

E-BOOK

EDUCATIONAL
AND
INFORMATIVE

BULLET
POINT
LISTS

WHY
AND HOW
TO BECOME
A CONSULTANT

english version



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CHAPTER 1

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, ROLE, AND STEREOTYPES

The concept of gender is one of the most debated topics in social and human sciences, as it represents a fundamental category for understanding how societies function and the power dynamics that develop within them. Often confused with the concept of biological sex, gender is actually a social construct that goes beyond an individual's physical and anatomical characteristics. It refers to the set of expectations, behaviors, and roles attributed to a person based on the sex assigned at birth.

This distinction between sex and gender is crucial because it helps to understand that many of the differences attributed to men and women do not stem from innate biological traits but rather from social norms that have solidified over time. The scholar John Money was among the first to clearly differentiate the two concepts in the 1950s, highlighting how gender is shaped by cultural and educational factors. In the following decades, numerous researchers further explored this distinction, including Ann Oakley (1972), who emphasized how gender is learned through the process of socialization and varies depending on historical and geographical contexts. The idea that gender is a social construction was developed in the 1970s by feminist studies and later expanded upon by gender studies and queer theory. Judith Butler, in her influential work *Gender Trouble* (1990), argued that gender is not a stable and fixed identity but rather a set of performative acts repeated over time. According to this perspective, gender is a product of social and cultural interaction rather than an intrinsic

characteristic of an individual. Butler critiques the notion that there is a "natural" way of being a man or a woman and asserts that gender is continuously constructed through language, behaviors, and social expectations.

Beyond theoretical studies, numerous empirical researches have demonstrated how gender norms influence people's lives from early childhood. According to a UNESCO study (2020), children receive different encouragements based on their gender from their first years in school: boys are more often encouraged to explore technical and scientific activities, while girls are encouraged to develop relational and caregiving skills. These conditioning factors directly impact educational and career choices, as well as participation in sports and career opportunities in the field. The social construction of gender is not a static phenomenon; rather, it changes over time. For example, while women were excluded from most sports competitions in the 19th century, today, more and more female athletes are achieving significant milestones in disciplines that were once considered exclusively male. However, gender equality has not yet been fully achieved, as shown by data on lower visibility and reduced funding for women's sports compared to men's sports (European Commission, 2018). Another fundamental aspect to consider is that gender is not limited to a simple binary opposition between male and female. Many cultures around the world have long recognized the existence of non-binary or fluid gender identities. For instance, in some Indigenous communities of North America, the concept of *Two-Spirit* has existed for centuries, referring to individuals who embody both masculine and feminine traits. Similarly, in India, the hijra community is recognized as a third gender with a long historical and cultural tradition.

In this context, the current debate focuses on the need to recognize and respect the diversity of gender identities, particularly in public policies and sports institutions. The inclusion of transgender and non-binary athletes in competitions has sparked numerous discussions and has led many international federations to revise their regulations to balance competitive fairness with human rights.

Understanding gender as a social construct is therefore essential for deconstructing stereotypes and promoting a more inclusive society. This approach does not mean denying the biological differences between sexes but rather recognizing that many existing inequalities stem from cultural factors rather than natural predispositions. Sports, as a highly visible and influential field, represent one of the key battlegrounds for overcoming stereotypes and promoting a fairer model of gender participation and representation.

1.1 Gender and Social Construction

The concept of gender emerged in the 1950s and 1960s within the fields of psychiatry and social sciences, thanks to the pioneering work of scholars such as John Money and Robert Stoller. They distinguished between sex, understood as the set of an individual's biological characteristics, and gender, which represents the social and cultural identification of a person within the traditional categories of male and female. This distinction paved the way for more in-depth studies on how gender is constructed and internalized throughout a person's life.

Gender expectations become particularly evident from childhood through education, school, and the media. According to Sandra Bem's studies (1981), gender socialization begins in the early years of life, when children are exposed to differentiated behavioral models. Girls are often encouraged to develop caregiving and cooperative skills, while boys are stimulated towards competition and leadership. This pattern was also confirmed by Connell (2002), who analyzed the concept of "hegemonic masculinity," referring to the way society rewards behaviors considered typically masculine while relegating feminine traits to a subordinate position.

According to UNESCO data (2020), gender stereotypes influence children's academic performance and educational choices. Girls are often encouraged to pursue humanities disciplines, while boys are steered toward STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). These dynamics are also reflected in the world of sports, where disciplines considered "masculine" receive greater investments and visibility. These socialization processes do not only manifest through formal education but also in daily behaviors and childhood play. Research conducted by Thorne (1993) has shown that, from an early age, children internalize gender norms through peer interactions, developing habits and behavioral models that reinforce gender segregation. In group play, for instance, physical and competitive activities are more frequently associated with boys, while symbolic play and caregiving activities are encouraged among girls. This social construction of gender is not a static phenomenon but is subject to continuous transformations based on cultural changes and historical dynamics. For example, while in the 19th century, the idea of a woman practicing sports like soccer or boxing was unthinkable, today, there are professional women's leagues in many disciplines once considered exclusively male. However, the gender gap persists, and women in sports continue to

receive less recognition and funding than men. According to a report by the European Parliament (2022), only 30% of professional athletes in Europe are women, and media coverage of women's sporting events remains significantly lower than that of men's sports.

Another aspect to consider is the influence of technology and new media in shaping gender identities. With the advent of social networks and digital platforms, gender representation has taken on new forms, often reinforcing but also challenging traditional stereotypes. Some recent studies (Gill, 2007) have highlighted how images presented by digital media can contribute both to perpetuating rigid gender roles and to promoting more fluid and diverse models. In this context, the concept of *gender mainstreaming*, introduced by the United Nations in the 1990s, represents a concrete attempt to integrate gender perspectives into all public policies, including those related to sports. The goal is to promote greater equity and ensure that opportunities are not influenced by gender stereotypes or discrimination. Understanding gender as a social construct is therefore essential for deconstructing stereotypes and promoting a more inclusive society. This approach does not mean denying biological differences between sexes but rather recognizing that many existing inequalities stem from cultural factors rather than natural predispositions. Sports, as a highly visible and influential field, represent one of the key battlegrounds for overcoming stereotypes and promoting a fairer model of gender participation and representation.

1.2 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Gender identity refers to an individual's perception of themselves in terms of gender. It may align with the sex assigned at birth (as in the case of cisgender people) or differ from it (as happens with transgender and non-binary individuals). According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2015), gender identity is a fundamental aspect of individual development and can emerge at a very early age, between 2 and 4 years old. This awareness strengthens over time through personal experiences and social influences, leading individuals to identify with a specific gender or to recognize themselves outside the traditional categories of male and female.

Gender identity is closely linked to the concept of gender expression, which refers to how an individual communicates their gender through clothing, body language, hairstyle, and other aesthetic and behavioral elements. While it is often assumed that gender expression should align with the sex assigned at birth, many cultures have historically recognized and accepted gender identities beyond the traditional binary framework. For example, in some Indigenous communities of North America, the *Two-Spirit* identity exists, referring to individuals who embody both masculine and feminine traits and have historically held significant social and spiritual roles. Alongside gender identity, sexual orientation refers to emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction toward other people. The main categories of sexual orientation include heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and asexuality. However, Alfred Kinsey's research (1948) introduced the concept of a continuum in sexual orientation, demonstrating that sexual attractions and behaviors are not strictly binary but can exist along a fluid spectrum.

Over the years, numerous studies have highlighted the impact of society on the acceptance of gender identity and sexual orientation. According to the ILGA-Europe report (2021), levels of discrimination vary significantly depending on cultural and political contexts, with some countries implementing progressive legislation for the legal recognition of transgender and non-binary people, while others maintain restrictive and discriminatory policies. In the world of sports, issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation have also become subjects of debate. The inclusion of transgender athletes in competitions has led many international sports federations to redefine their regulations. For example, the International Olympic Committee published new guidelines in 2021, removing arbitrary limits on testosterone levels and urging federations to evaluate cases individually based on scientific evidence and principles of fairness and inclusion. Another important issue is the discrimination LGBTQ+ athletes may face in sports environments. According to research by Outsport (2019), 54% of LGBTQ+ individuals have experienced discrimination or exclusion while participating in sports, leading to negative effects on psychological well-being and active participation in athletics. This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of role models: openly LGBTQ+ athletes remain a minority, and their visibility is often hindered by social pressures and fears of professional repercussions.

To combat these forms of discrimination, many sports organizations and associations are promoting awareness and training initiatives. Campaigns such as *Rainbow Laces* in the United Kingdom and *Play with Pride* in the United States aim to create more inclusive sports environments, encouraging respect for gender diversity and sexual orientation.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not merely individual concepts but social issues that deeply influence the structure of opportunities and personal experiences. Understanding and valuing this diversity is essential to fostering a more equitable environment, not only in sports but in all aspects of social life.

1.3 Gender Roles and Their Implications

Gender roles refer to the set of social norms and expectations that define which behaviors, activities, and personality traits are considered appropriate for men and women. These roles are deeply rooted in the culture and traditions of a society and can vary significantly over time and across different regions. For example, while in some cultures the female role has historically been associated with the domestic sphere and family care, in others, women have held leadership and power positions in political and religious domains. In the context of sports, gender roles have profoundly influenced people's participation in various disciplines. Sports such as football (soccer), rugby, and weightlifting have historically been considered masculine, while artistic gymnastics, dance, and synchronized swimming have been associated with femininity. According to a European Parliament report (2022), women represent only 30% of professional athletes in Europe, despite the growing interest in women's sports. This gender division in sports is not accidental but rather the result of a long and complex historical process. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, women were strongly discouraged from participating in sports, often based on pseudoscientific justifications that physical activity could compromise their fertility or their so-called "natural" fragility. The modern Olympic Games, founded by Pierre de

Coubertin in 1896, initially excluded women, and it was only in 1900 that they were allowed to compete in disciplines deemed more "appropriate," such as tennis and golf. It was not until 2012 that all participating countries included at least one woman in their Olympic delegations.

This evolution demonstrates how gender roles in sports have changed over time but also highlights the persistence of inequalities. For instance, a UNESCO study (2021) found that in sports media, female athletes receive significantly less coverage than their male counterparts, with attention often focused on their physical appearance rather than their athletic performance. Additionally, many women's sports receive less funding and sponsorships, making it more difficult for female athletes to build sustainable professional careers. Beyond media and economic aspects, gender roles also affect dynamics within teams and sports organizations. Coaches and sports executives tend to be predominantly male, which can limit female representation and the creation of more inclusive environments. According to a report by the Women's Sports Foundation (2020), only 25% of coaches for women's teams in U.S. universities are women, while the percentage is even lower for men's teams. Another relevant aspect concerns the perception of athletic abilities. Deeply ingrained gender stereotypes often lead to the assumption that men are naturally stronger and faster than women, without considering physiological differences and training opportunities. In reality, athletic performance depends on multiple factors, including access to resources, the quality of training, and social support. Recent studies have shown that in some endurance disciplines, such as open water swimming and ultramarathons, women can compete on equal footing with or even outperform men, challenging established biases (Hunter et al., 2020). In the sports world,

overcoming gender role stereotypes requires inclusion policies and concrete actions to ensure equal opportunities. For example, FIFA has introduced regulations to guarantee pay equity between men's and women's football, while many federations are working to increase female representation in leadership positions.

Gender roles, therefore, are not just a theoretical issue but have tangible implications for the lives and careers of athletes. Overcoming these barriers requires a collective effort from institutions, media, businesses, and sports communities to create a fairer and more inclusive environment, where every individual can express their full potential without being constrained by gender-based expectations.

Conclusion

The concept of gender, in all its complexity and multidimensionality, cannot be reduced to a simple distinction between male and female. As we have seen, gender is the result of a social construction process that develops through education, cultural norms, media, and institutions. Its influence extends to all areas of life, from individual development to social relationships, from the workplace to sports participation. Sports, in particular, represent one of the most emblematic fields where gender stereotypes are manifested and perpetuated. The historical segregation of sports disciplines, disparities in opportunities and funding, and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles demonstrate how the path toward gender equality is still long. However, in recent decades, significant progress has been made thanks to the efforts of athletes, activists, and institutions that have

challenged existing norms and promoted a fairer and more inclusive approach. Gender studies and research in the social sciences have highlighted that overcoming the barriers imposed by gender roles is essential not only to ensure equal opportunities but also to build fairer societies that embrace diversity. Deconstructing stereotypes, promoting equal representation, and ensuring inclusive policies are essential steps to guarantee that every individual can fully express their potential without being limited by arbitrary social constraints.

Addressing gender issues in the sports context means recognizing the value of inclusion and diversity while promoting policies and practices that give everyone, regardless of gender, the opportunity to participate and compete on equal terms. Breaking down gender barriers in sports is not just a matter of social justice but also an opportunity to enrich the sports experience itself, valuing talent and abilities beyond rigid and outdated categorizations. In the following chapters, we will delve deeper into the evolution of gender studies, European policies on equality, and the role of sports institutions in addressing inequalities, providing practical tools to promote a fairer and more inclusive sports culture.

CHAPTER 2

GENDER STUDIES FROM THE 1970s TO TODAY

Gender studies is an interdisciplinary field that officially emerged in the 1970s within the realms of social sciences, philosophy, history, and psychology. This field of research developed with the goal of analyzing gender not merely as a biological difference between men and women but as a social construct influenced by cultural, political, and economic norms. The focus on gender stereotypes, inequalities, and discrimination has led to the emergence of a vast academic literature that has challenged power structures and opened new perspectives for understanding identities, roles, and social dynamics. Over the years, gender studies have influenced numerous fields, including education, law, politics, and, of course, sports.

