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SAIL4Sustainability

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D 3.1 Toolkit for Inclusion and Diversity within Sustainable Sailing Practices

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1- Introduction

'Sail 4 Sustainability' is an inspiring Erasmus+ initiative. Our vision is to empower young people to embrace sustainability and protect our planet through the transformative power of sailing. We strive to offer a safe, enjoyable learning environment where youth can discover the magic of sailing and the significance of sustainability. By enhancing their knowledge and skills, we aim to cultivate sustainability ambassadors who will positively contribute to an ecologically sound and socially just world. At the same time, we aim to provide tools to make the sailing sport more inclusive and diverse. That is what this Toolkit is for.

Our sport has the power to benefit communities and individuals by encouraging collaboration and providing the opportunity to establish long-lasting friendships. However, all too often potential participants can be discouraged from entering the sport by misconceptions of sailing being an exclusive and expensive sport. Our research has shown that in many clubs, some sections of the community are under-represented. Those groups have not had the opportunity to discover the rewards of sailing.

As this Toolkit will show, a lot can be done to eliminate perceived barriers to participate in sailing. We recognise that every organisation is unique, and that this toolkit is not a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, we hope that the following pages will act as a useful resource of things to consider when trying to become more inclusive and diverse. The Toolkit is designed to assist in assessing how diverse an organisation's current membership is and give guidelines in setting achievable goals. It offers practical ideas on how to take the next steps on an organisation's inclusion and diversity journey.

2- About this Toolkit

This Toolkit has been designed to support all European sailing clubs, training centres and partner organisations to be more inclusive and diverse. We have outlined our definitions of these terms below:

Inclusion: Offering everyone an experience of belonging; ensuring that everyone feels welcomed, supported, and part of the organisation.

Diversity: Recognising and celebrating difference; understanding that everyone experiences life in different ways, ensuring representation across all that you do, and taking time to celebrate individuals and their stories.

This Toolkit contains practical tools that can help to improve inclusion and diversity (I&D). Most tools are supported by case studies, further reading suggestions, and useful links.

3- Why Inclusion and Diversity

The UN Sustainable Development Goals framework[1] includes gender equality as part of its broader sustainability agenda. In the context of sailing, we aim for an even wider focus regarding inclusion and diversity. Therefore, we promote the fair treatment and full participation of all people, particularly groups who are underrepresented or subject to discrimination based on race, colour, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, religion, disability or handicap, sex or gender, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.

Statistics on the underrepresentation of various groups within the sailing sport are scarce. Based on our collective experiences however, we have come to understand that there is a general overrepresentation of white people and/or men. This creates an opportunity for improvement. Besides being fair, I&D is also smart. More people sailing translates into more sailing club

members to befriend, more people that are connecting to nature and therefore more potential sustainability ambassadors. It also means more business for organizations that create products or services for sailors. Moreover, diverse sailing teams are better equipped to be more successful.[2]

'Successful teams invite diversity to the table. Remember we are not talking just about gender diversity. The potential that demographic diversity (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) brings is in experiential and cognitive diversity – a broad range of experience, knowledge, thinking patterns and behavioral styles brings a diversity of perspectives. Effective teams co-create.'

Team Coach and organizational psychologist Anje-Marijcke Van Boxtel

4- Overcoming Barriers

What is keeping everyone from starting and continuing to sail? Is your sailing club or training centre a proper representation of society at large? If not, apparently certain barriers exist. What are they and how can they be overcome?

It Starts with Data

As evidenced by a landmark 2019 study by the World Sailing Trust[3] that covered 75 countries, underrepresentation of and discrimination against women is a significant issue in the world of professional sailing. The survey revealed that 80% of female respondents and 56% of male respondents believe that gender balance is an issue in our sport. Respondents mentioned several key trends: issues around a lack of female participation causing and demonstrating discrimination; a lack of support for women and girls; lack of representation; poor perceptions about women in sailing and issues around the politics of racing. Respondents also shared their experiences of discrimination: 59% of female respondents and 14% of men say they have experienced discrimination. They mentioned experiences of isolation and harassment, being treated as less competent and experiencing slights on board, a lack of opportunities for women and girls, being stereotyped by gender and receiving less support than male counterparts.

