

ONE SPORT – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Norwegian parasport strategy,
2022 – 2027



NORGES
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For people with disabilities to be able to enjoy sport, we need to create a good social environment and give coaches the skills they need to enable their athletes to develop and achieve.

The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports

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INTRODUCTION

Our vision “Joy of Sport – for All” says it all. It signals our ambition to reach everyone, and it adds an important value perspective to both our vision and to sport itself. Sport should be fun! The vision describes our intention for sport to bring people together and to be available to everyone who wants to take part.

“Joy of Sport – for All” is an inclusive vision. It sets the direction for Norwegian sports’ ambition to provide a wide range of activities that offer something for everyone and allows people to develop according to their own wishes and needs. The vision prepares the ground for one sport – equal opportunities. For everyone.

The vision commits all parts of the organisation – from the early-years play and fun activities organised by local sports clubs to elite level programmes.

Para athletes have physical, visual or hearing impairments and/or learning disabilities. The parasport strategy is designed to reach this target group. It is aimed at all organisational levels in sport and describes key initiatives with goals and concrete measures.

The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) has given the national sports federations overall responsibility for all athletes who wish to participate in their respective sports. This might seem an obvious ambition in a country that does not distinguish between people with and without disabilities in education and work, but it still poses a challenge for any sport or sporting organisation.

It is therefore vital that we continue to make it easier and more rewarding for people with disabilities to participate in sports. Wherever possible, the NIF wants para athletes to be able to participate in the sports they want, where they want.

One essential tool for making it easier for sporting organisations to include people with disabilities is a comprehensive and consistent strategy. This parasport strategy provides a framework for better enabling recruitment, participation, development and achievement and – for those who want to – performance at elite level.

Recognising the complexities of the different needs that exist in parasport, we need to take a broad-based approach to priorities and initiatives. There is not one single measure that alone will boost participation in organised sports amongst the target group, rather it is the sum of targeted efforts in a number of areas.

The key to success is to identify and implement measures that can encourage more people in the target group to engage in sport and to begin to enjoy their sport once they get started (Oslo Economics, 2020).



Photo: Norges skiforbund, Alpent

PREPARING THE PARASPORT STRATEGY

In 2022 it is 15 years since the process of integrating para athletes from all national sports federations was completed and the Norwegian Sports Organisation for the Disabled was dissolved. Considerable efforts have been made since then across organised sports nationally, regionally and locally. Some of the initiatives have been successful, others less successful. Most parts of the organisation say they are keen to do more. Now is therefore the time to step up and set a new direction. In August 2021 the NIF Executive Board decided to draw up a comprehensive strategy for parasport.

The purpose of the strategy lies within the one sport ambition, to provide equal opportunities for all and for everyone to be met with respect, knowledge, inclusion and equality.

One important premise when drawing up the strategy was to ensure broad participation by the entire organisation in order to get the best input for decision-making, and to promote ownership of the collective efforts that all sporting organisations will be creating in the coming years. Individual and group-based interviews have been carried out with more than 100 individuals representing every branch of the organisation and relevant committees in Norwegian sports. An open survey attracted more than 600 responses, and consultations have been held with the national sports federations and regional sports confederations.

Together with the report from Oslo Economics (2020), the consultations have identified key challenges and success factors in parasport. They have formed the basis for the strategic priorities set out in this plan.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR PARASPORT

It is important to fully include people with disabilities in sport. However, targeted and redoubled efforts are needed if we are to succeed in the time frame we have set ourselves.

To reach our goal of one sport – *equal opportunities*, the strategy sets out targets in the following areas:

- grassroots sports
- elite sports
- skills
- communications
- facilities
- activity aids, sign language interpreters and guides
- partnerships and collaborations

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Underlying the seven priority areas are a few unresolved challenges that have emerged when working on the parasport strategy. They must be addressed in more detail in order to ensure a more comprehensive investment in parasport.

REGISTRATION AND DEFINITION

One source of frustration within the organisation is that people with disabilities in general are all too often conflated with potential para athletes. Although accommodation should be made for all athletes to be able to participate on their own terms, particular measures are being taken to reach these target groups. One reason for this is the need to classify athletes to ensure fair competition. One essential task will therefore be to more precisely identify the actual potential for recruiting para athletes.

It is difficult to fully understand the current situation and to measure changes in the number of athletes, especially because of limitations of registrations and a lack of data. We do not want to store sensitive personal and medical information. This makes it more complicated to measure participation trends and not least communicate information about sporting opportunities to athletes and potential athletes.



FUNDING

The circumstances of parasport are often unclear and fragmented, especially when it comes to funding. A welcome fact is that there are multiple funding sources and supportive partners both internally and in the public sphere – amongst private individuals, businesses, organisations and foundations.

However, it is a problem that many parasport activities are organised on the basis of short-term project funding. A great deal of resources are being spent on reporting and innovative application-writing rather than on refining existing initiatives that have been proved to work. Short time horizons and precarious funding are also preventing local sports clubs from embracing and wanting to get involved in the initiatives.