2.1 The Origins and Influence of Feminism on the Birth of Gender Studies

Gender studies have their roots in the feminist movements of the second half of the 20th century, particularly in the so-called "second wave" of feminism, which took place between the 1960s and 1980s. While the first wave focused primarily on women's civil and political rights, such as voting rights and access to education, the second wave expanded the scope of analysis, challenging gender norms, patriarchy, and the distribution of power in society. Authors such as Simone de Beauvoir, with her renowned work *The Second Sex* (1949), had a tremendous influence on subsequent studies. De Beauvoir famously stated that "one is not born a

woman, but rather becomes one," emphasizing that gender is not a natural condition but the result of a social construction process. This concept provided a fundamental theoretical basis for future gender studies, pushing researchers to investigate how society shapes the identities and roles of men and women. During the 1970s and 1980s, key figures such as Betty Friedan, bell hooks, and Adrienne Rich further expanded feminist thought, incorporating an intersectional perspective that considered not only gender but also race, social class, and sexuality as crucial factors in shaping individual and collective experiences. Intersectionality, a concept developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), allowed for a better understanding of how different forms of discrimination overlap and intertwine, creating unique experiences for women belonging to socially marginalized groups. For example, a Black woman may face discrimination both due to sexism and racism, experiencing two forms of oppression that reinforce each other. This approach led gender studies beyond the simple male-female dichotomy, embracing a broader and more complex vision of power relations. Meanwhile, feminist studies also influenced public policy, leading to the introduction of mechanisms such as *gender mainstreaming*, a concept officially adopted by the European Union in the 1990s to integrate gender perspectives into all government policies and decision-making processes. This approach contributed to promoting equity initiatives, such as gender quotas in parliaments and corporate boards, as well as gender equality education programs in schools.

Another central aspect in the development of gender studies was the debate on women's representation in the media. Scholars such as Laura Mulvey, in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), introduced the concept of the *male gaze*, highlighting how women are often represented in media from a male perspective

that objectifies them and relegates them to subordinate roles. This type of analysis had direct implications in sports, where female athletes are frequently portrayed more for their physical appearance than for their athletic achievements, reinforcing limiting stereotypes. In recent decades, feminist theories and gender studies have continued to evolve, with the emergence of postmodern feminism and new digital technologies that have expanded the ways in which gender is discussed and analyzed. Movements such as *MeToo*, which emerged in 2017, have brought issues related to sexism, gender-based violence, and the need for deep structural changes in institutions back to the center of public debate. The influence of gender studies has thus extended far beyond the academic world, shaping laws, social policies, and cultural movements. In the field of sports, this has led to the revision of regulations and the adoption of inclusion policies aimed at ensuring greater equity between male and female athletes, reducing gender discrimination, and increasing opportunities for all.

2.2 The Birth of Queer Theory and the Expansion of Gender Studies

In the 1990s, gender studies underwent a further evolution with the emergence of *queer theory*, a field of research that questioned the rigidity of gender and sexuality categories. Scholars such as Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble* (1990), introduced the concept of gender performativity, arguing that gender is not a fixed reality but rather a set of repeated acts and behaviors that construct and reinforce specific identities. According to Butler, gender is a social phenomenon shaped by cultural and linguistic practices that are learned and reproduced over time.

Queer theory challenges the essentialist view of gender, which sees it as an innate and immutable characteristic, instead proposing a more fluid and dynamic model. This approach has had a significant impact on gender studies, pushing research beyond the traditional male-female dichotomy to include a broader range of gender identities and sexual orientations. Michel Foucault, in his work *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (1976), was another key reference for queer theory, analyzing how power and discourse shape the construction of sexual identities. Foucault highlighted how sexuality has historically been regulated through social, religious, and scientific institutions that have imposed rigid and limiting norms. His analysis paved the way for a critique of disciplinary practices that exclude or marginalize individuals who do not conform to heteronormative models. The contributions of queer theory have not been confined to academia but have had significant political and social repercussions. They have influenced debates on LGBTQ+ rights and have increased awareness of the need for inclusive policies for transgender and non-binary individuals. In the legal field, the growing recognition of non-conforming gender identities has led many countries to revise their laws regarding gender recognition, marriage equality, and protection against discrimination.

Another fundamental aspect of queer theory is its application in media and popular culture analysis. Scholars such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Jack Halberstam have examined how gender and sexuality are represented in films, literature, and mass cultural products. Through this critical lens, queer theory has helped expose dominant heterosexual norms and promote more inclusive and diverse narratives. In the sports context, queer theory has raised questions about gender categories in competitions. Traditionally, sports have been organized according to a rigid binary division

between men and women, but this structure is increasingly being challenged by transgender and non-binary athletes who demand recognition and respect for their identities. The participation of transgender athletes in competitions has sparked intense debate, leading many sports federations to revise their regulations to ensure greater inclusivity. In particular, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) updated its guidelines in 2021 to allow transgender athletes to compete without necessarily undergoing surgical interventions, instead basing eligibility on principles of fairness and inclusion. This change represents a significant step forward in the fight against discrimination in sports, but the debate remains open and continues to be analyzed by scholars and activists.

Finally, queer theory has contributed to a redefinition of masculinity and femininity in sports. It has challenged the notion that strength, endurance, and competitiveness are inherently masculine qualities and has promoted a more nuanced view of athletic abilities. This has led to greater acceptance of gender diversity in sports and the creation of more inclusive spaces for all athletes, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

2.3 Gender Studies and Their Impact on Sports

Gender studies have had a significant impact on the world of sports, highlighting the disparities in treatment between men and women and the challenges faced by individuals who do not conform to the binary gender system. For decades, sports have been considered a predominantly male domain, with roles and opportunities heavily influenced by gender stereotypes. However,

thanks to academic research and civil rights movements, recent years have seen substantial progress toward greater equity and inclusion. One of the main contributions of gender studies in the sports sector has been the demonstration that gender disparities do not stem from insurmountable biological differences but rather from social and cultural structures that limit opportunities for female athletes. Research conducted by institutions such as UNESCO and the European Parliament has shown that women in sports receive less media visibility, lower funding, and reduced support compared to their male counterparts. According to a European Commission report (2022), only 4% of global sports coverage is dedicated to women's sports, while men's sports continue to dominate the media and commercial landscape. Another key issue emerging from gender studies concerns access to sports for young girls. The lack of role models, combined with a culture that still associates certain disciplines with masculinity, discourages many girls from engaging in sports. Recent studies have shown that dropout rates among adolescent girls are significantly higher than those of their male peers, often due to social pressures, lack of family support, and discrimination. In response to this issue, many international organizations have launched programs to promote gender equality in sports, encouraging female participation across all disciplines.

Gender studies have also raised critical questions regarding the regulation of transgender and non-binary athletes' participation in competitions. Traditionally, sports competitions have been organized according to a strict binary division between men and women, excluding those who do not fit into these categories. However, the growing recognition of non-binary and transgender gender identities has led many international sports federations to revise their policies. In 2021, the International Olympic Committee

(IOC) updated its guidelines, stating that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for all sports and that each federation must develop inclusive regulations based on principles of fairness and respect for human rights. The challenges related to the inclusion of transgender individuals in sports remain a subject of global debate. On one hand, there are arguments supporting the need to ensure equal opportunities for all athletes, regardless of their gender identity. On the other hand, some critics argue that competitions should be based on biological criteria to maintain fairness among participants. Gender studies have helped dismantle many discriminatory arguments, demonstrating that sports performance depends on numerous factors, including training, nutrition, and available resources, rather than exclusively on innate physical differences.

Another fundamental aspect of the impact of gender studies on sports is the growing attention to language and media representation of athletes. Historically, women in sports have often been described more for their physical appearance than for their athletic abilities, with disproportionate attention to details such as clothing or personal life. Gender studies have contributed to raising awareness among journalists and industry professionals about the need for fair and respectful representation of female athletes, emphasizing their sporting achievements rather than unrelated aspects. Finally, gender studies have promoted the development of inclusion and diversity policies within sports institutions. Today, many international federations and national organizations are adopting strategies to ensure greater gender equity in leadership and decision-making roles. However, the path toward full equality is still long and requires continuous commitment from institutions, sports organizations, and the media. The impact of gender studies on sports has led to significant changes, but many challenges

remain. The fight for gender equality in sports is far from over, and it will be crucial to continue monitoring progress, promoting new research, and developing effective strategies to ensure fair and inclusive access to all sports disciplines.

2.4 The Future of Gender Studies: New Perspectives and Challenges

Although gender studies have already brought profound changes to society, they continue to evolve and face new challenges. Gender dynamics are constantly shifting, and current research aims to explore not only the persistent inequalities between men and women but also issues related to fluid and non-binary gender identities, intersections with other forms of discrimination, and the impact of digital technologies on the construction of gender identities. One of the most debated topics concerns the future of gender inclusion in institutions and public policies. While many countries have introduced laws to protect gender equality, structural discrimination persists in various fields, including the labor market, education, and sports. New research focuses on analyzing the most effective measures to reduce the gender pay gap, promote greater female representation in leadership roles, and ensure that inclusion policies are effectively implemented and monitored. In the sports sector, the future of gender studies intersects with ongoing discussions about the participation of transgender and intersex athletes in competitions. Sports regulations are still evolving and often vary from federation to federation, creating an inconsistent regulatory framework. The International Olympic Committee has recently adopted a more inclusive approach, but the need to balance fairness and inclusion remains an open challenge. Future research will focus on

developing parameters that ensure the rights of all athletes are respected while avoiding discrimination or unfair advantages in competitions.

Another emerging aspect is the impact of digital technologies on gender issues. Social media, video games, and streaming platforms are redefining how gender is represented and perceived. On the one hand, these tools have provided greater visibility to gender-related issues and created safe spaces for LGBTQ+ communities. On the other hand, new technologies have also exacerbated phenomena such as online sexism, cyberbullying, and misinformation about gender issues. Future studies will analyze these dynamics and develop strategies to combat digital discrimination while promoting a more ethical use of technology. Intersectionality will remain a key concept in the future of gender studies. Analyzing the interconnections between gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, and disability is essential for developing effective inclusion policies. Research is increasingly shifting toward a global approach, considering the diverse experiences of individuals based on their cultural and geopolitical contexts. International organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union are investing in research projects and awareness programs to address gender inequalities on a global scale.

Finally, the future of gender studies will see a stronger collaboration between academia and institutions, with a focus on the practical application of theoretical frameworks. The goal will be to transform acquired knowledge into concrete tools for social change through legislative reforms, educational programs, and awareness initiatives in the media and sports.

In conclusion, gender studies will continue to play a central role in shaping the future of modern societies. While many battles have been won, significant challenges remain that require ongoing commitment to ensure a fairer and more inclusive future for all individuals, regardless of their gender or identity.

Conclusion

Gender studies have profoundly redefined the way we understand identity, power relations, and social inequalities. Since their emergence in the 1970s, these studies have contributed to dismantling stereotypes and oppressive structures, promoting a more fluid and inclusive vision of gender and sexual identities. One of their greatest contributions has been to demonstrate that gender is not an immutable biological fact but rather a social and cultural construct that varies over time and across historical contexts. By analyzing gender norms, inequalities, and exclusion mechanisms, gender studies have provided both theoretical and practical tools to promote equality in various fields, including education, labor, politics, and sports. Despite the progress made, numerous challenges remain. The fight for gender equality is still hindered by cultural, political, and economic barriers that limit opportunities for women and LGBTQ+ individuals. The ongoing battles for civil rights, pay equity, and the recognition of non-binary gender identities highlight that the debate on gender's role in society is more relevant than ever. In the world of sports, gender studies have raised awareness of the discrimination faced by female athletes and transgender athletes, yet many unresolved issues persist. The regulation of transgender athletes' participation, the reduction of the gender gap in funding and media coverage of

women's sports, and the fight against gender stereotypes in athletic disciplines all require further research and concrete action.

Looking ahead, gender studies will continue to be a crucial reference point for inclusion policies and cultural transformations. As society evolves and new technologies emerge, the field of gender studies will expand further, addressing new challenges such as sexism in digital media, algorithmic discrimination, and the role of artificial intelligence in perpetuating gender stereotypes. It is essential that the discussion on these issues does not remain confined to the academic sphere but is translated into concrete actions at institutional and social levels. Educating new generations on gender equality, ensuring fairer workplaces and educational environments, and promoting inclusive policies in sports are just some of the objectives that must be pursued in the coming years. Ultimately, gender studies represent a dynamic and continuously evolving research field capable of profoundly influencing our lives and social structures. Their significance lies not only in critiquing existing inequalities but also in providing concrete tools to build a fairer, more equitable, and inclusive world for everyone.

CHAPTER 3

EUROPEAN POLICIES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE GENDER GAP IN EUROPE

In recent decades, the European Union has implemented a series of policies aimed at promoting gender equality across all sectors of society, including sports. Gender disparities in sports manifest in various ways: from lower female participation in competitive activities to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, as well as the limited media visibility of women's sports. This chapter will explore the main European policies on gender equality, analyzing the measures adopted to reduce the gender gap in sports and the challenges that still need to be addressed.

3.1 The Main European Policies on Gender Equality

The European Union has long recognized the importance of promoting gender equality as a fundamental principle. As early as the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the principle of equal pay between men and women was established, but it was through the evolution of European directives that more effective policies were developed. Over the years, gender equality has become a priority for European institutions, with an integrated approach aimed at eliminating inequalities in all areas, from sports to the labor market and political representation. European strategies are based on key principles such as *gender mainstreaming*, which integrates a gender perspective into all policies and decision-making processes, and legislative measures designed to combat discrimination.

Some of the main regulatory instruments include:

- Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: An EU action plan aimed at reducing the gender gap in economic, political, and social spheres. This strategy identifies key areas of intervention, including the inclusion of women in traditionally male-dominated sectors, the prevention of gender-based violence, and the elimination of the gender pay gap.
- European Charter for Women's Sport (EWS): Promoted by the European Parliament, this charter aims to improve opportunities for women in sports by increasing financial support and ensuring greater inclusion. It serves as a key document for adopting more equitable and inclusive sports policies, with a focus on training, leadership, and representation.
- Gender Equality Action Plan in Sport (2022-2025): An initiative encouraging sports federations to implement equity policies and monitor progress through specific indicators. This plan includes dedicated funding for projects that promote female participation and measures to incentivize the involvement of women in leadership roles within sports organizations.
- Directive 2006/54/EC: Related to equal treatment between men and women in employment and work, also applicable to the sports sector. This directive has been crucial in ensuring that women in sports have access to the same rights, opportunities, and salaries as their male

counterparts.

- EU Strategy for LGBTQI+ Rights 2020-2025: This strategy aims to protect and promote the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals, including those related to sports participation and the fight against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. The inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals in sports competitions remains a highly debated issue, and the EU is working to ensure greater equity in access to sports for all.

