

Transferability Toolkit

What we learnt on the road to Cork 2022!



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

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WHO WE ARE

International Mixed Ability Sports is a not for profit organisation working with healthcare professionals, educational institutions, grassroots sports clubs and coaches to improve understanding of diversity and inclusion through the introduction of the Mixed Ability model.

The Mixed Ability model is very different to disability-specific provision. It includes people facing a whole range of obstacles to participation, including physical and learning disabilities, mental & physical health conditions, age-related impairments, low confidence or other personal circumstances.

Social inclusion is at the heart of the Mixed Ability model and this is reflected through IMAS trainers who have 'lived experience' of facing barriers to participation.

VISION

To radically change the way we think of, join in and enjoy sports, leading to a fairer and more equal society.

MISSION

Bringing people of all abilities together to play sports and learn from each other, giving everyone the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Our Manifesto

The Mixed Ability Model is about:

MEMBERSHIP AND BELONGING



Mixed Ability recognises the right of everyone to participate in community sports without being separated, classified or labelled.

EQUAL PARTICIPATION



Mixed Ability is a social movement within sports, actively promoting inclusion and equality through a sense of belonging and membership to a group, team or club.

RULES AND REGULATIONS



Mixed Ability Sports follows the same rules and regulations of mainstream sports without adaptations, and only minor adjustments to take into account individual participant needs.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS



In breaking down these barriers Mixed Ability Sport creates opportunities for marginalised communities to challenge the established status quo and affirm their right to equal participation.

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS



Sport has the power to transform lives making us healthier and happier, and yet there are people excluded or segregated because of stigma, prejudice or personal perceptions of their capability.

INCLUSION AND EQUALITY



Too often sport is seen as the prerogative of elite athletes or established majorities. Grassroots sport can also be responsible for excluding minorities allowing access only to charitable or segregated activities.



Foreword

We all know participation in sport benefits our physical and mental well-being, as well as creating positive social change. Why – then – are there still so many people who face significant barriers to participating in mainstream sport as equal members? Where are their voices? How can we make sure we use sports activities and sport events to promote real life-changing, sustainable opportunities for people of all abilities and walks of life? We believe Mixed Ability answers many of these questions.

The idea behind the Mixed Ability Week 2022 was to showcase the Mixed Ability model to the biggest audience possible, to raise awareness about a new idea of grassroots sport, and to prove that global events don't need to be parachuted from the top, but can instead be nurtured by the knowledge, passion, and talent present in any local community. The vibrant week of Cork 2022 has showed beyond any reasonable doubt that this is indeed possible.

We wanted therefore to share our main lessons, in a transparent and honest account, including the issues we encountered as well as our suggestions to reach positive and inclusionary outcomes. Each section focuses on a key

topic that underpinned the implementation of the Mixed Ability Week 2022, reflecting on the barriers and enablers, and put this knowledge into the public domain.

But the Transferability Toolkit is not just this document. This Toolkit is intended to complement all the educational resources co-produced by IMAS with our 'experts by experience', so to give the confidence to any club willing to open their doors to true inclusion that this is a realistic and enjoyable journey!

We believe the learnings shared in this Toolkit are valid for many different sports, local groups, and community-led projects, and we hope this will enable coaches, clubs and activist organisations working in different countries and social contexts to promote longlasting social inclusion through Mixed Ability sport. The reward awaiting us is a fairer and more equal society, for everyone!



Martino Corazza, International Mixed Ability Sports



Introduction



This resource highlights the lessons learnt by organising a truly global event at a community-based club to a variety of stakeholders. What we share here, will allow other grassroots clubs or community groups who want to create inclusive, participatory and sustainable events to start their journey and embrace the scale of their vision and ambition!

Who is the Toolkit for?

This Toolkit is a useful reference for community sports clubs across Europe and the communities they represent, to organise accessible, inclusive, and participatory sporting events, raising awareness about the benefits of sport and its power to transform lives.

It is also a reflection on the experience of organising the Mixed Ability Week 2022 (MAW22) and the 3rd International Mixed Ability Rugby Tournament 2022 (IMART 2022) in Cork, enabling the Project Team to share their lived experience with the wider sector.



What is the Toolkit for?

The main objective of this Toolkit is to raise awareness about what is possible and achievable organising global events at a grassroots level. IMAS wants to share a different approach – that we called ‘glocal’ – combining global reach and ambitions with deep roots, and connections to our local communities. We wanted to demonstrate that not all sports events have to be ‘slash and burn’, an ephemeral and short-lived apparition in a local context, leaving untraceable legacies, considering people as spectators and not active agents.