To increase sporting activity and better enable clubs to develop parasport, it will be essential to try to combine the resources and co-ordinate the work in a more fruitful and coherent way. The goal must be to improve conditions for parasport through increased co-operation, consistency and institutionalisation both internally and externally.

ROLES AND INSTITUTIONALISATION

If we are to successfully develop parasport, we need stronger anchoring of roles and responsibilities in the various parts of the sport organisation. The aim should be to enable sports clubs and coaches to recruit, develop and support para athletes in the same way as other athletes. To achieve this, the work we do on parasport and the parasport strategy must be incorporated into planning at all levels of the organisation. The strategy must be converted into concrete actions, and methods such as strategic resource management and stronger expectation management must be deployed to encourage parasport to move in the desired direction.

Many of the initiatives require the central part of the NIF (including Olympiatoppen), regional sports confederations, national and regional sports federations to continue to offer vital support to the clubs and serve as a link between organisations that can have an impact on activity in the target group.



VALUE BASE

VISION: Joy of Sport – for All.

OBJECTIVE: Give everybody the opportunity to practise sport according to their wishes and needs without being subjected to unfair or disproportionate discrimination.

The vision and objective must be upheld by everyone involved in Norwegian sports, including those representing Norway in international sports organisations. They reflect our desire to adopt equal opportunities and non-discrimination as prerequisites for safe and inclusive sports for all.

MISSION

Everyone should be able to experience sports, a sense of achievement and development in a safe and supportive environment.

OVERARCHING GOAL

More people involved – for longer.
More new medals.

FUNDAMENTAL POSITIONS

The NIF's organisational values and activity values are described in its objects clause (Section 1-2) and underpin everything the organisation does. This long-term plan is subject to a few tenets that will come to have an impact on the organisation's work in the next few years. Fundamental positions: playful, ambitious, honest and inclusive.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

Our vision and our objective are put into practice by athletes, coaches, volunteers and leaders. Norwegian sports should be a positive value creator for individuals and for society, thus reinforcing its position as a people's movement and driving force in society. Our work should be founded on volunteering, democracy, loyalty and equity.

ACTIVITY VALUES

All sporting activity should be based on fundamental values such as the joy of sports, community, health and honesty.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

People

- Inclusive and equitable sport
- Safe sports
- Honest sports

Sports

- Fair sports
- Healthy sports
- Clean sports

Organisation

- Democratic sports
- Open sports
- Well governed sports



STRATEGIC GOALS FOR PARASPORT

GRASSROOTS SPORTS

Activities and competitions should be provided in the athletes' local community insofar as possible. Friendship, community and local identity are important to all athletes. However, building more robust clubs where more para athletes come together can also help lower the bar for participation, boost confidence and increase expertise within the sports club. Para athletes get into sports in a variety of ways. We must therefore recruit and retain athletes of all ages for lifelong involvement in sport.

One of the biggest challenges for parasport is to recruit new athletes and make them stay with the sport. The challenges of recruitment are complex, and we must therefore strengthen internal co-operation across organisations but also with organisations outside the world of sports. At the heart of this is the need to better understand and deal with the challenges that arise on the journey from potential to active athlete.

To boost core activities and the sports clubs' ability to develop parasport, it is vital that we seek to target the resources and co-ordinate the work in a more appropriate and consistent way compared to what is currently the case. One key factor for success is to think more long-term and see the longer lines when it comes to resources for parasport.

Objectives

1. We must ensure varied and inclusive activities and competitions for all target groups in parasport, irrespective of functional capacity, level and age.
 2. We must recruit more new para athletes through a committed partnership internally and externally and put effective structures in place for information and knowledge-sharing.
 3. We must incorporate parasport in planning documents at all levels of the organisation by raising awareness and taking steps to improve our knowledge of parasport.
 4. We must improve conditions for parasport through increased co-operation, long-term planning and institutionalisation both internally and externally.
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Good parasport provision requires local clubs to have access to help and expertise when they need it.



Photo: Øyvind Thorsen

ELITE SPORTS

The goal of celebrating elite-level performance must also include parasport.

If we are to create the best athletes and offer development opportunities for tomorrow's elite athletes in parasport, we must bring together and prioritise assets and resources. Medical diagnoses have a material impact on performance and classification in parasport and on individual factors that promote health and prevent injury. We must work to make available the expertise that exists in these areas across different sports.

Elite para athletes must have the same opportunities to train and compete with other elite athletes. This requires a degree of adaptation for each participant in terms of equipment, guides, assistants and sign language interpreters.

Objectives

1. We must prioritise and reinforce the support framework to enable today's and tomorrow's para athletes to plan for the long-term in order for them to have an impact internationally.
 2. We must develop parasport in the same way as other elite sports with the goals, expectations and demands that entails.
 3. We must create more arenas for sharing and disseminating relevant skills across the different parasports.
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SKILLS

Skills are key to training confidence-inspiring and inclusive coaches who can support both new and experienced para athletes. Knowledge of parasport must therefore be included in and promoted by courses and training programmes in general and in coaching development in particular. This is necessary in order to integrate parasport across the board and ensure that coaches and leaders are able to facilitate and support lasting participation and performance.