Beyond these regulations, the European Union actively collaborates with international organizations such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the International Olympic Committee to develop common policies that enhance gender equality in sports. The Council of Europe, in particular, has adopted specific recommendations to encourage women's participation at all levels of sports activities, from athletes to coaches and federation leaders. The European Commission funds numerous projects through the Erasmus+ Sport program, supporting initiatives that promote gender equality and combat discrimination in sports activities. These projects include educational programs to raise awareness among coaches and sports managers about gender issues and initiatives aimed at encouraging girls to pursue careers in sports, challenging the stereotypes that still limit their opportunities. Furthermore, the recent approval of the Paris Declaration on Gender Equality in Sport represents another significant step forward. Signed by numerous EU member states, this declaration reaffirms the commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination and actively promoting gender equality policies in sports. Key measures proposed include increasing funding for women's sports,

promoting inclusive leadership policies, and adopting guidelines to improve the representation of female athletes in the media.

Despite these important advances, challenges remain. The implementation of European gender equality policies varies significantly among member states, with some countries adopting strong reforms while others struggle to implement effective measures. For this reason, the EU continues to closely monitor progress, promoting the adoption of best practices and encouraging the exchange of experiences between countries. European policies for gender equality in sports are therefore a crucial element in building a fairer and more inclusive system. The path toward equality is still long, but with continuous institutional commitment and collaboration with key stakeholders in the sports sector, it is possible to reduce the gender gap and ensure equal opportunities for all athletes, regardless of gender.

3.2 The gender gap in sports in Europe: data and analysis

Despite regulatory progress, the gender gap in sports remains a significant issue. Data collected by the European Commission and organizations such as UNESCO show that:

- Women represent only 37% of registered athletes in European sports federations.
- Female presence in sports governance roles is below 20%.
- Media coverage of women's sports events is less than 10% compared to men's.
- The pay gap between male and female athletes is still

significant, with some disciplines showing differences exceeding 50%.

The causes of this disparity are multiple, ranging from cultural stereotypes to reduced funding for women's sports. The perception that certain sports are "male" or "female" continues to influence access opportunities for female athletes, limiting their professional growth. Beyond general data, it is important to analyze the situation in specific sports disciplines. For example, in team sports such as football, volleyball, and basketball, men's teams receive significantly greater financial support than their female counterparts. UEFA, for instance, has recently increased funding for women's football, but the gap with men's football remains enormous: the men's Champions League awards up to €2 billion in prize money, whereas the women's Champions League stops at around €24 million. Another relevant statistic concerns women's presence in leadership roles. According to a study by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), less than 10% of European sports federations have a female president. Additionally, only 14% of high-level team coaches are women, a figure that demonstrates how difficult it is for women to access leadership positions in sports. The gender gap also affects career opportunities after competitive sports. Many former female athletes struggle to enter the field of sports management, as key positions are often assigned to former male athletes. The lack of training programs and support for women aspiring to managerial careers in sports further sustains the gender imbalance. Another crucial factor is the media representation of women's sports. According to a report by the Women's Sport Trust, women's competitions receive less than 4% of total sports media coverage in Europe. Additionally, when women's sports are covered, media attention often focuses more on athletes' physical appearance than on their performance. This

narrative contributes to reinforcing harmful stereotypes and reduces the appeal of women's sports for sponsors and investors.

Despite these obstacles, there are positive signs. Events such as the Women's Football World Cup and the Olympics have recorded a significant increase in audience numbers and media coverage in recent years, demonstrating that public interest in women's sports exists when properly promoted. However, for the gender gap to be truly reduced, structural policies are needed to promote equal access, increase media visibility, and ensure greater economic support for female athletes. The EU and international sports organizations are working to address these disparities, but achieving concrete change requires constant commitment and action from governments, federations, media, and sponsors.

3.3 Strategies to Reduce the Gender Gap in Sports

To address the issue of gender disparity in sports, European institutions, sports federations, and non-governmental organizations have developed targeted strategies that operate on multiple levels: from promoting access to sports for girls to increasing female representation in leadership roles, and improving media coverage of women's sports events. One of the first steps to reducing the gender gap in sports is ensuring adequate financial support for female athletes and women's teams. The EU, through programs such as Erasmus+ Sport, has allocated funds to encourage women's participation in sports and support initiatives aimed at improving visibility and opportunities for female athletes. Many national governments have adopted similar policies, but funding distribution often remains unbalanced in favor of men's sports.

A positive example is the Women's Sports Equity Plan, adopted in France in 2021, which provides for a gradual increase in funding for the women's sector and incentives for companies that sponsor women's teams and athletes. In Spain, the Women's Sports Law introduced measures to ensure better working conditions and fairer contracts for professional female athletes. Another effective tool to ensure gender equality is the introduction of gender quotas in decision-making roles within sports federations and organizing committees. In countries such as Sweden, Norway, and France, legal requirements have been introduced to ensure a minimum female representation of 40% on the boards of major sports federations. At the international level, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has launched a program to increase female representation in Olympic organizing committees and the boards of affiliated federations. This type of measure helps rebalance decision-making power and breaks down barriers that prevent women from accessing leadership roles in sports.

Cultural Perception and Awareness Campaigns

The cultural perception of women's sports plays a crucial role in its growth and acceptance. Many awareness campaigns have proven effective in challenging gender stereotypes and promoting positive role models of successful female athletes.

Examples of successful campaigns include:

→ "This Girl Can" (United Kingdom) – An initiative launched by the British government to encourage women of all ages to practice sports, breaking down prejudices related to physical appearance and performance.

→ "Women in Sport" (European Commission) – A project aimed at

improving media representation of female athletes and stimulating cultural change in the media.

→ "Equal Play, Equal Pay" – Campaigns promoted by professional female footballers to demand equal pay compared to male colleagues, with support from organizations such as FIFPro and UEFA.

Enhancing Media Coverage of Women's Sports

Another key factor in reducing the gender gap is ensuring greater media coverage of women's sports events. Currently, less than 10% of sports broadcasts feature women's sports, with direct consequences on the popularity of the disciplines and sponsorship investments.

To counter this trend, several initiatives have been launched to improve the visibility of female athletes. For example, the European Union has proposed the adoption of media guidelines to encourage a balanced portrayal of women's sports.

Additional strategies include:

- Agreements with television networks, such as those signed in Germany and the Netherlands, to ensure the broadcast of women's sports events on national channels during prime time.
- Development of dedicated digital platforms, such as DAZN Women's Football, an exclusive channel for broadcasting women's football matches.

Closing the Leadership Gap in Sports

To bridge the gender gap in sports leadership, training and mentoring programs have been launched to support women aspiring to become coaches, referees, or sports executives.

Examples of good practices include:

- UEFA's "Women in Leadership" initiative
- UNESCO's "She Leads" program

At the national level, many countries are introducing incentives to encourage women's entry into technical and managerial roles, including:

- Scholarships for training courses
- Support measures to help women balance sports careers with family life

These initiatives represent significant steps toward reducing the gender gap in sports, but continuous efforts are needed to ensure lasting and structural change.

3.4 Future challenges and prospects

Despite the progress made in promoting gender equality in sports, many challenges persist, requiring targeted solutions and a constant commitment from institutions, sports federations, and civil society. The cultural change necessary to eliminate the gender gap in sports is a long and complex process that must be addressed through a systemic and multidisciplinary approach.

One of the main obstacles to gender equality in sports is the persistence of gender stereotypes, which influence the perception and participation of women in sports from childhood. Many sports are still perceived as either "male" or "female," limiting opportunities for girls and discouraging their participation in disciplines considered more "physical" or "competitive." A significant example is football: despite the growing popularity of women's football, many clubs and youth academies continue to primarily invest in the men's sector, leaving women's teams with fewer resources and growth opportunities. To overcome this gap, it is essential to work on school and sports education, promoting positive role models and breaking down cultural barriers that limit girls' choices. The gap in financial resources allocated to women's sports compared to men's sports represents another major issue. Many women's sports receive significantly less funding than their male counterparts, negatively impacting infrastructure, athletes' salaries, and the quality of technical and athletic training.

According to a European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) report, the budget allocated to women's sports in major European professional leagues is, on average, 60% lower than that of men's sports. This disparity is also reflected in sponsorship contracts, prize money for competitions, and career opportunities for professional female athletes. To close this gap, measures are needed to encourage investment in women's sports, including salary equity requirements and support policies for federations that promote gender equality. Despite the increase in female participation in sports, leadership and technical positions continue to be dominated by men. Currently, less than 20% of sports executives in Europe are women, and the percentage of female coaches in professional teams is even lower.

To address this issue, it is necessary to promote specialized training programs for women aspiring to leadership roles in sports, as well as introduce policies that encourage balanced representation on the boards of sports federations. The adoption of gender quotas, which has already been successfully tested in some European countries, could be an effective strategy to accelerate gender equity in decision-making roles. Another emerging challenge concerns the inclusion of transgender and non-binary athletes in sports competitions. In recent years, various federations have introduced regulations to govern the participation of transgender athletes, but the issue remains highly controversial and is often addressed with discriminatory regulations. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has recently updated its guidelines on the participation of transgender athletes, promoting an approach based on equity and inclusion. However, many international federations, such as World Athletics and FINA, have adopted restrictive regulations that limit the participation of transgender women in women's competitions. The debate remains open and requires further scientific studies and inclusive policies to ensure fair competition for all athletes. The underrepresentation of women's sports in the media is another significant barrier to gender equality. The lack of media coverage reduces sponsorship opportunities for female athletes and limits access for new generations of girls who could find inspiration in female sports role models. To overcome this barrier, European institutions are promoting media guidelines to ensure fair coverage of women's sports events. Additionally, the rise of specialized streaming platforms, such as DAZN Women's Football, is helping to increase visibility for women's competitions and create new opportunities for female athletes.

Looking to the future, it is crucial that gender equity policies in sports become an integral part of sports development strategies at

the local, national, and international levels. Institutions must collaborate with federations, businesses, and media to create a fairer and more sustainable ecosystem, where women have the same opportunities for success as men.

Future prospects include:

- Greater incentives for investment in women's sports, with dedicated funds and tax benefits for sponsors supporting female athletes.

- Reforms in salary policies, ensuring equal pay for professional male and female athletes.

- Introduction of educational programs in schools, raising awareness from childhood about gender equality in sports.

- Collaborations between institutions and media, to ensure a fairer representation of women's sports and female athletes.

The path to full gender equality in sports is still long, but through joint efforts and profound cultural change, it is possible to create a future where sports are truly accessible to everyone, regardless of gender or identity.

Conclusion

The gender gap in sports remains a significant challenge at both the European and global levels, despite regulatory progress and awareness initiatives. The analysis of European policies, strategies implemented, and persistent issues demonstrates that gender equality in sports cannot be achieved without a joint and continuous commitment from institutions, sports federations, and civil society. The measures adopted so far have contributed to

improving women's participation in sports, but the path toward true equity is still long. The disparities in funding, media visibility, and career opportunities for female athletes show that change must be structural and involve all levels of the sports system. The implementation of gender quotas in leadership roles, increased funding for women's disciplines, and the promotion of positive role models in the media are just some of the necessary actions to accelerate the equity process. Another crucial aspect is the fight against gender stereotypes that influence sports education from childhood. Schools and sports academies must play an active role in promoting an inclusive and bias-free environment, where boys and girls can freely choose the sport they wish to practice without cultural conditioning. At the same time, the growing focus on the inclusion of transgender and non-binary athletes shows how the concept of gender in sports is evolving, requiring new regulations that ensure fairness and respect for all identities. The debate on these topics will continue to grow in the coming years and will require an approach based on scientific data and human rights. Future prospects depend on the effective implementation of gender equality policies and the willingness to transform sports into a truly inclusive and fair environment. The active involvement of governments, sports organizations, businesses, and the media will be crucial in ensuring lasting change. Increased funding, the adoption of fairer policies, and greater media visibility for women's sports will be key to achieving a future where men and women have equal opportunities in the sports sector. Ultimately, gender equality in sports is not just a matter of social justice but also an opportunity to enhance talent and improve the sports sector as a whole. Investing in gender equity means creating a more competitive, healthy, and sustainable environment for future generations of athletes, strengthening the value of sports as a tool for inclusion, growth, and social development.