We hope that our event showed that another approach is possible. We wanted in particular to:

- Share the journey who led to the realisation of MAW22 and IMART22
- Point out the key success factors and pitfalls that any project might encounter
- Provide advice on how to keep the boat steady
- Share a successful example of how people and the event reached their vision
- And finally, the Appendix section will provide a series of basic template documents that we found useful to implement and successfully deliver this project!



“IF WE WERE TO START SPORT AGAIN, WE WOULD PROBABLY USE THE MIXED ABILITY MODEL TO RESHAPE IT”

- CATHERINE CARTY, UNESCO CHAIR IN INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORT, FITNESS AND RECREATION, MTU.

FACTS AND FIGURES



1,100

PLAYERS



650

VOLUNTEERS



28

TEAMS



15

NATIONS



82

MATCHES



25,000

SPECTATORS



53,000

UNIQUE STREAMS*



IRELAND, ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND, SPAIN, ITALY, BELGIUM, POLAND, NETHERLANDS, MALTA, ARGENTINA, CANADA, ECUADOR, CHILE, URUGUAY

NEW SPORTS

- MIXED ABILITY ROWING,
- MIXED ABILITY BOXING,
- MIXED ABILITY FOOTBALL,
- KINBALL,
- FLOOR CURL



*Unique viewers on streaming platforms

“IMART IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO GROW THE CULTURE OF INCLUSION THROUGH THE VALUES OF SPORT.”

- PARTICIPANT



IMART GROWTH

🏆 1ST WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT EVER! 🏆

	BRADFORD 2015	VITORIA-GASTEIZ 2017	CORK 2022
TEAMS	12	16	28
PLAYERS	450	600	1100
NATIONS	10	12	15
VOLUNTEERS	40	150	650
SPECTATORS	4,000	10,000	25,000

€1M RAISED, INCLUDING CO-FINANCING FROM ERASMUS+
 OVER **€280K IN PRESS AND DIGITAL MENTIONS** IN IRELAND
 SOCIAL MEDIA REACH **+42 MILLION PEOPLE**
 MORE THAN **6M DIGITAL AD VIEWS**
 GENERATED MORE THAN **100K INTERACTIONS**



“IMART KNOCKED IT OUT OF THE PARK. I COULDN'T COMPLIMENT IT HIGHLY ENOUGH”

- SIMON SLATTERY – SMURFIT KAPPA, IMART PLATINUM SPONSOR



Vision



Mixed Ability is a value-driven movement within grassroots sport, that reimagines the way we think of, join in and enjoy sport. Our values are upheld in our Manifesto.

The event in Cork was built around this strong vision, shaped, shared and owned by the core team members who – in their turn – were able to pass it onto all the other relevant stakeholders. The culture set out by the team was to ensure everyone “enjoyed the event” and had the best possible time, making sure that MAW and IMART would leave a sustainable impact behind them.

Since the very first planning meeting in 2018, it was clear that IMART 2020 (then postponed to 2022) was conceived as a great showcase of the Mixed Ability ethos, the best IMART to date, but above all a truly inclusive and fun event, reaffirming the social aspect of sport.

This vision was then embedded throughout the project, from the strategic planning to the individual workstreams and the daily meetings with volunteers during the event. It was the reassuring feeling people went back to when things got tough, because it was never challenged or questioned.

Values were integrated in each action performed, each meeting carried out, in all aspects of our planning and communication. This has made possible for the project to be resilient, innovative, and ultimately deliver a high-quality event.

From our experience:

- Set out a clear vision
- Generate ideas
- Ask a trusted ‘critical friend’ to facilitate the discussion amongst project team members.
- Don’t be afraid of bringing up difficult conversations at this stage. It’s more likely they will surface anyway at some point so... the earlier the better!
- Let values be the measuring stick of your decision-making
- Don’t compromise on your values but be flexible on the way you achieve your goals

“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD; INDEED, IT’S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.”

- Margaret Mead

Champions

Mixed Ability is all about people, and about communities. People who were excluded from sport and society, but also people who took a stand and created a more inclusive society, leading by example. The expansion of Mixed Ability sports relies on the vision, passion and commitment of these key individuals who have lived experience of barriers to participation and act to build a fairer and more equal world. They are the champions.

The project team was made up of champions, with the idea of delivering the best IMART possible. Everyone was given chance to input and feel ownership of the project, everybody was invited to contribute and everybody did. The level of internal communication was exceptional and consistent, resulting in one of the critical success factors.

It is important to acknowledge that leadership happens at all levels, and that is much easier to achieve a shared vision by empowering, engaging with, and delegating to the right people, once they're in the right place. For this reason, the project team co-opted other key members with specialist skills and expertise, enabling the project to expand its reach and to gather commercial and political support from additional key stakeholders. This also meant that the project was able to display consistent professionalism and benefit from a much wider network to support the event activation.

