



UPSTREAMING

END USER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



This publication has been produced by partners of the Upstreaming; Boosting Disability Mainstreaming in Sport 622782-EPP-1-2020-1-DE-SPO-SSCP has been co-funded as part of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



INTRODUCTION

The importance of sport as a cultural driver towards enhancing the social inclusion and equal opportunities of people with a disability is undeniable and the positive effects on overall wellbeing of sport and health enhancing physical activity is also widely accepted. However, the opportunities for people with a disability to participate in a Mainstream environment are still limited. Discrepancies exist between the ideological support for Mainstreaming at the Sport Policy level and sport provision level. Mainstreaming involves providing both disability sport specific opportunities and access to sport in a mainstream environment. However, structural inefficiencies in the EU sports system have led to ineffective or unbalanced sports provision to people with a disability. The gaps in the system can be characterised by a lack of; a) knowledge transfers around Mainstreaming, b) information and modelling on effective Mainstream structures, c) resources & materials on effective Mainstreaming programmes, d) involvement of the grassroots & end user development of Mainstreaming, e) exchange networks. This can be attributed to an imbalance between the financial resources, knowledge bases and experience levels which exist in national sports organisations on the topic of Mainstreaming and an overall lack of opportunity for international, cross border collaborations. In order to improve access to truly Mainstream environments at the European and local level, the Upstreaming project works with organisations from both disability and mainstream sport to circumvent barriers through a) Strategic development of Mainstreaming b) Knowledge Transfers around the topic of Mainstreaming c) Engagement in and Promotion of Mainstreaming. In order to achieve this, the Upstreaming project will establish an understanding of the Mainstreaming landscape, engage with local stakeholders, develop and implement



a sequence of development workshops and create sustainable Mainstreaming exchange mechanisms. In order to deliver this project SPIN Sport Innovation has brought together a knowledge rich and committed partnership including; German Tennis Federation, European Paralympic Committee, Para Tennis Löhner TC, and the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN A NUTSHELL

The Upstreaming project seeks to (1) add value at the practical level to give interesting examples of how mainstreaming can be implemented successfully, (2) to assist mainstreaming managers (those responsible for mainstreaming at the national or regional level) in navigating the implementation of mainstreaming and to (3) bring together a group of those people to exchange and train each other and to contribute to the growth of the mainstreaming network. The topic of mainstreaming is complex and varied especially when considered at the European level, the Upstreaming project seeks to take a practical approach, drawing parallels where possible and highlighting existing resources with the express purpose of helping mainstreaming managers the task of mainstreaming implementation.

END USER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

In response to the imbalance between true mainstreaming and disability sport specific provision it is clear that there needs to be better consultation and engagement at the Grassroots level and for the 'End Users' of Mainstream programmes. This approach will provide insight which can improve operational and programme initiatives and move Mainstreaming away from an emphasis on top-down governance and towards bottom-up influenced decision making.

This has been implemented through a series of Engagement sessions which will seek to serve two purposes a) engage grassroots stakeholders to understand their perception of Mainstreaming as 'End Users' b) promote Disability sport and Mainstreaming to sport stakeholders at the local level.

In order to deliver (a), End Users were interviewed, with players given the chance to provide their experiences of Mainstreaming from the grassroots structure, giving their reflective experiences and providing input into how from an athlete's perspective the system can be improved. In addition, coaches were interviewed with insights gathered from the personnel who are often the 'conduit' between policy initiatives & governance structures and application. All End User interviews were included into the 'Mapping Document'.

With regards to delivering (b), Engagement sessions were organised around the German National Blind Tennis Championship, Löhne. Stakeholders from local sports clubs, local sports federations and national sport federations attended the event and were exposed to Visually Impaired Tennis for the first time. Using the event as a 'hook' to bring local and influential stakeholders together, this was the basis of forming a Community of Practice Pilot around Visually Impaired Tennis in Löhne.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor. Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. The domain is not necessarily something recognized as “expertise” outside the community.

In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other; they care about their standing with each other. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems, in short, a shared practice.