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BULLET POINT LISTS



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20 PRACTICAL TIPS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND COUNTER GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS

Administration

1. Use inclusive registration forms that do not require mandatory gender boxes unless strictly necessary.
 2. Allow members to freely indicate their name and gender identity, with space for non-binary or self-defined options.
 3. Organise shared spaces (changing rooms, toilets, showers) with neutral or private options whenever possible, to respect all gender identities.
 4. Provide uniforms, kits and materials without colours, styles or symbols that reinforce gender stereotypes (e.g., pink only for girls, blue only for boys).
 5. Collect and monitor gender-disaggregated data, including non-binary data where declared, to assess equal access to services and activities.
-

Governance

6. Ensure gender balance in the composition of the board and other decision-making bodies, with clear criteria for equal representation.
 7. Include statutory rules or internal guidelines that help guarantee access to leadership roles for underrepresented genders.
 8. Give visibility to female and non-male leaders through official channels, highlighting their role and experience.
 9. Regularly review decision-making processes to identify any hidden gender barriers or discriminatory dynamics.
 10. Encourage active participation by all members during assemblies and meetings, creating safe spaces that motivate everyone to speak up.
-

Communication

11. Use neutral and inclusive language in all communication materials (flyers, website, social media), avoiding words or phrases that reinforce gender stereotypes.
 12. Choose images that reflect gender diversity and avoid stereotypical roles or poses.
 13. Design merchandising, uniforms and promotional materials with colours that do not associate gender with specific shades (no default pink for girls, blue for boys).
 14. Share stories and examples of athletes who have challenged gender stereotypes to offer diverse role models.
 15. Develop short internal guidelines for staff, coaches and volunteers with practical tips for inclusive communication.
-

Standards of behaviour

16. Organise regular training sessions for staff, board members, coaches and volunteers on gender stereotypes and inclusion in sport.
 17. Adopt and widely share a clear code of conduct that defines respectful, non-discriminatory behaviour, including practical examples of what to avoid.
 18. Display posters and signs promoting respect, inclusion and gender equality in visible areas within sports facilities.
 19. Set up a confidential and accessible channel for reporting any discriminatory behaviour, verbal harassment or inappropriate conduct related to gender.
 20. Hold regular meetings or focus groups to discuss inclusion practices and gather suggestions for improvement directly from the community.
-

10 PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SPORTS INSTRUCTORS TO COUNTER STEREOTYPES DURING TRAINING.

Approach to athletes

1. Avoid assigning roles based on gender
Never assume that a player's gender determines their best position or role. Evaluate individual skills and let each athlete try different positions to develop multiple abilities and break limiting stereotypes.
 2. Maintain equal expectations and motivation
Give the same quality of feedback, encouragement and constructive criticism to all athletes. Avoid unconsciously pushing boys to be more competitive or girls to be more "caring"; treat everyone as equally capable.
 3. Promote mixed-gender teamwork
Design exercises, drills and games that require mixed pairs or groups. This helps normalise working together across genders and teaches mutual respect and trust on the field.
 4. Foster diverse leadership
Rotate team captains and group leaders regularly. Give leadership tasks to athletes who might not usually take the lead, especially girls and gender-diverse youth, to build confidence and visibility.
-

Approach to parents (for underage athletes)

5. Communicate your inclusion policy clearly
When welcoming new families, explain how your club or association promotes gender equality. Make sure parents understand that sexist jokes or stereotypes are not tolerated in your sporting environment.
 6. Provide awareness moments for parents
Hold short workshops or informal talks with parents to share why fighting gender stereotypes in sport matters and how they can support their children's freedom to choose and express themselves.
 7. Address inappropriate comments firmly
If a parent makes a remark that reinforces stereotypes (e.g. "my son should not play with girls"), respond calmly but firmly. Use it as an educational moment to explain your club's commitment to equality.
-

Communication

8. Use language that breaks stereotypes
Eliminate remarks that reinforce old ideas like “boys are stronger” or “girls can’t do this”. Praise athletes for their individual skills and attitude, not for matching gender expectations.
 9. Highlight diverse role models
Bring examples of successful athletes of all genders into your coaching. Share stories of women, men and non-binary people who have succeeded in various sports, showing that talent has no gender.
 10. Encourage free self-expression
Create an atmosphere where athletes feel safe to be themselves. Support boys who want to dance, girls who want to play rough sports, or anyone who wants to challenge traditional gender norms through their playing style or appearance.
-

5 GROUP SPORTS ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVENESS AND GENDER EQUALITY.

Activity 1 – Role Swap Challenge

Objective: Break stereotypes by letting players experience roles and positions they don't usually play, showing that skills are not tied to gender.

Participants: Minimum 8, maximum 30 athletes (works well with team sports like football, basketball, volleyball).

Duration: 30–45 minutes (can be adapted to fit one training slot).

Materials: Standard training equipment (balls, cones, bibs).

Description:

Divide players into small teams. Assign each athlete a role or position different from their usual one (e.g. forwards become defenders, goalkeepers play as field players). Run a normal drill or short match with the swapped roles.

After the activity, gather the group for a 5–10 minute debrief: ask how they felt in a new role, what they learned about themselves and others.

Trainer's Tip:

- Pay attention to any discomfort and support players positively through the switch.
- Emphasise that trying new roles is not about performance but about understanding, flexibility and breaking habits.
- Make sure the activity stays fun and safe — avoid forcing uncomfortable situations, especially with contact roles.

Activity 2 – Stories of Champions Circle

Objective: Inspire athletes to challenge gender stereotypes through real stories of athletes who broke barriers, encouraging reflection and discussion.

Participants: Small to medium group, ideal 6–20 people. Suitable for mixed-age teams.

Duration: 20–30 minutes.

Materials: Short printed stories or a tablet/phone to read them; optional whiteboard or flipchart for key points.

Description:

Gather the group in a circle. Read aloud 2–3 short stories of athletes (women, men, non-binary) who overcame gender stereotypes (e.g. a female football player in a male-dominated league, a male gymnast breaking bias, a non-binary athlete speaking up for inclusion).

After each story, ask open questions:

- What surprised you?
- Did this change how you see the sport?
- How can we apply this message in our team?

Write down keywords or commitments that come up and keep them visible for future sessions.

Trainer's Tip:

- Choose relatable stories connected to the age and sport of the group.
- Keep the tone informal and positive to encourage everyone to speak up.
- Be ready to manage any jokes or dismissive comments — remind everyone of respect and the purpose of the circle.

Activity 3 – Team Reflection Huddle

Objective: Create a safe moment for athletes to share experiences of inclusion or exclusion and build collective awareness about equality and respect.

Participants: Any size team, ideal 8–20 athletes. Suitable for all ages.

Duration: 15–20 minutes (ideal at the end of training or a match).

Materials: None needed. Optional: a notebook or flipchart to note key ideas.

Description:

At the end of a training session or game, gather everyone in a close circle (huddle). Invite each participant to share:

- A moment when they felt included and supported.
- A moment when they felt left out, treated differently or uncomfortable (if they want to share).
- One idea for making the team more inclusive.
- If the group is shy, the trainer can start with a personal example to break the ice. Encourage listening without interruptions and thank each athlete for sharing.

Trainer's Tip:

- Make sure the atmosphere is calm and private — choose a quiet spot away from parents or distractions.
- Remind everyone that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Take note of recurring issues to address them in future sessions or with the coaching staff.

Activity 4 – Equality Wall

Objective: Encourage athletes to express personal commitments and messages for gender equality, creating a visible sign of the team's shared values.

Participants: Any size group; works well with 10–30 athletes. Suitable for all ages.

Duration: 30–40 minutes (can be done at the end of training or during a special session).

Materials: Large sheet of paper or poster board, colourful markers, tape or pins to display it on a wall.

Description:

Prepare a large blank poster titled *Equality Wall*. Ask each athlete to write or draw one message about inclusion, equality or respect for gender diversity. Examples: *"Everyone can lead"*, *"Respect all choices"*, *"Girls and boys play the same game"*.

Once all messages are added, hang the Equality Wall in a visible space: changing rooms, clubhouse, hallway. Keep it up long term and invite new members to add their own contribution.

Trainer's Tip:

- Give examples to inspire creativity, but let messages be personal.
- Make sure everyone feels comfortable sharing — no one should be forced to write their name if they prefer not to.
- Take a photo of the finished wall to share (with consent) in team communications or on social media to show the club's commitment to equality.

Activity 5 – Mixed Skills Tournament

Objective: Show that team roles and performance depend on skills and teamwork, not on gender, by organising matches with mixed-gender teams and fair role assignment.

Participants: Medium to large group, ideal 12–30 athletes. Works best for team sports like football, basketball, volleyball.

Duration: 60–90 minutes (can be adapted to fit a standard training session).

Materials: Normal game equipment (balls, bibs, cones); optional scoreboard or small prizes.

Description:

Divide athletes into balanced mixed-gender teams. Explain that teams will decide player roles (e.g. captain, striker, defender) based purely on skills, interest or random draw — not on gender assumptions.

Organise short matches or mini-games. Between rounds, mix teams or switch roles to let everyone try different positions. At the end, gather everyone for a short reflection on what they learned about teamwork and bias.

Trainer's Tip:

- Monitor team discussions to prevent dominant voices from pushing gendered role choices.
- Celebrate fair play and effort over winning — highlight good examples of teamwork across all genders.
- Use this activity as a fun event: invite families or other teams to watch and reinforce the message of inclusion.

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WHY AND HOW TO BECOME A CONSULTANT



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What is LUB – Let Us Be

LUB – Let Us Be is a project created to support sports associations through a process of cultural transformation aimed at recognizing and overcoming gender-related stereotypes, discrimination, and exclusive practices.

The name itself — *Let Us Be* — carries a powerful message: every person has the right to be themselves, fully and freely, especially in sports, which too often become a place of judgment, pressure, and predefined roles. LUB is not meant to be a “quality label” or a set of rules to follow. Rather, it is an educational approach made of questions, observations, discoveries, and simple yet powerful tools that help sports organizations recognize what they are already doing, reflect on what could be improved, and envision freer, more inclusive, and happier environments for everyone.

Why This Approach Was Created

Sport has extraordinary educational potential: it teaches about the body, teamwork, commitment, and respect. But precisely because it plays such a central role in many people's lives — starting from a very young age — it can also become one of the places where gender stereotypes, exclusion, and imposed roles take root most easily.

How many times have we heard that “some sports are for boys” or that “a real athlete shouldn’t cry”? How many times have girls and boys felt out of place in locker rooms, tournaments, or

teams where their body, identity, or self-expression was judged?

LUB was born from these questions, and from a simple belief: it's not the fault of sports associations — but they do need concrete support to help them change.

That's why we created a process that is:

- not punitive, but supportive
- not standardized, but adaptable to each context
- not theoretical, but based on activities, tools, and everyday observations

LUB believes in change that is both possible and realistic, starting from what already exists.

The Key Role of Sports Associations

Sports associations are among the most active and vibrant educational environments within local communities. Often, they are the first place where children learn how to be part of a group, respect rules, and face themselves and others. They are spaces where deep relationships, habits, and shared imaginaries are built.

But they are also fragile spaces, often run by volunteers, driven by passion and goodwill, which don't always have access to ongoing training or updates on the educational and social aspects of their work. For this very reason, sports associations are the ideal protagonists of this journey. They should not be judged or changed from the outside, but supported with respect and expertise in a process of awareness and transformation. The LUB project acknowledges the strength of these

associations, enhances it, and provides practical tools, guided activities, tests, and training sessions to help each sports organization become more aware, fairer, and more welcoming.

Chapter 1 – Being an Agent of Change: Do You Know Your Potential Power?

Introduction

Change cannot be imposed. It must be supported. Planted. Cultivated.

This is the very heart of the learning and growth journey that leads to becoming a LUB consultant.

But before we even talk about tools, operational steps or proposed activities, it's important to pause and look inward: Who am I in this process?

What is my role?

What kind of change am I willing to promote — but also to experience personally?

Becoming a LUB consultant means accepting a responsibility: to walk alongside a sports community, helping it see its habits, unspoken rules, language, and spaces with new eyes.

It means connecting with people, truly listening to them, asking uncomfortable but constructive questions, supporting the initial discomfort of those who feel challenged — and at the same time, keeping the trust alive that another path is possible. This first chapter does not provide instructions, but rather a perspective.

It is the moment to mentally and emotionally prepare for the role you are about to take on. It's not about having all the answers, but about learning to ask the right questions, to observe without judgment, and to act with intention.

Being a LUB consultant is a form of everyday activism: quiet but radical.

It requires skills, of course, but also presence, empathy, consistency, and a desire to build authentic relationships. This chapter is the foundation upon which everything else will be built: not so much a theory, but a position, an attitude, a way of being in relationship with the people and systems we want to transform.

Do You Know Your Potential Power?

Those who approach the role of LUB consultant bring with them skills, experiences, and sensitivity — but above all, a transformative potential they often don't even fully realize. Speaking of power, in this context, does not mean exercising authority or having control over a process. It means recognizing the impact we can have on others and on the environment in which we work. Every word we choose, every question we ask, every gesture of listening, and every thoughtful reflection we share can trigger a deep process of change within a community. The power of a LUB consultant is gentle yet incisive: it does not manifest through imposition or absolute truths, but through the ability to observe, read signals, facilitate dialogue, and offer new perspectives.

We often underestimate our potential because we associate it with something extraordinary, visible, or “strong.” In reality, the most profound change happens quietly — in the details, in the consistency of daily work.

A timely word, a respectful silence, a well-placed question can do much more than a thousand rules. Being a LUB consultant means activating this power in a conscious, ethical, and constructive way. It means training yourself to be a presence

that does not impose, but supports; does not judge, but offers insight; does not demand, but opens up possibilities.

All of us, when placed in the right conditions, can be agents of change.

The first step is to recognize that we do have power — even if small — and to choose, every day, how to use it.

The Power of Influence

A LUB consultant is not meant to command, correct, or instruct from above. Their real power lies in influence. A form of influence that is exercised through presence, consistency, the way questions are asked, the way we listen, and how we share observations — respectfully yet transformatively. To influence does not mean to manipulate. On the contrary, it means creating subtle shifts in the way a person or a community perceives themselves and their practices — without force, without imposition. It's about accompanying others toward greater awareness, helping them discover something that was already there — just unseen.

The power of influence lies in the details:

- in how we welcome doubts and resistance,
- in our ability to make room without taking up all the space,
- in our communication style: never accusatory, always generative.

Sometimes, influencing means simply giving someone permission to change — by showing that it is possible, that it's not wrong, that nothing is lost by questioning a habit. In fact, something more fair, more authentic, and more respectful can

be gained.

This kind of influence is most effective when rooted in personal coherence.

If we, as consultants, ask associations to reflect and look at themselves with new eyes, we must also be ready to do the same.

Our influence is not measured by how much we “teach,” but by how much movement we are able to generate.

That’s why the power of a LUB consultant is never vertical, but horizontal, dialogical, and relational.

A Role Between Guidance and Mediation

A LUB consultant does not arrive with ready-made solutions or with the intention of “saving” a sports organization.

Their role is to guide and mediate — two subtle but essential actions for generating real and sustainable change.

To guide means to walk alongside, with respect and patience.

It means recognizing the other’s pace, and accepting that each association has its own history, its own resistance, and its own vulnerabilities.

A good consultant does not force change, but creates the right conditions for transformation to emerge authentically. They don’t push ideal models but work with what’s already there, with what can be done right away — even if it’s something small.

Guidance also means being present throughout the process, not just focusing on the outcome.

Sometimes, the real change won’t be visible at the end of the

consultancy, but will have only just been triggered. In these cases, being able to recognize signs of movement — even the smallest ones — is a key part of the consultant's role.

At the same time, the consultant plays a role as mediator. In many organizations, there are gaps between how the staff perceives things and what members actually experience. Or between what the group aspires to be and what they manage to achieve. The LUB consultant helps name these gaps, bring them to light without creating conflict, and foster dialogue and reconnection.

They don't take sides, they don't judge, but they facilitate encounters between different perspectives, creating a space where the community can reinterpret and reorient itself.