It is also inevitable that – when people care about what they do – and especially working towards a very intense, time-limited event, there is a risk of burn out. Physical and mental exhaustion is something that the whole project team have experienced. In less cohesive teams this can lead to relationship breakdowns, but the special working relationship based on openness, trust and shared vision meant that it was possible to maintain a positive and proactive attitude.



From our experience:

- Map your community assets, communicate your vision with clarity
- Play to everyone's strengths, don't parachute people in uncomfortable seats
- Ensure those with key roles are fully committed. With volunteers, ensure there is a clear understanding of the commitment and roles required and check they can demonstrate they are capable of doing them.
- Care about people, just like many disabilities, bad mental health is at times invisible.

“LOOK, I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHERE WE SHOULD TAKE THIS BUS. BUT I KNOW THIS MUCH: IF WE GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE ON THE BUS, THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT SEATS, AND THE WRONG PEOPLE OFF THE BUS, THEN WE'LL FIGURE OUT HOW TO TAKE IT SOMEPLACE GREAT.”

- **Jim Collins**, Good to Great

Allies



Every event happens in a specific community at a very specific time. Sometimes the place is right, but the time is wrong. At times it's the other way around. It is important to understand the context you are working within and make sure your vision stems from and resonates with the lived experience of people around you. And then black swans occur, such as the Covid19 pandemic. It is therefore crucial to build resiliency through a vast network of likeminded allies.

Even in the most difficult hours of the pandemic, participants, teams, sponsors, and stakeholders didn't stop supporting the project, showing how much it meant to them.

Likewise, the team at MAW22 were always willing to reach out to ask for support, expertise and advice proactively and then action accordingly where necessary, firm on the vision but flexible on the best way to achieve that.

An example of the success of this stance, for instance, is the nearly €500k that was raised by the team locally through corporate sponsorships and public partnerships, matching the investment from the European Commission. This was the result of a vision aimed at offering a bespoke experience for each sponsor, focusing on tailored opportunities, staff engagement, and value alignment, resulting in a win-win situation.

Mixed Ability is about creating networks of allyship, building meaningful relationships anchored in trust, accountability and consistency that can benefit everyone, and most importantly people at risk of exclusion and marginalised groups. It is important to remember that one cannot be a self-proclaimed ally, they have to be recognised and acknowledged by the individual and community they serve.

From our experience:

- Make sure your vision stems from real needs and aspirations
- Acknowledge and celebrate each individual contribution as unique
- Use already existing community assets such as community groups and local networks
- Ask your champions to identify people they trust in their community, and work with them
- Maximise the network

Risks

Risks are inherent to our lives, and even the most careful planning cannot mitigate against them all. We believe it is important to identify risks, contextualise them, put in place mitigating strategies but also try to understand them in the wider context of the benefits some activities might provide. This is the case in sport. All sports carry an element of risk, most noticeably injuries, but also provide physical and mental wellbeing, social connections, friendship, and a sense of membership and belonging. All these aspects actively impact on our quality of life. Therefore, it is important that everyone is allowed to make their own informed choice about the way they want to be involved in community sport (see Focus 1: Risk, A Necessary Evil?)

More in general, a global event like IMART has ramifications that extend to the personal, community and societal level, with aspects that involve safeguarding, logistics, event management, fundraising, first aid, entertainment only to mention but a few. Besides, risks extend not just to the operations but to the culture and vision too!

Risk management is more effective if done in participation with participants, stakeholders, and volunteers as this is likely to create a better analysis and stronger ownership of the results than a 'top-down' approach.

Of course, the complexity and extent of a risk register depends on the size, scope, and nature of your project, but whatever your sector it is important to have a framework for identifying, assessing, and recording the risks that your organisation faces (see Annex 2 for a template).

And then, black swan events do happen... The project team didn't include the possibility of a global pandemic in its risk register (although a mention to unknown unknowns was made), but the presence of a comprehensive risk register allowed the project team to act swiftly and initiate the procedures and communications to postpone the event as soon as 17th March 2020.



From our experience:

- Create a thorough risk register with participants and stakeholders
- Mark each risk against their likelihood
- Identify whether other stakeholders co-own the risk
- Put in place some mitigation strategy if the event were to occur
- Revise and update the risk register regularly
- Risks can impact the culture and vision of a project/organisation
- A co-produced, participatory risk register is more comprehensive and more likely to capture the complexity of your project
- Remember: black swans do happen so, plan for the best, prepare for the worst.