It is also important to create a unified and coordinated knowledge base that is easily accessible by everyone. The knowledge base must include both general and specific knowledge and be aimed at different levels and target groups. Increasing recruitment of people with in-depth knowledge of parasport will also help raise awareness within the organisation. The accumulated knowledge must be preserved and developed by co-operating and sharing information internally and across sports and levels.

Objectives

1. We must incorporate knowledge of parasport as a mandatory element in all training (coaching, leadership, club and facilities development).
 2. We must make information about parasport easily available to everyone, irrespective of level and role.
 3. We must employ more people with parasport expertise and encourage more people with disabilities to get involved in sport (employees, officials, coaches and leaders).
 4. We must enable information and knowledge-sharing at all levels.
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COMMUNICATIONS

Parasport must be given increased recognition, promotion and visibility, both internally in the world of sports and in society in general. To achieve this, all levels of Norwegian sports must work systematically on internal and external communications. Para athletes in all target groups should be highlighted in order to raise awareness of parasport in society. As well as giving publicity to athletes at various levels, we also need to promote more role models amongst volunteers, coaches and employees. Norwegian sports must develop a comprehensive media and communications strategy to help put people with disabilities on an equal footing both in sports and in wider society.

Objectives

1. We must increasingly put parasport on the agenda and raise its visibility in society.
 2. We must include and give equal status to parasport in all communications channels.
 3. We must identify and promote more high-profile athletes at all levels of the organisation in order to create new role models and raise awareness of parasport.
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National heroes can motivate people to engage in sport more generally, but many in the target group are also in need of local role models from the local sports club who can reassure them that sport is actually for them.



Photo: Kristin Bentdal, NIF

FACILITIES

Facilities are a prerequisite for being able to conduct sports. Many Norwegian sports facilities are outdated and not well suited to para athletes. Universal design is mandatory in all new buildings, but this is not enough to ensure that all para athletes are fully cared for.

Sports arenas and outdoor facilities are funded by lottery money according to the instructions of the Ministry of Culture. Facilities must be accessible to everyone and be fit for purpose, including where additional investment is required above and beyond the statutory requirements.

To ensure adequate storage of activity aids and technical equipment for different target groups, for instance, the funding needs to be obtained through an extraordinary lottery allocation. Similarly, additional lottery allocation are required to rebuild outdated facilities so that they can be used by all target groups.

Local authorities and sports clubs building new facilities rely on increased lottery funding to be able to accommodate the needs of parasport.

Objectives

1. We must improve funding for facilities, including through the lottery scheme and increased government and local authority funding. This applies to both new arenas and outdated arenas being rehabilitated to accommodate parasport over and above existing universal design requirements.
 2. We must incorporate the needs of parasport into policy documents for arenas and facilities internally and at a local and county authority level.
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Minor adjustments to facilities, often gone unnoticed by the club, can sometimes help lower the bar for participation.



Photo: Caroline Dokken Wendelborg, NIF

ACTIVITY AIDS, SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND GUIDES

Access to activity aids, transport, sign language interpreters and guides is often highlighted as a barrier to participation in sports (Oslo Economics, 2020). When people with disabilities are unable to practise sports in the same way as other people, the bar for participation and equity in society is raised. A number of public schemes are designed to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in social forums in the same way as people without disabilities.

Many people with disabilities need access to activity aids, transport, sign language interpretation and guides to be able to participate in sports. The public schemes are beyond the remit of organised sports, but it is important that we exert influence over the organisation and management of these schemes. Existing public schemes are not sufficient to meet the needs of athletes.

Objectives

1. We must work to strengthen schemes for sign language interpretation, activity aids (26-year age limit), transportation and recruitment equipment.
 2. We must work to implement new schemes aimed at competition equipment and guides.
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PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

We must strengthen and empower the parasport initiative by entering into strategic partnerships and collaborations – on sport's own terms. To be able to continue to develop Norwegian sports, we need to work closely with a range of partners who are not normally directly involved in sports. By working with external partners, we will be able to create arenas for learning and skills development. This will in turn generate opportunities for athletes, coaches and staff in the form of a diverse range of partners. It is important for Norwegian sports to move in step with wider society and to be a role model in key areas in both sports and society at large. We should be proud to share our knowledge of parasport with society.

Objectives

1. We must enter into long-term partnerships with businesses and foundations to ensure adequate and consistent funding for parasport.
 2. We must lower the bar for participating in sport for people with disabilities by maintaining a close dialogue and sharing knowledge with local authorities, institutions and relevant interest groups.
 3. We must continually strive for learning, innovation and development in parasport by partnering with academia, research institutes and others.
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Ambitious

Including

Playful

Honest

ONE SPORT -
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Norwegian parasport strategy,
2022 - 2027

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