Being a consultant means holding together two complementary approaches:

- a steady but gentle presence — someone who supports without taking over
- an empathetic clarity — someone who can identify knots and suggest ways to untie them, without creating division

It's a delicate balance, but a necessary one. And its strength lies precisely in the ability to remain in the middle — neither intrusive, nor withdrawn.

Why We Need Agents of Change in Sport

Sport is one of the most formative environments in a person's life. From early childhood, it becomes a space where we learn rules, get to know our bodies, experience intense emotions, face competition, and build relationships. Precisely for this

reason, sport is never neutral. And those who work in or participate in it carry a great responsibility.

Everything that happens in a gym, a locker room, or a team setting speaks of values, role models, identities, and roles. Every space, every word, every image communicates — even when we don't realize it. And if we're not mindful, sport can become a place that excludes instead of includes, that reinforces stereotypes instead of overcoming them, that generates insecurity instead of empowerment.

That's why, now more than ever, we need agents of change: people who can look at sports environments with new eyes and foster, from within, the evolution of everyday practices. Not theorists, but professionals of the everyday. Not “gender experts” imposed from above, but facilitators who can guide educational processes within associations, starting from what already exists and what is lived every day.

An agent of change knows that:

- you can't change everything at once, but every step matters;
- inclusion is not a trend, but a right and an opportunity;
- transformation is born from dialogue and grows through trust.

Those who work in sport already hold a huge educational potential.

The role of the LUB consultant is to help recognize it and direct it toward creating freer, more respectful, and fairer environments for everyone — regardless of gender, identity, or personal history.

Where LUB Comes From: Sport, Differences, Inclusion.

LUB – Let Us Be was born from a real, widespread need observed in dozens of sports organizations, both large and small: the difficulty of recognizing and managing differences in a conscious, respectful, and fair way.

Many sports associations have good intentions, a strong educational spirit, and great passion. Yet, in everyday practice, phrases, behaviors, habits, regulations, and communication choices often emerge that — even unintentionally — reinforce gender stereotypes, create exclusion, and fuel insecurity.

Just think of:

- registration forms that only offer “male” or “female”;
- differentiated awards and roles in tournaments;
- jokes in locker rooms that discourage those who don’t fit a certain model;
- promotional images showing only boys in “leader” roles;
- activities strictly divided by gender.

LUB was created to address all of this — not with blame or judgment, but with practical tools to observe, reflect, and change.

The key word is inclusion. But not a formal, slogan-based inclusion — rather, one that truly reaches into the internal culture of an organization, working on language, structure, relationships, and implicit messages.

LUB offers a practical, respectful, and flexible approach, designed to support each organization along its specific path — without standardizing, but without compromising on core values:

- the right to full self-expression;
- respect for differences;
- the commitment to creating sports environments that are truly welcoming for all.

This is the heart of the LUB method: helping sports associations notice what often goes unseen, and then transform it into an educational opportunity.

And to do this, we need aware, trained, and empathetic consultants.

We need agents of change who know how to stay in the process, respect complexity, and act with responsibility and vision.

The 3 Key Words of a LUB Consultant

(Listen – Understand – Bridge)

The name *LUB – Let Us Be* is not just a title, but a message. An invitation to let each person fully be themselves. But it can also be read as an operational acronym: three simple words, three essential directions to guide the work of a consultant — always within an educational relationship based on trust and transformation.

L for Listen

(Listen actively and deeply, beyond words)

Listening is the starting point of every transformative process. A LUB consultant must know how to listen with attention, presence, and openness — not only to what is said, but also to what lies between the lines: silences, hesitations, glances,

emotions.

To listen means suspending judgment, setting aside expectations, and immersing oneself in the culture of a context in order to truly understand how it works.

It's an active and generative kind of listening — not just collecting data, but creating space for trust, dialogue, and growth.

U for Understand

(Truly understand what you observe, hear, and perceive)

Understanding goes beyond knowing.

It's the ability to make sense of the information collected, to connect signals, words, and relational dynamics. For a LUB consultant, understanding means deciphering resistance, recognizing where stereotypes are rooted, noticing the small mechanisms that reinforce exclusion.

Understanding also means looking within:

- Why am I reacting this way?
- What image am I forming of this context?
- What is my own story with regard to these topics?

Deep understanding is what makes any intervention coherent, respectful, and meaningful.

B for Bridge

(Build bridges, mediate, generate possibilities)

Being a LUB consultant ultimately means creating connections. Bridges between intentions and actions. Between different perspectives (staff, members, parents). Between what is currently being done and what could be done. Between today's reality and tomorrow's vision.

Building bridges does not mean “fixing” or “solving,” but rather facilitating dialogue, enabling new conversations, and supporting sustainable change.

A good consultant knows how to stay in the middle: not imposing, but guiding. Not dictating solutions, but creating the conditions to find them together.

The bridge is the symbol of LUB consultancy: solid, accessible, and bidirectional.

Listen. Understand. Bridge.

Three words. One approach.

A way of being that makes change possible.

Reflective Exercise 1 – LISTEN

How do I listen? What do I (not) listen to?

Listening is an everyday act that we often take for granted. But for a consultant, listening is a professional and relational act, full of responsibility.

This exercise helps you explore your listening style and become aware of what you're able to facilitate... and what you might risk missing.

↳ Instructions

Take 15–20 minutes in a quiet space, with pen and paper. Read the questions, reflect calmly, and write down your answers freely and personally. There's no score — just a chance to observe yourself from the outside.

1. **When a person or a group speaks, which aspects do I tend to listen to the most?**

- ☐ The words
- ☐ The tone of voice
- ☐ Gestures, body language
- ☐ Emotions
- ☐ Contradictions
- ☐ Other: _____

2. **Which “subtle signals” do I find hardest to pick up on?**

(for example: unspoken discomfort, a silence that lasts too long, a sentence that feels out of place...)

3. **Am I able to listen even to those who express ideas I don't agree with?**

What happens inside me when I hear stereotypical phrases or views that go against my values?

4. **How does my listening change if I already know the people I'm talking to?**

Am I more lenient? More rigid? More certain of my interpretations?

5. **Think of a recent situation in which you truly felt listened to.**

What did the other person do that made you feel that way?

6. **How can I improve my listening in the sports contexts I'll be working in?**

Write down at least two concrete actions you can try to implement.

Reflective Exercise 2 – UNDERSTAND

What do I truly understand? What do I interpret?

Understanding a context isn't just about gathering information — it's about making sense of what we observe, taking into account complexity, differences, and lived experiences. This exercise invites you to reflect on your mechanisms of understanding, how you interpret group dynamics and behaviors, and what unconscious filters you might carry with you.

↳ Instructions

Take 15–20 minutes to write. Don't focus on "correct answers" — focus on what helps you work better with the people you will meet.

-
1. **When I enter a new environment (a gym, a meeting, a training...), what's the first thing I notice?**

What catches my attention first?

-
2. **How much time do I give myself to truly understand an environment before suggesting an idea or offering feedback?**

And how much room do I leave for the possibility that I might have misunderstood?

-
3. **On which elements do I base my interpretations?**

- ☐ Verbal communication
- ☐ Observable behaviors
- ☐ Dynamics between people

- What I already know about the topic
- Personal impressions
- Other: _____

4. **Can I distinguish facts from my opinions?**

When I give feedback, can I say: *“I saw this”* — instead of *“I think you are...”*?

5. **What role do my personal values play in understanding others?**

Sometimes they help. Sometimes they act as filters. Can you recall an example where your values limited your understanding?

6. **Write a guiding phrase to keep in mind when you find yourself in a context that is hard to interpret.**

A phrase that helps you stay open, patient, and attentive.

Reflective Exercise 3 – BRIDGE

How do I build connections? How do I support change?

To be a bridge means to unite what is distant, to facilitate dialogue between different perspectives, between intentions and actions, between what is and what could be.

This exercise helps you recognize what kind of bridge you are, how you support processes, and what obstacles you might encounter along the way.

↳ Instructions

Take 15 minutes in a calm space. Reflect and write with honesty.

You don't need to have all the answers — just begin seeing yourself in the role of a bridge.

1. What kind of bridge do I feel like I am?

Write a metaphor or an image that represents you (e.g., “a suspended but solid bridge,” “a light walkway,” “a boat ferrying people from one shore to another” ...).

2. What personal qualities help me build bridges between people?

- ☐ Calm
- ☐ Clarity
- ☐ Empathy
- ☐ Ability to synthesize
- ☐ Neutrality
- ☐ Steady presence
- ☐ Other: _____

-
3. **In what situations do I tend to close off instead of building a bridge?**

What triggers me? What blocks me?

-
4. **How do I respond to strong resistance or to a viewpoint very different from my own?**

Can I stay in the relationship, or do I feel the urge to immediately “correct” it?

-
5. **Do you remember a time when you successfully brought together two opposing perspectives?**

What did you do?

What worked?

-
6. **What is the most important thing to remember when supporting a sports association through a change process?**

Write it as if it were a note to keep in your pocket every day.

Chapter 2 – Stereotypes to Break Down in Contemporary Society and Sports Environments

Introduction

Why talk about gender stereotypes in sport? Because sport has always been one of the spaces where differences are experienced, represented — and often reinforced.

Through rules, language, images, and roles, the sports world can become a mirror — and at times a megaphone — for the stereotypes that run through society as a whole.

When we say “*stereotype*,” we’re not just talking about outdated ideas or obvious phrases.

We’re talking about deep, automatic, cultural mechanisms that shape how we see people and their possibilities. In sports settings, these stereotypes act every day — often without being noticed: in registration forms, in assigned roles, in how spaces are managed, in educational expectations, in how an athlete is rewarded or valued.

In this chapter, we’ll dive into these mechanisms. We’ll use concrete examples, guiding questions, and practical reflections to help you recognize, name, and dismantle the most common stereotypes — especially gender-based ones.

Being a LUB consultant also means this: becoming aware of your own filters, so you can support sports associations in a transformation journey that is fairer, more equitable, and more respectful of differences.

What Is a Stereotype and Why It Affects Us All

A stereotype is a generalized and simplified idea that we attribute to a group of people — often without realizing it. It's like a mental label: it helps us judge a situation or a person quickly, but at the cost of complexity, truth, and individual uniqueness.

Stereotypes are not just “wrong ideas” we have about others. They are cultural patterns that run through us, that we absorb from a very young age, and that influence our behaviors, language, and choices — even when we see ourselves as open-minded and inclusive.

A stereotype is powerful because:

- it's automatic: it acts without us noticing;
- it's shared: passed on through media, school, family, sport;
- it's comforting: it makes us feel “in the right,” even when it excludes someone.

That's why no one is immune to stereotypes.

Even the most sensitive and progressive people may reproduce them; even the most inclusive environments can be affected by them.

Recognizing stereotypes doesn't mean feeling guilty — it means becoming aware of our mental shortcuts so we can begin to change them.

A good LUB consultant doesn't try to eliminate stereotypes by force but helps people see them, name them, and reduce their impact.

To do this, we need to start with a simple but powerful question:

👉 *What images come to mind when I think of “a good female coach”? A “real athlete”? A “strong girl”? A “gentle boy”?*

Stereotypes hide inside these mental images.

It's up to us, as consultants, to open them up, expand them, and transform them.

Gender Stereotypes in Sport: Examples, Phrases, and Typical Situations

In the world of sport, gender stereotypes often show up implicitly. They are “invisible norms” expressed through jokes, habits, and unspoken expectations.

They don't only appear in overtly sexist phrases, but in everyday details that become part of an association's culture and shape its overall atmosphere.

Many phrases commonly heard in sports — and even said by ourselves at times — reflect deep-rooted cultural patterns that separate what is “for boys” and what is “for girls.” Some real examples, gathered during workshops, observations, or interviews, can help us recognize them.

Here are some recurring gender stereotypes in sports:

- “Girls aren't as competitive as boys.”
- “Boys need to train more; girls are more fragile.”
- “Girls are better suited for individual sports.”
- “Football isn't a sport for women.”
- “A boy who does dance is too sensitive.”
- “Girls don't want to sweat too much.”
- “Girls need to stay calm during games, or they'll look bad.”
- “We put the girls as cheerleaders at the end of the

tournament so they feel involved.”

- “We offered boxing to girls too, but with slightly lighter rules.”
- “I never know how to act with that kid... It’s complicated.”
- “We chose softer music for the girls.”
- “Boys ‘make their presence felt’ on the field, girls need to learn.”
- “We put the girls in the office changing room — there aren’t many anyway.”
- “We added a girl on the flyer so we’re covered.”

And situations like:

- Female uniforms are tighter-fitting — even in sports where comfort should come first.
- Boys receive more technical feedback, girls get more generic praise (e.g., “well done”).
- In mixed classes, girls are often told to “watch out” for the boys — as if they’re less capable of protecting themselves or competing equally.
- Non-binary youth or those with non-conforming gender expression don’t know where to change or who to train with.
- Boys’ teams get the best training times.
- Girls’ tournaments have fewer prizes and visibility.
- Social media photos show only boys in action.
- There are no changing rooms for “other” or non-binary individuals.
- Boys get looser, more comfortable T-shirts; girls get tighter fits “because it looks nicer.”

None of these examples necessarily come from bad intentions. But they act as small, repeated messages over time that define roles and limits — excluding those who don’t fit neatly into the mold.

A LUB consultant helps sports associations recognize exactly these kinds of signals:

- invisible but present,
- tolerated but not neutral,
- normalized but not harmless.

Often, these phrases or choices aren't driven by malice. In fact, they're often repeated "without thinking," or even with good intentions.

But because they are so internalized, they carry enormous power: they influence how people feel, move, and evaluate themselves.

They create an implicit idea of what is "normal" and what isn't.

Of who belongs — and who doesn't.

Of who is valued — and who is invisible.

The role of the LUB consultant is not to blame, but to help make visible what often goes unnoticed.

And to offer space for reflection through questions like:

- Who is represented in our communication?
- Which sports are offered to whom?
- What kind of language do we use during training?
- How do we react when someone behaves differently from expectations?

Only when these questions become part of everyday practice can we begin to break stereotypes and create a new kind of space.

Unconscious Mechanisms That Reinforce Inequality

You don't need to shout a sexist phrase to create exclusion. Often, gender inequalities in sport are reinforced without harsh words. All it takes are glances, unspoken expectations, the layout of a form, the choice of a photo, or the tone used to deliver information.