A needs analysis for establishing a community of practice (COP) starts with identifying what is already available and present in a certain local community and context. In this way, awareness of current local resources and assets is created, the use and connection of these resources towards the local COP activities can be identified, and the COP stakeholders ensure to recognize and value the existing resources inside the local community.

PILOT: VISUALLY IMPAIRED TENNIS LÖHNE

Tennis Club Löhne wanted a new approach to engagement. They felt they had tried many of the traditional approaches and found that they were often in the loop of needing specific help of resources for specific events or activities. This leaves them in a dynamic of need-ask, when it comes to obtaining resources from influential stakeholders in the area. This in turn leads to long term development being restricted, due to most of their limited capacity, focus and energy being spent on gaining what they need in the short term.

Therefore, the opportunity was taken to rethink the relations between the club and their stakeholders, with the intent of building a system which would benefit the end user the most over the long term. It was felt that by piloting a community of practice around the development of Visually Impaired Tennis in Löhne it could give a longer-term perspective, and also, foster a better understanding between stakeholders and to encourage shared ownership.



THE PLAN: VISUALLY IMPAIRED TENNIS LÖHNE

The planning began by identifying the key stakeholders with whom Tennis Club Löhne identified as either (a) already supporting the topic of VI Tennis or (b) vital to the development of VI Tennis. Eight stakeholders were identified, including athletes, coaches, local sponsors, regional tennis administration, regional inclusion in sport administration, and the national tennis administration.

These stakeholders were invited to attend the Blind Tennis National Championships in Löhne in December. The first objective was to allow the stakeholders to experience Blind Tennis. The sport was showcased, with the best players and coaches attending. For some this was the first time that they had seen the sport live, although they were responsible for administering it.

The plan was to use the event as a springboard for the development of a community of practice. To begin simply and slowly but to form the basis of a long term cooperation around the topic of Visually Impaired Tennis ins Löhne. A one hour

workshop was planned, with the core objectives of (a) introducing the stakeholders to each other (b) finding common ground (c) committing to meet again.

These objectives were simple yet clear, without overloading the stakeholders with information or commitments. The focus was placed on building a longer-term community around Visually Impaired Tennis, meeting at eye level, rather than extracting resources from those around the table. The long-term intention is to put Tennis Club Löhne in a position of being one committed stakeholder amongst many, rather than the lone activist for Visually Impaired Tennis. This affect expected is that the provision of Tennis to the target group will benefit from the stability and opportunity created by this system.

The pilot is in its infancy. There is cautious optimism that this approach could boost the long-term development of the sport in the area and could have the replicability to be spread to other localities. The group has agreed to meet again, hosted by the regional sports administration, where they have committed to establishing some key actions, upon which they will work together to achieve.

The idea behind the community of practice approach is to allow the actors at the local level to dictate how the community develops in a collaborative and iterative manner, rather than planning centrally and dictating the progression. Below is attached the workshop which was developed and delivered to kick off this part of the engagement strategy. This is one hour format with a small group, working to basic but clear objectives to forge a group in the first instance.