To address potential discrimination or diversity and inclusion issues at your organization, it is necessary to know the (lack of) diversity of your members. The first step is therefore to **establish a baseline** of where your organisation is currently within its I&D journey, whether this is right at the start or further along. Establishing a baseline will support you to identify areas of potential improvement and track the progress you are making. A practical way to do this, is to do a survey among your members or trainees and compare the outcome to comparable census data for your country. While doing this, don't forget to comply to the data privacy regulations that apply. The RYA has published a comprehensive guide[4] where more details of these actions are included.

Show Your True Colours

We believe an organization's journey towards more I&D would benefit from leadership by example. That means to **ensure inclusion and diversity in your organization's board and committees**. Diversity at this level will support organisations to make fully informed decisions, not just around I&D, but around the organisation's everyday work, too.

Achieving diverse representation can be difficult. An option to consider is setting term-limits for committee members. Of course, organisations with a diverse members will have a broader base into which they can tap to achieve better representation at committee level compared to organisations with a more homogenous group of members. If the membership is not yet very diverse, organisations can look outside its current membership to ensure it is attracting diverse representation in its committees. This could be done by utilising current members' family and friend connections, or by developing better relationships with the local community. In other words, a club may need to diversify its membership before it is able to make significant committee changes.

When recruiting new committee members, be upfront that you are encouraging applications from individuals with a diverse background to better represent the organisation. The organisation could also think about having a committee member responsible for leading I&D within the organisation.

Another element is to be clear about your organization's intentions. Another tool to encourage diversity and inclusion is to **publicly state your ambitions** for I&D. Although for some this might feel superfluous or self-evident, it does have the benefit of creating clarity for both internal and external audiences, such as potential new members or sponsors.

A good example of a public statement on inclusion and diversity is the statement from the Italian Sailing Federation (Federazione Italiana Vela - FIV). FIV has made efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within the sport.

Case Study: *Federazione Italiana Vela Inclusion and Diversity Statement*[5]
" Sailing is a sport for everyone, and the Federazione Italiana Vela (FIV) is committed to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to participate and enjoy the sport. We believe that diversity enriches our community and enhances the experiences of all our members. Our goal is to break down barriers and create an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected. We are dedicated to promoting equal opportunities in sailing and fostering a culture of mutual respect and acceptance."
(Source: The FIV Support and Development plan 2024)

Another good example is the online statement of the American Sailing Association:

Case Study: *American Sailing Association Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement*[6]
"Sailing is for everyone. There should be no barriers to participation by anyone - period. The young, the old, the disabled, and the athletic all can find ways to enjoy this wonderful activity. American Sailing welcomes anyone interested in sailing regardless of their race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion. Come, and take sailing lessons from an ASA-certified instructor at an ASA affiliate facility based on our world-renowned educational system. Come, join our association of sailors who share a passion for the sport. Come, have fun sailing. The ASA recognizes the rights of all individuals to mutual respect and acceptance of others without biases based on differences of any kind and we promote these values throughout our organization and community."

Ideally, such statements are approved by members and communicated to all, available online for all current and potential members to read. In addition, the statement could get a prominent place in the organisation's clubhouse.

We also recommend **creating and providing clear policies and codes of conduct** that clarify the desired behaviours from members, instructors, and coaches. To support the inclusion of diverse groups of people, be sure to have effective anti-discrimination, hate speech, and equality policies to support this. The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) has done some great work[7] in this area.

I&D should also be part of the board's and members' normal behaviour. It means that it should become commonplace to **stand up to inappropriate and offensive behaviour.** Only by setting good examples, you truly allow everyone in your community to speak safely and freely on matters that concern them.

Finally, **using inclusive language** is also important. Inclusive language requires us to challenge our own stereotypes and prejudice towards different groups of people in society and aids us to unlearn negative habits that are ingrained in us from a young age. By normalizing inclusive language, we aim to remove the barriers for groups of people who are often marginalized in our society. A person's disability or health condition is not what defines them, yet often they are referred to as having a disability, health condition, or impairment. Instead, it would be better to refer to them as a person. A comprehensive guide for the English language has been created by the RYA[8].

RYA Inclusive language handbook

In Spain, an inclusive language guide[9] has been developed for use in all sports, including sailing. It was launched by the Provincial Council of Bizkaia and is mandatory for all sports clubs.