What makes these mechanisms so effective (and hard to dismantle) is precisely their everyday invisibility. No one enacts them with bad intentions. They are habits, automatisms, small gestures that — added together — create an environment that feels less free for some people.

It can happen that less space is given to those who don't fit dominant models, even unintentionally: maybe a question isn't asked, a suggestion isn't considered, it's assumed that a person isn't interested, or that "it's not their place."

It also happens that visual communication reinforces stereotypical views: girls are always represented delicately, boys always shown as dynamic or competitive. Or that group communication uses language based on a rigid, binary division between male and female, excluding those who don't identify with these categories.

In many sports settings, there's a tendency to value those who adapt without asking questions, who don't "cause trouble," who conform. And those who raise a problem or ask for change are seen as difficult, complicated, or unsuitable.

But adapting to an unjust system isn't always possible. And above all, it should not be the requirement to feel welcome.

Another common mechanism is the idea that inclusion is an external issue — something that concerns "others," "special

cases,” or “protected categories.” But inclusion is not an exception. It’s a quality of the environment.

And it’s built through everyday situations: in how instructions are given, how spaces are managed, how doubts are answered, how questions are welcomed.

Being a LUB consultant means helping associations shift their perspective:

From the single episode to the context that made it possible,
From the reaction to the system that produced it,
From the individual to the shared culture.

Changing these automatisms isn’t easy. But it’s possible. And often, all it takes is bringing to light something no one had ever named — and things begin to move.

Where They Hide: Registration Forms, Assigned Roles, Language, Spaces

To understand how deeply rooted gender stereotypes are, you don’t need to look for extreme cases. Just observe the tools, documents, and routines of a sports association.

Stereotypes don’t only manifest in relationships between people — they are also present in objects, words, and seemingly neutral choices that structure everyday life.

Take, for example, a registration form.

If it only offers two gender options (M/F), asks for the name of the “father” and the “mother,” or assigns the athlete’s identity based on the head of household’s surname, it’s already sending a clear message: you are recognized only if you fit into a predefined norm.

The same applies if health forms or internal regulations don’t allow for self-identification, or if the online database enforces rigid, unchangeable fields.

Implicit hierarchies are also found in the management of physical spaces: changing rooms divided strictly by binary gender, restrooms with no neutral accessibility, “technical” areas mostly assigned to men, and caregiving or listening spaces allocated to women.

In many associations, girls change in the office or a shared classroom “because there are fewer of them.” But that “fewer” is already a form of exclusion.

Language, too, is one of the most powerful tools. When we speak only in the masculine form (“the boys will...”, “the athletes must...”), we create an environment where some people feel excluded or invisible. When we say “girls need to behave” or “boys must be tough,” we are assigning fixed roles — even if casually.

The distribution of educational roles is also often shaped by stereotypes:

Women are assigned to care for the youngest, to keep the peace, to welcome; Men lead training, manage the stopwatch, conduct evaluations.

These roles become entrenched not by conscious choice, but by habit.

The LUB consultant is called to read these details. To notice what usually goes unseen. To reveal the effects that these small, cumulative messages have on the sense of belonging, motivation, and the right to feel fully part of a sports community. Only when we begin to question forms, language, and spaces can we truly start talking about cultural change.

Differences Between Stereotype, Prejudice, and Discrimination

To fully understand exclusion mechanisms, it's important to distinguish concepts that are often confused: **stereotype**, **prejudice**, and **discrimination**.

They are not synonyms, but rather different stages of the same process — one that can start from an abstract idea and lead to very real consequences.

- **A stereotype** is a generalized, often rigid and simplified idea that we assign to a group of people.
For example: *“Girls are less competitive”, “Boys are more naturally athletic.”*
It's a mental filter — often unconscious — that helps us quickly categorize what we observe.
- **Prejudice** is the next step: it's a stereotype charged with emotion and judgment, turning into an opinion.

It's no longer just a thought about *"how others are"*, but includes feelings of sympathy or distrust.

For example: *"I'd rather not have a woman referee; she gets too emotional"*, or *"If a boy acts delicately, he's probably not suitable."*

- **Discrimination** happens when prejudice turns into a concrete action that creates disadvantage or exclusion. It doesn't need to be harsh or explicit: it's enough for someone to be excluded from a course, ignored in a technical meeting, left out of an invitation, or overlooked for a role.

This process can happen:

- **Consciously and directly** (e.g., *"We don't accept girls on this team"*)
- **But more often unconsciously and systemically** (e.g., *"We hadn't thought about it"*, *"It's always been this way"*, *"We don't have the facilities"*)

Here's a chart with 10 concrete examples that clearly illustrate the difference between stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination in a sports context.

Each row shows the progression: from a general idea (**stereotype**), to a judgment (**prejudice**), to an action that excludes (**discrimination**).

STEREOTYPE	PREJUDICE	DISCRIMINATION
Girls talk too much during training.	Girls aren't suited for sports that require concentration.	No more female registrations are accepted in the advanced course.
Boys are more energetic than girls.	It's better not to train them together, or they'll be disruptive.	Separate classes are created, but only the boys' class gets access to the larger gym.
Non-binary people make others uncomfortable.	I don't trust them in the locker room with the others.	They are not allowed to use any locker room, leaving them without a space.
Women are more empathetic than men.	It's better to have a woman handle the group's emotional management.	A female coach is excluded from the technical area and assigned only to support roles.
Boys must be strong.	If a boy stops because of pain, maybe he lacks character.	A young athlete is publicly scolded for not 'toughing it out.'
Girls don't like getting dirty.	Let's not involve them in certain activities — they	Girls are not offered participation in outdoor or physical contact activities.

	probably won't enjoy them.	
Mothers are more involved with their children.	Better to contact the mother for any communication.	Fathers are excluded from the team's information channels.
Boys are naturally more competitive.	It's not worth investing in a girls' team.	The girls' tournament receives no prizes or visibility compared to the boys'.
Women are more open about their emotions.	There's no point in offering awareness workshops to boys.	Only girls are given access to moments of listening and reflection.
Effeminate boys aren't athletic.	I wouldn't put him in a physical contact role.	A boy is systematically excluded from group exercises or direct confrontation.

The Educational Challenge of the LUB Consultant

The challenge for a LUB consultant is to intercept the stereotype before it becomes a prejudice, and to address the prejudice before it turns into discrimination.

Being able to recognize these differences allows you to:

- not trivialize the issue,
- avoid blaming people and instead encourage responsibility,
- intervene with the right tools at each stage of the process.

Only in this way is it possible to promote a change that is deep, conscious, and long-lasting.

How to Address Them: Educational and Communication Strategies for the Consultant

Recognizing stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination is only the first step. The core of the LUB consultant's work lies in managing these elements using effective educational, communicative, and relational tools — tools capable of generating change without triggering conflict or resistance.

There's no need to lecture or accuse. On the contrary, change often occurs when the right question is asked at the right moment, or when an observation is shared with respect, clarity, and care.

Here are some key strategies every consultant can activate:

1. **Make the invisible visible.**

Many automatisms go unnoticed. The consultant can act as a mirror, bringing to light what would otherwise remain implicit: words, habits, unintentional exclusions.

2. **Use concrete examples, not theory.**

Talking about “systemic discrimination” might be intimidating or seem too abstract. But pointing out an unbalanced flyer or observing who speaks during a meeting helps ground the reflection in real life.

3. **Choose the right moment and tone.**

Giving feedback in the heat of the moment, in an accusatory way, can provoke defensiveness. But asking a thoughtful question later, with a constructive tone, can open an authentic space for reflection.

4. **Ask instead of stating.**

5. “Who do you think felt represented in this material?”
“Did you notice who was left on the margins today?”
Questions open up space. Statements close it down.

6. **Use pluralism as a resource.**

7. Bringing in examples from other sports settings, cultures, or experiences helps normalize diversity and introduces new possibilities — without imposing them.

8. **Acknowledge efforts, not just point out limits.**
Recognizing what works is essential to motivate change. The LUB consultant is not an inspector, but an ally.

9. **Stay with the process, not the judgment.**
What matters is not “*who is right,*” but *what can be built from the conversation.*

The consultant’s role is to keep the dialogue open — even when resistance or fragility arises.

A more inclusive sports environment cannot be built in a day — and no association becomes perfect.

But every step matters, and the consultant’s job is precisely to support these steps with method, listening, and courage.

Exercises to Develop Educational and Communication Strategies

1. Make the Invisible Visible

Exercise: “The Invisible Lens”

Take a registration form, an official communication, a flyer, or an internal regulation from a sports association. Observe it closely and note everything it takes for granted: categories, roles, language, implicit references.

- What is present?
- What is missing?
- Who is included, and who is not?

Write down (or share) 3 things you noticed that previously seemed neutral to you.

2. Use Concrete, Not Theoretical, Examples

Exercise: “From Fact to Impact”

Recall a real episode in a sports setting where you noticed a gender imbalance (e.g., role assignments, language, access to resources).

- Describe only the facts, without interpreting them.
- Then, write what effect this could have had on the people involved.

Finally, formulate an open-ended question you could have asked to spark reflection in that moment.

3. Choose the Right Moment and Tone

Exercise: “When and How Do I Say It?”

Imagine you want to point out that a coach used non-inclusive language during a session.

- What emotions does this situation bring up for you?
 - What would be a bad moment to give this feedback? Why?
 - What would be a more effective moment? With what tone?
- Write a possible sentence to introduce the reflection, keeping a constructive attitude.

4. Ask Instead of Stating

Exercise: “Reframe the Statement”

Take 3 strong statements you might use to highlight a discriminatory dynamic, for example:

- “There’s no trace of inclusion in this flyer.”
- “Girls are never mentioned.”
- “This phrase is sexist.”

Try to turn them into open-ended questions. The goal is not to water down the message, but to open reflection instead of triggering defensiveness.

5. Use Pluralism as a Resource

Exercise: “What If It Were Somewhere Else?”

Choose a difficult topic or dynamic in a sports setting (e.g., bathroom access, staff roles, visual communication).

Try to describe how the same issue is addressed in another context: a different sport, a school, a foreign association, an informal group.

- What strategies do they use?
- What could you propose based on that example?

This exercise helps move beyond the idea of “we’ve always done it this way.”

6. Value Attempts, Not Just Point Out Limits

Exercise: “Find the Seed”

Think of a sports organization you’ve observed or worked with. Identify at least one gesture, idea, or action that — even if imperfect — moves in the direction of inclusion.

- What is the value of that attempt?
- How could you give feedback that strengthens it and encourages the next step?

Write a feedback sentence that recognizes the effort and suggests a possible development.

7. Stay with the Process, Not the Judgment

Exercise: “The Space of the Unfinished”

Think of a time when you felt frustrated because a change didn’t happen the way you hoped.

- What did you expect?
- What happened differently?
- What meaning can you give to that situation today?

Reread what you wrote. Add a sentence that helps you stay in the process with trust, rather than falling into judgment.

Chapter 3 – Building Free Sports Environments

Introduction

Creating a free sports environment doesn't just mean eliminating visible barriers — it also means transforming the culture that makes certain barriers invisible.

A space might seem welcoming because there are no insults or obvious acts of exclusion, but that doesn't mean every person truly feels free to express themselves, to experiment, to belong.

A sports environment is truly free when:

- differences are not just tolerated, but recognized and valued,
- everyone feels safe in the body they inhabit, the name they choose, the gestures they make,
- there are no “assigned roles” based on gender, body type, age, or perceived identity,
- it's possible to make mistakes, speak up, and change one's mind without fear of being judged or ridiculed.

In the work of LUB consultancy, building free sports environments means guiding associations through gradual but structural change.

It's not enough to add a gender-neutral form, change an image, or write “athletes of all genders” in a message. A deeper action is needed: a reorganization of rules, spaces, habits, language — and above all, relationships.

This chapter explores exactly those elements. We'll ask what freedom in sport really means, how we can encourage the

representation of all identities, and what organizational choices can help create a more equitable and respectful atmosphere. No ready-made formulas — just a clear lens and practical tools.

What Is a Truly Free and Inclusive Sports Environment

The word “freedom” is often used vaguely in the world of sport. People say that sport makes you free, that sport is for everyone, that only commitment and passion matter in sport. But is that really true for everyone? And more importantly: what does it actually mean to build a sports space where every person feels free?

A truly free sports environment is not one where “*anyone can enter*,” but one where those who enter feel recognized, respected, and safe — without having to hide or conform in order to be accepted.

It’s a space where no one has to make themselves smaller just to avoid being a bother. Where diversity isn’t a rare exception to be managed, but a value that enriches the group.

In sports, being free means:

- being able to play a sport without having your body questioned;
- being able to choose how to dress, how to define yourself, who to engage with — without having to justify your identity;
- being allowed to make mistakes, improve, learn — without the burden of stereotypes judging you before your performance even begins.

A free sports environment doesn't ask people to "be the same" in order to coexist — it works to ensure that differences don't become inequalities.

It's a space willing to question itself, to reconsider its routines, hierarchies, even its language. A space where freedom isn't a starting point, but a goal to be built every day.

The LUB consultant doesn't bring a fixed rule — but a shift in perspective.

They help people see what might be limiting that freedom — even in the smallest actions — and offer tools to rethink spaces, relationships, and dynamics.

It's not about starting from scratch. It's about creating room. Room for new voices, for different experiences, for ways of being in sport that don't necessarily follow well-worn paths.

Only then can sport become what it promises to be: a playing field where everyone has the right to be themselves.

What “Freedom” Means in the Sports Context

Talking about freedom in sport might sound abstract — but it's actually about very concrete, everyday choices. It's not just the freedom to play a sport or participate in a competition: it's freedom of expression, of identity, of connection.

And these forms of freedom are either built — or limited — through every detail of the environment where sport is practiced. Freedom in sport means being able to show up without having to hide part of yourself in order to be accepted. It means being able to speak without fear of ridicule, to express

doubts or emotions without being judged as weak, to enter a place — physical or symbolic — without feeling like you don't belong.

It's not freedom if a girl feels watched every time she raises her voice.

It's not freedom if a non-binary child doesn't know which locker room to enter and no one asks.

It's not freedom if you can only participate by adapting to a single model of behavior, body, or belonging.