“I SUPPORTED MY LOCAL RUGBY TEAM FOR YEARS, THEY WOULD NOT LET ME PLAY BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT I COULD GET HURT. OF COURSE I CAN GET HURT, IT'S PART OF THE GAME!”

- **Anthony Brooke**, founder of the Bumble Bees Mixed Ability Rugby Team

Focus

Risk, A Necessary Evil?

One of the biggest concerns around disabled people's inclusion within mainstream sport, and contact sports like rugby specifically, has to do with the risk of injury. It is important to raise both participation and awareness of Mixed Ability (MA) and the risk of injury is a common concern. Below we have detailed our reasons why we believe this risk is manageable and even necessary in the journey to full inclusion.

The Full Experience

Mixed Ability is played to the same regulations as mainstream sports, with competition against local social sides encouraged to spread the MA model of inclusion. This ensures that MA teams remain within the mainstream structure and aren't segregated to only play against other MA teams in a separate league. We have seen MA teams play fixtures against opposition from national leagues, veterans' sides but also, whilst in Argentina, Los Pumpas played against the national rugby team, the Pumas! Once again, this rightfully raises questions about ensuring the safety of players and we have found a simple briefing prior to the game to be the most effective means to achieve a social yet competitive fixture.

In rugby, for instance, utilising the 'tackle who needs to be tackled' ethos allows the contact intensity of a game to vary depending on the rugby-competency of the individual in possession. By playing mainstream opponents it allows for MA teams to access all of rugby's many benefits be that physical on the pitch or social in the bar afterwards!

Duty of Care

On the infrequent occasions that we receive resistance to Mixed Ability, 'duty of care' is often cited as a reason that it can't be delivered. This generally comes in the form of questions such as 'don't we have an increased duty of care to protect these players from injury?' In short, the answer is no. As with any sporting activity the club and coach involved have a duty to deliver sport safely through effective preparations and safeguarding, and abiding by their National Governing Bodies' protocols and procedures.

However, delivering sport 'safely' doesn't mean that any element of risk must be eliminated. Whether playing rugby at international level or in a friendly between two local Vets sides accidents are inevitable and an accepted part of the game. Rowing on a river has its intrinsic risks. What is key is that all participants understand the potential risks involved, consent to participate, and can successfully retain the information provided by the coaches.

'Unwrapping the Cotton Wool'

For many disabled participants the opportunity to play full contact rugby, or train in a boxing gym, will often be their first experience of playing contact sport. It is commonplace for parallel sports to be offered that remove any elements that can be considered dangerous, even if this is to the detriment to the sport itself. Mixed Ability rugby, and Mixed Ability sports in general, provide an opportunity to move away from the misconception that disabled people are a unique section of society that require protection and instead empowers them with the autonomy to decide what sport they would like to engage in.

Encouraging Independence

For players new to rugby stepping out onto a pitch to test yourself against 15 opponents for the first time is a daunting prospect, regardless of disability. However, from a player's perspective when a coach sends you out onto the field it is a moment of immense pride as it illustrates that they trust you to participate both safely and competitively. By allowing players to participate despite risk it helps to build independence and confidence that can often spill into other areas of life. For example, we have seen how individuals who may previously have required support to attend training have gained the confidence to attempt another 'risky' activity in the form of travelling independently. In this instance whilst the risk is more likely to be ending up in the wrong place rather than injury the premise is the same and the confidence gained via rugby is transferable leading to a greater level of independence.

Plan, plan and... plan again!



One of the keys to the huge success of the MAW and IMART 22 was without doubt the incredibly passionate Project Team. The Team held the original vision at the centre of everything that was done. The members worked together, trusting each other, but at the same time were not shy of challenging one another where necessary.

Unlike many programmes that are volunteer-led, it was crucial to have an external Project Manager (PM) with an outstanding level of expertise. The PM was uniquely focused on the delivery of the project/event without being influenced by club or other networks' dynamics. This meant she was also able to hold people to account.

The strong project management enabled the Project Team to feel supported whilst focusing on their specific tasks/areas. The format and focus of project meetings ensured the Project Team stayed on tasks to completion right through to daily event meetings. The level of project planning and detail that went into each aspect ensured people knew what needed to be done and were empowered to deliver, allowing also the flexibility to respond accordingly as curve balls were thrown into the mix (not least the postponement of the tournament twice because of the pandemic!).

All these occurrences reinforced the resilience and responsiveness of the Project Team in resolving a huge spectrum of issues. The team kept a 'can d' attitude and whilst planned

for what they could plan for, held a flexible approach to situations as they arose. During the tournament, daily on-site meetings with security, volunteers, and event control, meant the team could adapt and change plans based on daily learnings of what was happening on site.