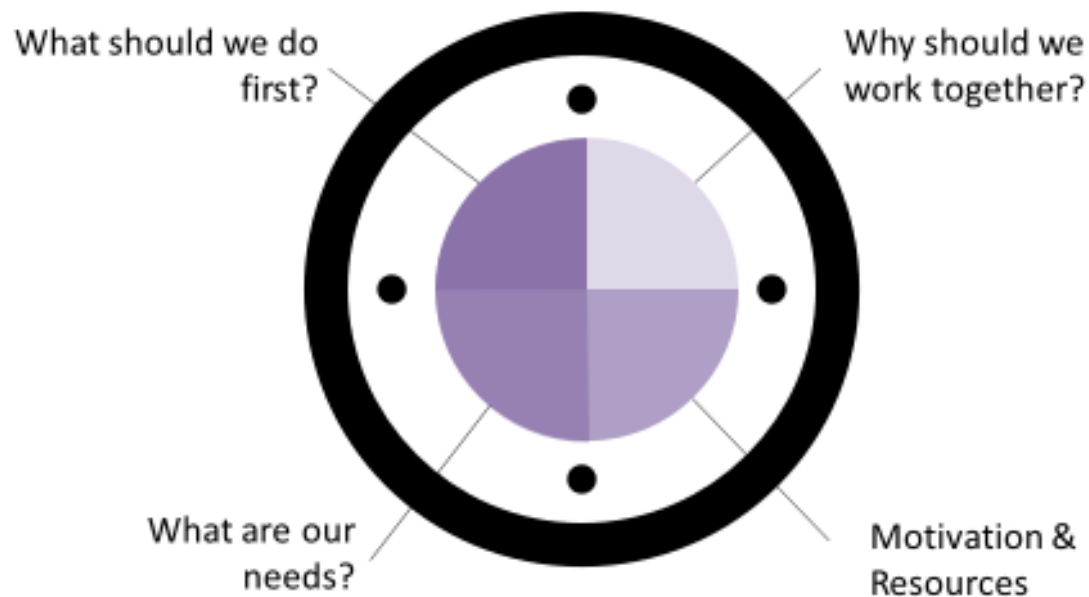
UPSTREAMING

ENGAGEMENT SESSION //
GERMAN BLIND TENNIS
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS,
LÖHNE, 03 DEC 2022

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



ENGAGEMENT SESSION



60 Minutes:
4 x 15 Minute
Sessions

Aim:
To create a very first
step in an organised
way towards a
common mission

Mission:
Improving blind
tennis' participants
experience in Löhne

1. Why should we work together?

Task:

- Take the Rubik's cube, and as a group try to solve just one side
- When you've solved one side, move onto the next and try to solve that
- 10 Minutes

Reflection:

- What did you learn?
- Discuss and write down the key outcomes
- 5 Minutes

Reflection points:

- Working to resolve one side means you need to undo the work you have previously done.
- Working together with a clear common vision and strategy is much more effective.
- Compromising on your own agenda means there is a benefit to the vision as a whole.
- Utilise the competencies, expertise and resources you have the group to your advantage – having someone who can read Braille is a help 😊



2. Motivation & Resources

Task:

- Take 2 pieces of paper
- On one list the motivation of each person in the group to contribute (min 2 per person)
- On one list the resources (experience, skills, networks, funding etc) each person can and is willing to contribute (min 2 per person)
- 10 Minutes

Reflection:

- How aligned/diverse are your motivations?
- Are you surprised by the resources you have available?

Reflection points:

- Motivation: Recognise that there is often a difference between 'organisational motivation' and 'personal motivation'
- Resources: Recognise that there is a need to openly talk about the resources which you are **willing** to contribute. i.e. the local sports shop is not willing to contribute equipment, whereas they would actually prefer to provide mentorship to the club about building their own revenue streams.



3. What are our needs?

Task:

- The first step to making progress is to understand each others' needs
- We are motivated, and we have resources. What are the things which hinder my capacity to contribute?
- Each person provides these hinderances in the form of a 'need'. i.e. I need more information about Blind Tennis to fully understand how I can contribute.
- 10 Minutes

Reflection:

- Go through the needs and mark them to say which can be solved within the group and which can't



4. What should we do first?

Task:

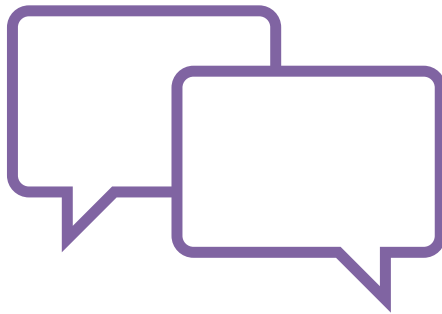
- We know that in principle we want to work together. We know we have motivation and resources. We know what we don't have or what is stopping us.
- What should be our very first step together? Don't try to find the answer now, just agree on what the step is and what you will need to achieve it.
- 10 Minutes

Reflection:

- Write down the very first step and have all participants sign the paper as a commitment to making that step together.



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We want to hear from you!!

**We are building a network around
the topic of mainstreaming.
Connect, and let us know your
thoughts at...**

**[www.parasports.world/
upstreaming](http://www.parasports.world/upstreaming)**