



Belgium

# THE PLAY UNIFIED SPORT CAMPAIGN

## Facilitating the (social) inclusion of people with mental impairment



### The Initiative

**Play Unified** has been developed by Special Olympics Belgium with Belgian Sport Federations.

160.000 people in Belgium suffer mental impairment. Special Olympics Belgium reaches 20.000 of them with sport activities. Sport is seen as a medium to facilitate their (social) inclusion. It is widely accepted that 1.000.000 persons in Belgium are directly or indirectly concerned in their daily life (parents, families, medical and health personnel)

Via Play Unified, social inclusion is promoted via unified sport practice. The aim is to bring valid (normal) athletes and athletes with mental impairment to practice sport in the same team. By doing so, they share trainings, sport experiences, successes and defeats. The basic principle is that training and playing together facilitates mutual understanding and creates friendship. Play(ing) Unified helps each athlete to progress: the one will make technical or tactical progression, while the other will develop values, commitment.

#### Expectations of the initiative

Three models exist within Unified Sports: competitive Unified Sports, Unified Sports Player Development and Unified Sports Recreation. All three models provide different types of experiences in team sports such as basketball, football and volleyball and in other sports such as bocce, golf and tennis.

**Unified Sports (Competitive):** The Unified Sports competitive model combines Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) as teammates on sport teams for training and competition.

**Unified Sports Player Development:** The Unified Sports Player Development model combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) as teammates on sports teams for training and competition.

**Unified Sports Recreation:** Unified Sports Recreation consists of inclusive recreational sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners without intellectual disabilities.

### Stakeholders involved

Leading organisation:

- Special Olympics Belgium

Stakeholders:

- Families and institutions of people with intellectual impairment
- Sport federations and clubs
- National Olympic Committee
- Public authorities

### Case Study Provided By:



Université catholique de Louvain (EOSE member) with Special Olympics Belgium

### Targeted Objectives

#### Main objectives

- Recognition and inclusion of athletes with intellectual impairment through sport
- Participation and implication of valid persons as unified partners
- Personal development of the athlete and the unified partner

### Impact

A quality label "Play Unified" is given by Special Olympics Belgium to the clubs, federations, cities, schools which provide a qualitative sport offer and contribute to the inclusion of athletes with intellectual impairment through sport.

### Dissemination

- ▶ Special Olympics Belgium: [Play Unified Campaign](#)
- ▶ Special Olympics Belgium: [Red Devils Play Unified Challenge](#)
- ▶ [Play Unified match with Special Olympics Belgium](#)

Website: [SO Belgium](#)

Website: [SO International](#)



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