From our experience:

- A dedicated, independent Project Manager is key to success
- The time invested in planning is time saved when activities happen
- Thorough planning helps to respond accordingly, instead of reacting.
- A good indicator of success is how well you handled your plan B.
- Remember, some things are so unexpected no one is prepared for them!
- Planning is necessary but believing is essential

“THE MAN WHO IS PREPARED HAS HIS BATTLE HALF FOUGHT.”

- Miguel De Cervantes

Impact



This IMART, unlike previous ones, will leave a huge amount of evidence in the form of pictures, videos, streaming, social media contents, articles, podcasts, information material as well as personal anecdotes. This will build a legacy for the global Mixed Ability movement. This time, we had almost 1,100 participants and delegates, from 16 different countries, and more than 25,000 spectators. Each and everyone have their story, each and every one saw the week with different eyes. They will carry the torch and become the best change agents in their communities!

For example, Elliot Smith, from the Oshawa Vikings in Canada, wrote an illustrated book about his experience at IMART. Other players posted videos on their social media. We produced a Legacy photobook to capture the emotions of the tournament, and many other participants shared their voices on Facebook, Instagram or Tiktok. The interaction across different platform reached a staggering 42million interactions and this was only possible because people saw, felt and lived the event as if it belonged to them. Which is true.

The impact goes well beyond the legacy. It is something that becomes embedded in the very fabric of our beings. Something we carry with us

at all times, and slowly transforms the way we see the world and ultimately who we are.

- Allow your participants to tell their stories with their voices
- Any individual benefit will also benefit the community, and society more in general
- Make sure participants know they 'own' the project and its success
- When people are transformed, they become agents for positive change

“YOUR LIFE MATTERS. YOU CAN'T LIVE THROUGH A DAY WITHOUT MAKING AN IMPACT ON THE WORLD. AND WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IS TO THINK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF YOUR ACTIONS ON THE WORLD AROUND YOU.”

- Jane Goodall

Work out loud



Marketing and communication played a crucial role in making the event possible. And ultimately made us more visible. When you are more visible you get noticed, people become interested, and your message has better chances to find fertile soil. It is important to have the right support and understanding of how to best communicate your vision and actions, with generosity and focus.

At MAW22 we had so much great content to share, so many incredible stories that it always felt we weren't doing enough... It is important to make sure communication does not become a mere marketing exercise, and that real voices are driving the storytelling. Ultimately, true stories will resonate with likeminded people, will change hearts and mind, and will create strength around your movement!

- Different audiences speak different languages
- Use your movement as amplifier
- Make sure the stories you tell are genuine and relevant, don't pretend to be something you're not
- True stories will speak volume to 'your people'
- A great story doesn't age, it become a classic!

"IF A STORY IS NOT ABOUT THE HEARER HE WILL NOT LISTEN. AND HERE I MADE A RULE - A GREAT AND INTERESTING STORY IS ABOUT EVERYONE OR IT WILL NOT LAST."

- John Steinbeck



Celebrate

And finally... celebrate! Celebrating an achievement is hugely important for many different reasons. Too often we feel like we're just 'going through the motions' and need to move on to the next project or challenge as quickly as we can. Taking the time to reflect on our journey, acknowledging people's contribution, showing our appreciation, are all important parts of building a supportive, inclusive, and sustainable legacy, where everyone is valued and recognised, and therefore motivated to carry on the work in their day-to-day lives.

It also helps to firm and consolidate the impact. Gratitude builds stronger connections, puts people at the centre of the vision, and allow us to acknowledge everyone is important but no one indispensable. An international movement such as the Mixed Ability one can only exist if the champions are driven and committed to growing its vision. Also, a great success like the Mixed Ability Week 2022, is the sum of a series of very small victories, that all deserve to be appreciated! And finally... never underestimate the importance of having fun!



Appendix

Risk assessment and monitoring template

Risk Description	Impact Description	Impact Level	Probability Level	Priority Level	Mitigation Notes	Owner
Give a brief summary of the risk.	What will happen if the risk is not mitigated or eliminated?	Rate 1 (LOW) to 5 (HIGH)	Rate 1 (LOW) to 5 (HIGH)	(Impact X Probability) Address the highest first.	What can be done to lower or eliminate the impact or probability?	Who's responsible?

Priority Level	
Probability	5 5 10 15 20 25
	4 4 6 12 16 20
	3 3 6 9 12 15
	2 2 4 6 8 10
	1 1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
Impact	

With the support of the:



With the patronage of:



Main sponsor:



Supported by:



Gold



Silver



Bronze



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