FROM PASSIVE INCLUSION TO ACTIVE INCLUSION

MICRO-GUIDE FOR COACHES AND FACILITATORS

1. INTRODUCTION

In many sports activities, inclusion is understood as simply allowing everyone to participate. However, being present does not always mean feeling included. Participants may attend sessions without interacting, expressing themselves, or influencing what happens during the activity.

Active inclusion means creating environments where all participants feel valued, heard, and able to contribute. It encourages ownership, collaboration, and leadership, especially among individuals who may face social, cultural, or language barriers.

This training pill helps coaches and facilitators move from “participation only” to meaningful engagement by using practical and adaptable strategies in sports sessions.

KEY MESSAGE

“INCLUSION IS NOT ONLY ABOUT ACCESS. IT IS ABOUT INFLUENCE, BELONGING, AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING..”



Co-funded by the European Union

EQUAL PLAY

EQUAL PLAY

FROM PASSIVE INCLUSION TO ACTIVE INCLUSION

2. PASSIVE VS ACTIVE INCLUSION

Passive Inclusion	Active Inclusion
Participants are present	Participants actively contribute
Coach makes all decisions	Decisions are shared
Some voices dominate	Everyone has opportunities to speak
Inclusion is symbolic	Inclusion is meaningful
Same activities for everyone	Activities are adapted when needed

3. WHY SPORT MATTERS

Active inclusion helps participants to build confidence and self-esteem; to develop communication and teamwork skills and feel respected and represented. It also creates stronger social connections and increase motivation and long-term participation.

For migrant participants, active inclusion can also support:

- Language learning
- Social integration
- Cultural exchange
- Sense of belonging within the community



Co-funded by the European Union

EQUAL PLAY

FROM PASSIVE INCLUSION TO ACTIVE INCLUSION

4. PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR COACHES

Strategy 1 – Co-create Group Rules

Instead of presenting all rules, involve participants in creating them together.
Examples:

- "What helps everyone feel respected during training?"
- "What should we do when someone makes a mistake?"

Benefits:

- Shared responsibility
- Greater respect for rules
- Increased participation

Strategy 2 – Rotate Roles

Give participants different responsibilities during sessions.
Possible roles:
Team captain; Warm-up leader; Equipment manager; Motivator; Fair play observer;Translator/support buddy.

Benefits:

- Encourages leadership
- Gives visibility to quieter people
- Reduces hierarchy within the group



Co-funded by the European Union

EQUAL PLAY

EQUAL PLAY

FROM PASSIVE INCLUSION TO ACTIVE INCLUSION

Strategy 3 – Use Peer Support

Create mixed pairs or small groups where participants support each other.
Examples:

- Pair local and migrant participants
- Create “buddy teams”
- Use cooperative challenges instead of elimination games

Benefits:

- Builds trust and friendships
- Reduces isolation
- Encourages communication

Strategy 4 – Offer Choices

Allow participants to make small decisions during activities.
Examples:

- Choosing teams
- Selecting music
- Voting for a game variation
- Choosing difficulty levels

Benefits:

- Creates ownership
- Increases engagement
- Respects diversity of preferences and abilities

Strategy 5 – Celebrate Different Strengths

Recognize more than athletic performance.
Highlight:
Teamwork; Creativity; Encouragement; Respect; Communication; Effort

Benefits:

- Creates more equitable participation
- Helps participants feel valued beyond physical ability



Co-funded by the European Union

EQUAL PLAY

EQUAL PLAY

EQUAL PLAY

FROM PASSIVE INCLUSION TO ACTIVE INCLUSION

5. PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

	Passive inclusion	Active Inclusion
Warm-Up Activity	Everyone follows the same warm-up led by the coach.	Different participants lead stretches or exercises from their own sporting or cultural backgrounds.
Football Session	The coach creates teams and gives instructions. Some participants rarely touch the ball or speak.	Participants help create team rules, rotate captain roles, and discuss strategies together after the game.
Conflict Resolution	The coach solves all conflicts immediately.	Participants are encouraged to express feelings, listen to each other, and propose solutions together.



Co-funded by the European Union

EQUAL PLAY

FROM PASSIVE INCLUSION TO ACTIVE INCLUSION

6.REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR COACHES

After each session, coaches can reflect on the following questions:

- Did everyone actively participate?
- Who spoke the most? Who spoke the least?
- Did participants make decisions during the session?
- Did I adapt activities to different needs?
- Did participants collaborate with people outside their usual group?
- Did anyone take a leadership role today?

FINAL MESSAGE

ACTIVE INCLUSION IS NOT A SEPARATE ACTIVITY; IT IS AN APPROACH THAT CAN BE INTEGRATED INTO EVERY SPORTS SESSION. SMALL CHANGES IN COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION, AND DECISION-MAKING CAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' SENSE OF BELONGING AND EMPOWERMENT.
WHEN PEOPLE FEEL THAT THEIR VOICE MATTERS, INCLUSION BECOMES REAL.



Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.