Getting Onboard

How to become a sailor if someone belongs to an underrepresented group and has never sailed? To eliminate barriers, it's important to **actively create easy and open introductions to sailing**. There are various ways to make this happen, either at your own organization or together with others.

In Italy, schoolchildren are invited to learn sailing in the "Velascuola" project.

Case study: "Velascuola[10]"

The Velascuola project, organized by the Italian Sailing Federation (FIV) in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Education, is a national educational program that introduces students to sailing through structured activities integrated into the school curriculum. Targeting primary and secondary schools across Italy, Velascuola combines both theoretical and practical components. Students learn the basics of sailing, maritime culture, environmental awareness, and sea safety in the classroom before participating in practical sailing lessons at local clubs or marinas, led by certified instructors.

The program is designed to be inclusive, offering opportunities for students from various backgrounds to experience sailing. Velascuola often culminates in local or regional sailing events and competitions where students can showcase their skills and compete in a friendly and supportive environment.

A key component of the program is educating students about marine conservation and the importance of protecting the maritime environment, instilling a sense of responsibility and stewardship for the sea. The Velascuola project has successfully introduced thousands of young people to sailing, fostering a new generation of sailors and maritime enthusiasts.

Educating students with sailing. Photo ©: Velascuola

Another successful initiative in this area is the "*Optimist on Tour*" program in the Netherlands.

Case study: "Optimist on Tour[11]"

This Dutch initiative is a traveling water sports event where children up to 12 years old can get acquainted with sailing for free. Under the guidance of certified and enthusiastic instructors, children sail their first miles in an optimist. Children learn more about watersports in a playful way. The initiative enables children to come into contact with sailing in an easy and accessible way. More than 150,000 children from all over the Netherlands gave taken to the water in 118 locations throughout the Netherlands. The program is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2024 and is still extremely popular with schools, municipalities, associations, and organizations to get children on the water.

Sailing Youth. Photo ©: Optimist on Tour

In Croatia, several initiatives are successfully organized to introduce disadvantaged children to sailing.

Case study: "Sailing from Dreams[12]"

The "Sailing from Dreams" initiative by the "Croatia for Children" Foundation serves as an inspiring example of inclusion in Croatia. This sports and educational weekend brought together 35 children from homes without adequate parental care for an unforgettable experience filled with sailing, learning, and socializing. For many of these children, it was their first time seeing the sea, and the event was marked by laughter and positive energy as six sailboats navigated the waters of the Šibenik aquatorium.
The event was made possible through the generous donation of sailboats from local nautical centers and charter companies, along with the enthusiastic participation of volunteer skippers. This collaborative effort highlights the power of community and the positive impact of providing inclusive opportunities for all children, fostering unforgettable memories and a sense of belonging.

Sailing for Dreams in action. Photo ©: Croatia for Children Foundation

Case study: "Power of the Waves[13]"

The "Power of the Waves" project is a unique initiative that, for the sixth consecutive year, offers an unforgettable experience to children from institutions for children without adequate parental care. This year, nine sailboats hosted forty-two children from six homes in Zagreb, Osijek, Lipik, Karlovac, and for the first time from Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Accompanied by their caregivers, the children enjoyed sailing and created wonderful memories despite their challenging life circumstances.
The project included a variety of fun, cultural, and educational activities. The children took part in learned sailing skills such as tacking, working on the winch, tying knots, handling the autopilot, identifying winds, and hoisting sails. Volunteers, including professional skippers and officers from the Croatian Navy, ensured the children's safety and imparted their knowledge.
The outcome of this special journey is the creation of friendships, social interaction, empathy, laughter, joy, new experiences, support, and memories that the children will carry with them for a lifetime.

Stepping on board. Photo ©: Power of the Waves project

Learning Skills

A lack of sailing skills can be a huge barrier to become a sailor. Moreover, sailing is much more fun, and safer, if you know how to do it properly. But first things first: **knowing how to swim** is even more important. People can feel very anxious on the water if they don't know how to swim. And in case of an emergency, swimming can be a life-saving skill. Fortunately, most kids learn how to swim at an early age. In the Netherlands, many municipalities offer free swimming lessons for kids from low-income families.[14]

Provided your (new) members can swim, there are various ways to **acquire sailing skills**. A very popular way for youth to do this in the Netherlands is to go to sailing school, for example during the summer holidays. Since the Netherlands has many inshore lakes, there is a wealth of sailing schools to choose from[15] that teach sailing in various types of open dinghies. Learning to sail in such boats guarantees awesome basic sailing skills and a lot of fun!