In sport, freedom is never just individual — it's a quality of the environment.

It's measured by the willingness to listen, by how people respond to an unfamiliar question, by the possibility of changing your mind without feeling guilty.

It's a freedom that isn't declared — it's practiced, and protected.

The role of the LUB consultant is exactly that: to help associations recognize if — and where — that freedom is real. Not to accuse, but to support a process of evolution and awareness.

Because a sports space can only be called free not when there are no rules, but when the rules don't limit people's identities.

The real challenge isn't to include everyone under the same conditions — but to give each person the chance to be themselves: in their own words, in their own time, in their own way of inhabiting their body and their group.

The Value of Representation (Images, Words, Roles)

One of the strongest — yet often overlooked — elements in building free sports environments is representation: in other words, who is shown, named, acknowledged. Who is visible. Who is heard. Who is portrayed as “normal” — and who, instead, is left on the margins, if not completely excluded.

Representation takes many forms: in posters at the gym, in social media posts, in promotional flyers, in official speeches, in examples used during training sessions, in the roles people are invited to take on.

And it’s powerful — because it shapes imagination. It tells who gets to occupy space, who leads, who is allowed to fail, who can be admired.

If every photo shows white boys in uniform competing, and girls smiling during an award ceremony, it’s not a graphic detail — it’s a message.

If speeches refer only to “athletes” in the masculine, if technical roles in rulebooks are always called “coach,” “manager,” “president” (in masculine form), then it reinforces the idea that only certain identities have a full role in sport.

And when someone or something “outside the standard” does appear, it’s often treated as a special case or exceptional example: *“a girl who made a difference,” “a sensitive boy who stood his ground.”*

But inclusive representation is not about inserting the exception. It’s about recognizing the plurality of experiences — without reducing them to symbols.

Even within the internal roles of an association, representation matters.

If organizational or leadership positions are always filled by the

same types of people — by gender, age, or communication style — the implicit message is that only those forms are trustworthy, legitimate, heard.

The LUB consultant supports associations in observing how they speak about themselves: who they highlight, who they portray, and who gets forgotten.

Not to enforce artificial balance, but to show that representation generates possibilities, visibility, and the right to exist in the sports space.

Because *“you can’t become what you can’t see.”*

Spaces, Groups, Rules: Reorganizing Through the Lens of Equity

When talking about inclusion in sport, the focus often falls only on how to better welcome individuals. But for many sports organizations, the real challenge lies in the concrete organization of environments and rules: physical spaces, group division, schedules, communication methods. All of these elements play a key role in determining who feels comfortable — and who does not.

Take changing rooms, for example. In many sports associations, they’re divided along a binary model — “male” and “female” — often without any reserved space for those who don’t identify within that binary. In some cases, the issue is simply ignored, leaving individuals to “choose what they prefer,” which results in no space being truly accessible.

Group divisions also often reflect rigid frameworks. “Boys” and “girls” groups, activities split by gender, roles assigned according to stereotypes.

Sometimes this distinction happens without anyone even realizing: instructions are delivered more harshly to one group, more gently to another. Or exercises are designed to be “lighter” for girls and “more competitive” for boys, reinforcing different expectations that don’t always reflect the real needs of those involved.

Internal rules are often designed to “simplify management,” but end up standardizing behavior. And those who don’t fit that standard — because of gender expression, culture, economic background, or ability — find themselves needing to adapt, ask for exceptions, explain, justify.

Reorganizing a sports environment through an equity lens doesn’t mean treating everyone the same — it means giving each person what they need to fully participate.

Sometimes it takes very little: a more flexible form, a bathroom accessible to everyone, the ability to choose who to train with, attention to how instructions are given.

Other times, it requires more courage: rethinking group divisions, sharing decision-making power, changing the rules.

The LUB consultant works precisely at this level — the organizational one.

They help read the structure to understand whether it promotes or hinders equity, and support the process of building alternatives.

They don’t bring prepackaged solutions, but tools and questions to design sports spaces that are truly accessible and respectful of diversity.

Small Changes, Big Impact

When it comes to creating freer and more inclusive sports environments, many associations fear it will require an overhaul, major investments, or a radical shift in the entire structure. In reality, the experience of LUB consultants shows that it is often the **small changes** that generate the **biggest impact**.

It's not about rewriting everything from scratch, but about learning to look at what already exists with new eyes — to understand where targeted improvements can be made. A changed sign, a corrected word, an updated practice: these are low-cost actions that send a clear message of attention and openness.

For example, updating registration forms to include neutral or more flexible options for gender identity doesn't change the core structure of the activity, but it makes people feel recognized who might otherwise feel invisible.

Placing a chair in the office for those who need a moment of privacy to talk, or adding a space in the attendance sheet to indicate someone's pronouns, can radically shift the feeling of safety.

Even in day-to-day interactions, the way we speak to people makes a difference.

Using inclusive language, avoiding generalizations, listening instead of assuming: these are simple gestures, but they contribute to a different climate.

It's not just about tools — it's about attention. Inclusion is not measured by how many projects are launched, but by the ability to recognize real needs and respond with care and consistency. Those who walk into an inclusive sports environment notice it immediately: they sense that nothing has

been left to chance, that every detail has been designed to welcome — not exclude.

The LUB consultant doesn't bring dramatic changes, but supports the process of observing what can be adjusted, improved, transformed.

They help reveal existing potential and build a **gradual, credible, and sustainable** path. Because sometimes it really takes very little to turn a space that “has no problems” into one that **creates possibilities**.

Glossary of Words and Practices to Promote

One of the roles of a LUB consultant is to guide sports associations toward a more inclusive language and relational style — one that can represent all identities without reinforcing stereotypes or excluding experiences.

Language is never neutral: the words we use reflect how we see the world and who we imagine as being part of or outside the group.

For this reason, anyone guiding a LUB process can propose — without imposing — a basic glossary: a kind of compass made of words and practices that support a deep yet accessible cultural shift.

Below are some **key concepts and useful suggestions** to guide everyday work.

Glossary of Words and Practices to Promote

Person

Using “person” instead of “boy” or “girl” can be helpful when speaking in a neutral and respectful way — especially when you're unsure about someone's identity or when speaking generally.

Pronouns and self-identification

Encourage people to share (only if they want to) the pronouns they identify with. A simple gesture that communicates respect and openness.

Mixed and fluid groups

Avoid creating fixed groups based on gender. Whenever possible, allow for choice and movement between groups, always respecting people's well-being and preferences.

Activities “for all”

Use symbols like the schwa (ə) or inclusive expressions such as “for everyone” in written communication to reflect all identities.

Sport for everyone, not just for those who conform

Promote practices that don't disadvantage people with different bodies, styles, paces, or life experiences. Inclusion begins by recognizing that not everyone starts from the same place — equity requires adjustments.

Welcoming

This isn't just the moment of enrollment — it's an ongoing attitude. A welcoming sports environment is one where people feel validated even in moments of vulnerability or transition.

Active neutrality

It doesn't mean "not taking sides," but rather creating spaces where no identity dominates over others. A neutral field isn't empty — it's intentionally designed so that everyone feels comfortable.

Plural visibility

Tell the story of sport through images, stories, testimonies, and language that reflect a range of experiences: different bodies, genders, roles. Representation builds legitimacy.

Authentic listening

It's not just about hearing. Listening means receiving what's said without rushing to correct or normalize. It's the first step to building trust.

Conflict management as a resource

Conflicts, misunderstandings, and mistakes are inevitable. An inclusive environment doesn't deny them — it faces them as opportunities for growth and dialogue, using educational, not punitive, tools.

Safe spaces

Ensure physical and relational contexts where each person feels safe expressing who they are, asking questions, sharing doubts, or reporting discomfort — without fear of judgment or consequences.

Distributed participation

Create opportunities for those who usually don't speak or decide to take part. Participation doesn't happen only when someone is given the floor — it happens when the conditions for accessibility are built.

Shared responsibility

It's not just the role of the "inclusion officer." Building respectful environments is a collective responsibility involving staff, leaders, athletes, and families.

Review the rules

Many internal rules are not neutral. The LUB consultant can suggest reviewing them together with an inclusive lens, asking: "Who does this rule help? Who does it make things harder for? Who gets left out?"

Simple and accessible language

An inclusive environment is recognizable by how it communicates: clear sentences, no ambiguity, no unnecessary jargon, and care not to use unexplained or discriminatory language.

Roles and representation

Pay attention to who takes on visible roles, who's consulted in decisions, who's featured in communications. Don't let gender hierarchies reproduce themselves automatically.

Personalized, non-stereotyped feedback

Avoid gender-based generalizations (e.g., "you're strong for a girl") and instead give specific feedback, focused on growth and addressed to the person — not to their group identity.

This glossary isn't meant to be memorized — it's a starting point to adapt to your context, your groups, and your community's sensitivities.

Each association can enrich it, expand it, and make it its own. The goal is not to use "the right words" just to avoid mistakes - but to use words **consciously**, to help create spaces where everyone feels recognized, called upon, and represented.

Chapter 4 – Being a LUB Consultant

Introduction

Becoming a LUB consultant doesn't mean bringing pre-packaged solutions or judging the work of associations. On the contrary, it means listening to a sports community, accompanying it with respect, and supporting processes of awareness and change.

The consultant acts as a bridge between the present and the possible — observing, asking questions, facilitating dialogue, and offering tools and activities tailored to the context.

To do this, it's not necessary to have all the answers. What is needed is a careful perspective, respectful language, and a willingness to build sustainable and consistent solutions together with the people and values of the association.

The LUB method is not based on control, but on relationships. Not on perfection, but on evolution.

This chapter is designed as a practical guide to accompany the consultant through each phase of the intervention:

- the initial assessment, using tests and observation tools;
- the definition of objectives, based on results;
- the implementation of activities, using guided sheets and practical resources;
- the final evaluation, to assess impact and support long-term change.

Each LUB intervention is unique, but following a structured process allows consultants to be effective and credible — even in the most complex contexts.

Studying a Sports Community and Defining Objectives

How to Administer the Tests (Members and Staff)

Administering the tests is the first concrete step of the LUB consultancy process.

This is when the consultant begins engaging with the sports community and collecting valuable data to understand how the space is experienced — both by participants (members) and by those who manage it (staff, coaches, leadership, and personnel).

The method of administration is crucial: it's not just about “handing out a questionnaire,” but about creating conditions that encourage engaged, conscious, and honest participation.

What You Need to Prepare

- Print copies of the two tests (one for members and one for staff)
- A brief introductory explanation, delivered verbally or included at the beginning of the test
- A simple collection method (hand delivery, anonymous dropbox, group session, or digital form if suitable)

Practical Tips

- Present the test with clarity and respect. Avoid accusatory or overly technical tones. For example, you can say:

“This test helps us understand how the sports space is experienced by those who participate and those who work here. It’s a tool to help us improve together.”

- Ensure anonymity. Make it clear that tests are anonymous, no one will be judged, and responses will be used only to get a general understanding of the environment.
- Allow time and space. Don’t administer the test “on the fly” between activities. Schedule a dedicated moment in a calm and focused setting.
- Involve the association in distribution. Ask them to help circulate the tests among members — including those who aren’t always present.
- Explain what will happen next. Clarify that the results will be analyzed and discussed, and that concrete proposals and actions will follow.

The test is not just a technical tool — it’s already an **act of listening**.

How to Interpret the Results (Comparison Sheets, Categories)

Once the tests from members and staff have been collected, the consultant’s task is to analyze the results in a way that is systematic yet understandable. The goal isn’t to perform a statistical analysis, but to extract useful insights for building a shared path forward.

Phase 1 – Scoring Calculation

- Each test consists of 20 questions, divided into 4 areas.
- Each question can be rated from 1 to 10 points.
- The maximum total score for each test is 200 points.

By summing the scores, you obtain a total value that places the association into one of the 4 evaluation categories:

Total Points	Category	Meaning
15 – 79	Poor	Presence of serious issues
80 – 129	Sufficient	Good intentions, but many grey areas
130 – 169	Good	Positive level, but with automatisms still to overcome
170 – 200	Excellent	High awareness and widespread attention

Phase 2 – Comparing Perception and Management

A crucial step is comparing the results from the members' test with those of the staff.

- If the values are consistent, it indicates a good alignment between lived perception and internal management.
- If there are significant gaps, these need to be analyzed:
 - **Is staff scoring higher?** Some problematic dynamics may not be noticed.
 - **Are members scoring higher?** Staff may be underestimating their own work or being overly self-critical.

This comparison can be facilitated using a **double-column worksheet**, where you note: • the scores of the 4 areas (for

staff and members)

- a short observation for each difference

Phase 3 – Area-Based Analysis

In addition to the final score, it's useful to observe which areas scored lower or higher:

- Welcoming and registration
- Sports activities
- Communication
- Changing rooms and privacy

These insights will be very useful in guiding the selection of objectives and activities to propose.

Don't look for perfection in the numbers — look for clues, signals, and questions worth exploring.

How to Provide Feedback in a Constructive Way

Providing feedback on the results is one of the most delicate moments in the consultancy process. It's not enough to say "your score is..." — the association must be guided through reading and understanding their current status with respect, clarity, and a spirit of collaboration.

The main risk is that the evaluation is perceived as a report card, an accusation, or a failure. On the contrary, the LUB assessment is designed to be a **starting point**, not an endpoint.

1. Prepare the feedback session carefully

- Schedule a dedicated meeting (ideally in person)

- Involve key roles within the association (staff, leadership, coordinators)
- Prepare a visual summary with the final category (poor, sufficient, good, excellent) and a brief overview of critical and strong areas
- Bring all useful materials: completed tests, comparison tables, and the proposed objectives sheet

2. Choose your words carefully

Start with a sentence that reassures and opens the dialogue:

"What we're sharing today is not a judgment of people, but an opportunity to understand together what's working and what could be improved."

Avoid phrases like *"you're lacking"* or *"you haven't done enough"*.

Prefer instead:

- *"This analysis highlights some very interesting aspects, and others we can explore further..."*
- *"This score doesn't mean the environment is negative, but that there are important signals to consider."*

3. Highlight potential, not just limits

Even in the most challenging situations, point out what can be activated, which resources are already present, and what small steps are already visible.

