction as players in a sports club. Our shared values are experienced and lived within this culture. It serves as orientation at all levels of a programme and thus represents fundamental values. Inclusion can become a building block of this shared culture. To this end, it is very helpful to consciously communicate this cultural orientation of the club. It would be ideal for the success of inclusive club work if everyone involved knows, shares and disseminates these common values and goals. Questions that should be asked on a regular basis in the process of creating an inclusive club culture are:

- How do we want to build and establish an active welcoming culture?
- Do we communicate our openness to inclusive work both internally and externally and do we give the topic enough space?
- Is there a consensus among all those involved within the organisation on the idea of how inclusion will become part of our activities?
- Do all people who take part in the programme feel comfortable and like equal participants?
- Do we see the challenges of inclusion as a positive opportunity to create a fairer and better offer for all?
- Does the inclusive orientation of the programme also reflect the common goal of the association in practice?

These exemplary questions can promote the process of creating, developing and adapting an inclusive culture, but are only meant as suggestions at this point.

Establishing inclusive structures

In order to build and then establish inclusive structures in addition to the existing ones, no additional fundamental effort is actually required. Your organisation has certainly distributed responsibilities, the infrastructure and the corresponding processes for running the programme, which could only be adapted to the special requirements of inclusion at this stage. Here are a few suggestions and examples of how this adaptation could take place:

- Define a dedicated person responsible for the area of inclusion. This person can act as a point of contact for everyone and keeps an eye on the topic and its implementation. He or she can thus relieve the others and also intervene in a controlling capacity.
- Establish permanent inclusive information channels for external communication in order to reach people outside the existing audience directly. It is important to use communication that is as barrier-free as possible.
- Further training and sensitisation of those carrying out the work. Inclusion should be a permanent topic.
- Remove physical barriers at the locations of the offer. This can take many forms and does not have to be limited to the classic wheelchair ramp. One example would be to create individual changing facilities to facilitate the participation of religious or queer people, for example.
- Design inclusive communication with the participants. Does everyone use language that is understandable and non-exclusionary?
- Create a collection of resources for everyone involved. What has been learnt and achieved should always be documented. This allows you to efficiently build on what you have already learnt
- Not every offer can work for everyone. It is therefore also part of an inclusive process to recognise and accept the limits of your own offer.

- Part of the structural organisation could also be to create separate spaces for the needs of individual groups. For example, it can make sense to create programmes that offer a "safe space" and thus cater more closely to individual needs.

It is also important here that it is not about perfect and complicated solutions. Every organisation creates the inclusive structures that work for them and are sustainable.

Develop your own inclusive practices

Inclusive practices can emerge on the basis of culture and structure. In the area of inclusion, these are increasingly geared towards the needs of all participants and can therefore require flexibility in the implementation of the programme. Here are some suggestions for club practice:

- Modular training structure, i.e. exercises that are easily adaptable and geared to the different individual abilities of the children.
- If it turns out that exercises or games are not accessible or motivating for everyone, it makes sense to temporarily divide or reorganise the group according to their abilities and inclinations. This experience can lead to a fundamental flexibility in dealing with heterogeneous groups.
- Ensure respectful and non-discriminatory behaviour at all levels, both when addressing participants and among the children themselves. This is where the moderation and role model function of the instructors is required.
- Establish lasting relationships with other clubs that already have experience with inclusion and organise an exchange of experiences. This experience does not have to relate to disc golf. Much can be transferred and adapted, especially in the area of children's sports.
- Look around for opportunities for further training, for example with specialist organisations (such as disabled sports associations or clubs) or with educational institutions for children and young people
- Find out about funding opportunities for inclusive work and the development of structures by associations and foundations and get help with applying for funding.

Inclusion is also not a stand-alone topic in everyday practice and takes place in the interplay of many factors and in the context of society as a whole. It is desirable to anchor the topic permanently in the implementation of the programme and to constantly adapt it to the conditions.

Closing words

With this guide, we want to introduce clubs to inclusion as an enriching opportunity. Integrating inclusion into your club's disc golf operations can be more of an opportunity for growth and development in the area of children's and youth sports in your club than an overwhelming task. It may even lead to the creation of a children's section or make the existing one more diverse. In any case, an inclusive path leads to more participation of children in sport in general and disc golf in particular. It is above all the small steps and patience that make a major contribution to the development of disc golf youth and inclusive club life. It may take some courage to go down this path. But it is worth it for an inclusive sports world in which all children are welcome.

Sources

- Boban & Hinz, Index for Inclusion (2003)
- Index for inclusion in and through sport, German Disabled Sports Association and National Paralympic Committee (DBS) e.V (2014)
- 4 Layers of Diversity according to Gardenswartz, L. and Rowe, A. (2003)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007)

Appendix 1: Simplified Inclusion Guidelines: 12 Tips for Inclusive Disc Golf in Clubs

Inclusion here means: All children are included, with and without a migration background, from economically disadvantaged households, with disabilities, with mental and physical illnesses and LGBTQIA+ areas. Disc golf is a sport for everyone.

Inclusion for children in the area of play is easy to implement. There is little need to be afraid of doing something wrong. Children are self-motivated to play and meet each other on the basis of their respective abilities. Through the diverse aspects of play and socialising, they get involved and become part of an inclusive group.

Setting up a culture for inclusion

1. Invite everyone, in simple visual language.
2. Give the idea of inclusion space in your club.
3. Use it as an opportunity to expand your offerings and spread the word in your neighbourhood.
4. Determines whether the different children feel comfortable in the group.

Establishing a structure for inclusion

5. Create a playing and training venue in the club as a (protected) meeting place
6. Select or appoint a person responsible for the inclusive aspects of the programme.
7. Make an initial plan for the design of the offer. Keep it simple.
8. Get started and continue writing the plan with your experience.

Developing a practice for inclusion

9. Follow the DISCKids channels or those of your country's Disc Golf Association for varied and age-appropriate training content
10. Adapt the practices to the needs of your children and coaches
11. Creates practices of language-independent communication, such as greeting rituals.
12. Talk about inclusion and disc golf and get in touch with other clubs, schools and social institutions.