Acknowledging past efforts — even if partial — helps to build a sense of trust.

4. End with a concrete proposal

After sharing the results, present the objective sheet that

corresponds to the achieved category and explain that this will be the starting point for the hands-on work, with targeted activities and practical tools.

"The value of this journey lies in the fact that now we have clear coordinates to act on. Each category already comes with concrete proposals to start working on."

How to Build Objectives with the Association

After sharing the evaluation, the next step is to define, together with the association, the objectives to pursue — based on the category achieved (poor, sufficient, good, excellent).

This phase is essential to actively involve staff and leadership in the change process, transforming the data collected into concrete actions.

1. Start with the LUB Objective Sheet

Each evaluation category has a dedicated sheet with 3 proposed objectives, designed to be feasible and aligned with the association's level of awareness.

These are not mandatory, but suggested starting points. The consultant can introduce them like this:

"These are the objectives proposed by the LUB process for associations at this stage. Let's read them together and see if they reflect your reality, if they need adjusting, or if there's anything to add."

2. Encourage Reflection, Not Defense

During the meeting, don't push for quick approval of the

objectives. Instead, create a space for open dialogue:

- Which of these objectives feels most relevant to your reality?
- Is there one that feels more challenging? Why?
- Would you like to add a personalized objective?

This step is key to co-creating the action plan — so that it's perceived as *theirs*, not imposed from outside.

3. Define a Priority

It's not necessary to work on all three objectives at once.

Help the association choose one as a starting point, and agree on a concrete first step. This increases the sense of feasibility.

“Which one shall we start with, in your opinion? What step can we take already in the next month?”

4. Connect Objectives to Practical Activities

Once the objectives are selected, you can propose the corresponding LUB activities — already developed and adaptable to different contexts.

This provides the association with a structured journey: starting from evaluation, defining goals, and moving into practical action to achieve them.

“For each objective, we’ve designed guided activities you can implement independently. I’ll accompany you step by step, but the real engine of change will be your daily commitment.”

Implementing Activities

A guide to using the activity sheets

One of the most important resources of the LUB pathway is the set of activity sheets, designed to help each sports association turn objectives into practical actions.

These are not school-style exercises or casual team-building games — they are pedagogical tools, developed to foster awareness, dialogue, and cultural transformation.

Each activity corresponds to one of the four categories from the evaluation (poor, sufficient, good, excellent) and is designed to meet the real needs of the context.

Structure of the activity sheets

Each sheet includes:

- **Title and level:** to immediately identify the associated category
- **Brief description:** explaining the purpose of the activity
- **Required materials:** to prepare in advance
- **Estimated duration:** to help plan the session
- **Type of activity:** discussion, creative lab, reflective exercise, educational game, etc.
- **Detailed steps:** outlining the flow of the activity
- **Facilitator's guide questions:** carefully worded prompts to read or adapt during the activity
- **Final suggestions:** to wrap up meaningfully

How to choose the activities

Once the category is identified (e.g., Sufficient), the consultant can suggest the three corresponding activities, each connected

to the level-specific objectives.

The association can:

- Choose which activity to start with
- Complete one activity at a time over a defined period (e.g., three months)
- Or adapt the activities to other training moments already planned (staff meetings, events, etc.)

Activities aren't meant to be read out like a script — they should be personalized, understood, and experienced.

Who facilitates the activity?

Usually, the LUB consultant facilitates the first activity (or at least part of it) to demonstrate the method and help the association feel confident about managing the following ones independently.

The key is that the facilitator:

- Does not position themselves as “the expert,” but as a guide in the process
- Knows how to listen, mediate, and maintain a welcoming atmosphere
- Is prepared to address resistance or challenges without judgment

“The goal of the activity is not to get everything right — it’s to surface blind spots, experiences, and possibilities.”

How to facilitate a session: tone, tools, and group management

Facilitating an activity within a sports association is not just a technical task — it's above all an educational posture. The LUB consultant doesn't act like a teacher or judge but instead creates space for dialogue, guides reflection, and values what already exists, while encouraging what can evolve.

Tone to maintain

- **Welcoming but firm:** create an open and respectful atmosphere, but don't let demeaning comments or aggressive behavior slide.

"We may not agree here, but we listen to each other with respect."

- **Clear but not directive:** give simple instructions, but allow freedom in how to participate.

"There's no right answer. I'm interested in your perspective."

- **Engaging but not invasive:** encourage quieter participants, but don't pressure anyone.

"If someone prefers to just listen now, feel free to speak later."

Useful tools for facilitation

- Large sheets or mobile whiteboards to collect ideas
- Colored cards, pens, and post-its for group or personal reflection work
- A visible timer or clock to manage time
- Chairs arranged in a circle, if possible, to create an equal, open setting

Also consider the location: choose a quiet, well-lit room away from the sports activity where participants can sit, write, and speak without distraction.

Managing the group inclusively

- Be mindful of who dominates the conversation and who stays silent
- Protect younger, shy, or vulnerable participants from teasing or exclusion
- If tension arises, don't minimize or escalate: acknowledge the emotion and propose a pause
"What you're saying matters. Can we come back to it shortly to explore it further?"
- Value every contribution — even hesitation or uncertainty can open the door to meaningful discussion

Facilitation doesn't mean control. It means creating the conditions for everyone to feel part of the process.

Useful phrases to start, mediate, and conclude

A well-designed activity can be ineffective if it is not supported by clear, respectful, and educationally coherent communication.

The LUB consultant uses language as a relational tool: words can open or close spaces for reflection.

In this section, you'll find examples of phrases you can use (or adapt) for each phase of the session.

To start the activity

The goal is to explain what you're about to do and why, and to create a climate of trust:

- “Today we’re taking some time to look at our sports environment from a different perspective.”
- “The goal is not to do things right or wrong, but to reflect on aspects that usually remain under the surface.”
- “You’re not obligated to speak, but if you want to share an idea, it will be listened to without judgment.”
- “What emerges in this space stays between us, unless we decide together to take it further.”

To mediate during the activity

Here, the task is to support dialogue, manage group dynamics, and maintain the pace:

- “Let’s give some space to those who haven’t spoken much yet.”
- “Let’s start from what we just heard: what stood out to you?”
- “If what was said made you uncomfortable, we can pause for a moment.”
- “Are there other ways of seeing this situation? Can we try to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes?”
- “We don’t have to agree on everything, but we can listen to each other attentively.”

To conclude

You need to give meaning to the experience, close the loop, and prepare for any next steps:

- “What are you taking away from this moment?”
- “Was there something today that helped you see things differently?”
- “Would you like to write a word, a feeling, or a thought on a slip of paper to leave in the center?”
- “Thank you for engaging. This is just a first step—every reflection can become action.”

Every word from the facilitator is a choice: it can open up a safe space, offer legitimacy, and foster change. You don’t need to be perfect. You need to be present, attentive, and consistent.

How to adapt activities to different contexts

LUB activity sheets are designed to be useful across different types of sports associations, but every organization has its own specificities: the age of participants, the sports disciplines practiced, availability of space and time, the relational atmosphere, and the group’s sensitivity to certain topics.

That’s why one of the key aspects of the consultant’s role is to adapt each activity to the specific context—while maintaining its spirit and objectives—by adjusting the method, language, or duration.

What can be adapted?

- **The format of the activity:** If the activity involves written work and the participants are very young or have low literacy, you can switch to an oral or visual format (drawings, symbols, mind maps).
- **The duration:** Some contexts allow for 60 minutes, others only 30. You can choose to do just part of the activity or divide it across two sessions.
- **The number of participants:** If the group is too large, break it into smaller subgroups. If it's very small, the discussion can happen all together in a more intimate setting.
- **The language:** With children or teenagers, simplify terminology, use relatable examples, or introduce playful elements.
- **The level of awareness:** In a group that is already sensitized, you can go deeper. In one that is less familiar, it's better to start with simple, concrete questions—without forcing.

Questions to ask yourself before proposing the activity

- What kind of relationships exist within this group?
- What is the group's openness to dialogue on these topics?
- Are there figures who can help encourage others to participate?
- What space is available? Do we need to move chairs or plan for physical movement?
- Are there any barriers (linguistic, cultural, emotional) to consider?

In case of resistance

In some situations, you might encounter skepticism, jokes, or

dismissal. Don't push. Instead:

- Reframe the topic in a more accessible way (e.g., "Let's talk about what helps people feel good here").
- Shift the focus from personal identity to behavior ("What makes a space feel welcoming for everyone?").
- Propose less "direct" but still transformative activities—like role play, image analysis, or creative exercises.

Adaptation is not a loss. It's the ability to communicate the heart of the activity, even when conditions seem unfavorable. This is where the LUB consultant shows their sensitivity, creativity, and effectiveness.

Evaluating Impact

When and how to do it

Evaluating the impact of a LUB pathway means understanding whether and how the work carried out has generated real change in the culture, behaviors, and organization of the sports association.

It's not just about checking whether "the activities were appreciated," but about observing the concrete — even small — transformations that have been triggered through the process.

That's why impact evaluation is not a separate or isolated moment, but an integrated and coherent step that reflects the work done so far.

When should it be done?

Ideally, impact evaluation should take place:

- at the end of the activity cycle planned for the association;
- not too long after the last activity, to ensure memory and connection;
- once the association has had time to test and apply even a small change.

In the LUB project, the evaluation moment can take place within 4–6 weeks after the activities have ended, either during a dedicated meeting or via tools that can be completed independently.

Who is involved?

- The association's staff (coaches, directors, admin): it's important that key figures who took part in the process are present.
- A representative from the group of members, if they were directly involved in the educational moments.
- The LUB consultant, who facilitates the reflection and collects final data.

Evaluation is not a technical act. It's a moment of shared listening and responsibility that helps consolidate what's been done and project forward into the future.

What tools to use (final test, observations, feedback)

To evaluate the impact of a LUB process in a credible but lightweight way, simple, accessible, and coherent tools are needed — aligned with the relational style of the consultancy. No need for complex data. What matters is observation, active listening, and structured reflection.

Below are the main tools to be used:
(to be continued with the next section if needed).

1. Final test for staff

This is a self-assessment test consisting of 10 questions, each rated from 1 to 10. It serves to understand how much the staff perceives a change in their way of working, communicating, and organizing.

Examples of questions:

- I feel more prepared to welcome people with different identities and backgrounds.
- I have learned to pay more attention to the language I use with boys and girls.
- We have started reviewing our forms, rules, or internal communication.

(This tool is already developed in the LUB materials set.)

2. Checklist of implemented actions

Based on the initial category (poor, sufficient, good, excellent), each association received:

- a specific set of objectives,
- three activities to carry out,
- and two support tools.

The checklist helps verify what has actually been put into practice.

It is divided into:

- Fully completed actions
- Partially initiated actions
- Actions not carried out

This tool is useful both for reporting and for reflection.

3. Consultant's observations

Throughout the process, the consultant may collect qualitative notes on:

- the degree of active participation,
- the emergence of sensitive topics or new questions,
- changes in attitudes or language,
- the association's willingness to engage.

These observations can be recorded on a summary sheet and shared in the final evaluation in an anonymous and respectful way.

4. Open feedback

Beyond the data, it's essential to collect open-ended testimonies:

- “What has changed for you after this journey?”
- “What struck you the most?”
- “Which part of the work would you like to explore further in the future?”

These questions can be asked in written form or during a short individual interview. Some testimonies can also be collected to enhance the project — with participants' consent.

Final recommendations: keeping the process alive

The LUB consultancy does not aim for immediate or spectacular transformation, but rather for activating a long-lasting process that continues to have impact even after the formal path ends.

For this reason, the final evaluation should not be just a moment to “wrap things up,” but an opportunity to reignite reflection and set new micro-goals the association can continue working on independently.

Suggestions to leave with the association

- Re-administer the tests annually to monitor internal perception and assess the effectiveness of implemented actions.
- Integrate inclusion into internal training: even just 1 or 2 moments a year can make a difference.
- Regularly update forms, materials, and communication to reflect the evolving context and awareness.
- Appoint a point person (formal or informal) for inclusion-related topics, someone members can turn to for questions, reports, or suggestions.
- Involve the group of members in open-dialogue moments: listening to those who live the sport is the best way to stay connected to reality.

And for the consultants?

Those who facilitate the journey should also continue growing. At the end of each consultation, the LUB consultant can take a moment to reflect on:

- What worked best

- What met resistance
- What kind of language or tools fostered openness
- What emotions, difficulties, or questions arose for themselves

A logbook or short summary sheet can help turn each intervention into a learning experience, strengthening the quality of LUB's work over time.

A real process of change can be recognized when it continues to generate questions, small actions, and new forms of awareness even after the official end of the project. The role of the LUB consultant is to plant these seeds — and leave it to the people to make them grow.

Bibliography and Suggested Books

Italian Books (translated titles):

- Maestri di sport, maestri di vita – Vanna Iori
- Corpi che contano nello sport – Fabio Montella
- Maschi in gioco – Lorenzo Braina
- Genere e sport. Prospettive pedagogiche e sociali – A cura di Donatella Poliandri

English Books (original titles):

- *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* – Caroline Criado Perez
- *Coaching for Equity* – Elena Aguilar
- *Fair Play: How Sports Shape the Gender Debates* – Sherry B. Ortner
- *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is Not Equal in Sports* – Eileen McDonagh, Laura Pappano
- *Every Body: A First Conversation About Bodies* – Megan Madison et al.

Portuguese Books (translated titles):

- Desporto e Género: Perspectivas e Práticas – AAVV (Edições Afrontamento)
- Educação Física e Inclusão – Carlos Neto
- Desporto, Cultura e Cidadania – Manuel Sérgio

Bulgarian Resources (translated titles):

- Спорт и общество (Sport i Obshtestvo) – A cura dell’Università Nazionale per l’Educazione Fisica “Vassil Levski”
- Gender Equality in Sport: Bulgarian Perspectives – Marina Paneva
- Инклузивното образование и спортът (Inkluzivnoto Obrazovanie i Sportat) – Petar Petrov

Other Useful Resources (original titles):

- *Erasmus+ Sport Manual: Gender Equality Toolkit* – European Commission
- *Outsport Report: The Experience of LGBT+ People in Sport*
- *UNESCO – Quality Physical Education Guidelines for Policy-Makers*

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