At a Dutch Sailing School - Photo © Zeilschool de Veenhoop

For those who prefer learning how to sail offshore, specialized sailing schools are the way to go. In the Netherlands sailing school "De Zeezeilers[16]" is a well-known institution.

Another way to go is for organisations to provide training programs at their local sailing club.

A notable example of a youth sailing program in Italy, Sardinia is hosted by the "Lega Navale Sulcis" in Calasetta. This organization hosts various sailing events and offers sailing instruction for young people. One of their significant events is the RS Aero[17] Youth World Championship, which took place from July 26-30, 2023. This event included multiple races over five days in the waters off Sant'Antioco, an island near Calasetta. It provided a platform for young sailors to compete and improve their sailing skills in a supportive and competitive environment. These programs in Sardinia demonstrate a strong commitment to nurturing young sailing talent through structured competitions and training sessions, offering excellent opportunities for youth to develop their sailing skills in a world-class environment.

Youth sailing with RS Aero - Photo © RS Aero Sailing

Sharing is Caring

Sailing can be an expensive sport, and money can therefore be a barrier. But is don't have to be. Especially when one **shares boats and sailing equipment** with others. This is a very common practice at sailing schools, but also in many sailing clubs' arrangements exist where youth can sail in boats owned by the club.

The concept of *sharing is caring* is an important feature of the Dutch Water Scouts.[18]

Case study: low-cost sailing at the Dutch Water Scouts

At the "Zeeverkenners" – as the Dutch Water Scouts are locally known, it is common practice to share the use of sturdy steel boats (the "lelievlet") and maintain them together. This keeps costs and therefore contributions low. Everyone is welcome at the Zeeverkenners and youth are grouped in age categories. They organise free introduction meetings to enable youngsters to get to know the organisation and sailing before becoming a member.

Water Scouts sailing in a sturdy 'Lelievlet' - Photo © Zeeverkenners Sint Joris

For youths who are enthusiastic about sailing and think about owning a boat while being on a tight budget, the way to go is to look for used boats, parts, and gear. Thanks to the internet, a huge online market has developed, such as the Dutch website "Marktplaats", which has various categories[19] that are boat related.

Another way to remove financial barriers is to **provide discount to youth** at your organization, like the Tall Ship "Eendracht" does.

Case study: "Eendracht" makes youth sailing affordable

Older youth or adults can become sailing enthusiasts by setting foot aboard the "Eendracht[20]". It's an active sailing and team-building experience that anyone can book. Experience is not necessary, because there's a professional crew on board to teach the participants all the tricks of sailing, navigating, and manoeuvring. Young people in the age group 15-25 receive up to 50 percent discount on the normal board price.

Tall ship "Eendracht" at Sea. Photo ©: Stichting het Zeilend Zeeschip

A commendable example from Italy where financial barriers are minimized to make sailing accessible is the "Mascalzone Latino" Sailing School[21] in Naples.

Case study: "Mascalzone Latino Sailing School" provides free sailing programs to underprivileged youth

This sailing school, founded by renowned sailor Vincenzo Onorato, emphasizes inclusivity and providing opportunities for disadvantaged youth. The school offers free sailing programs for young people from underprivileged backgrounds. This initiative aims to use sailing as a tool for social inclusion and personal development. Participants receive comprehensive training that covers both the theoretical and practical aspects of sailing. The school provides all necessary equipment, ensuring that students do not need to incur any costs to participate. Beyond sailing skills, the program focuses on teaching life skills such as teamwork, responsibility, and resilience. The aim is to help participants grow both as sailors and as individuals. The school is supported by various sponsors and donors who share its vision of making sailing accessible to all.

Making sailing accessible to all. Photo ©: Scuola Vela Mascalzone Latino

Check your Facilities

A handicap or physical disability could be a barrier for people to sail. It is therefore important that your **organisation's location and venue are accessible and inclusive** to all. Ideally, your venue is accessible via good level access for vehicles, wheelchairs, pushchairs, etc., and has good lighting from the main road to the venue entrance. Ideally, a local public transport stop is nearby and there is sufficient parking available, including disabled spaces. The entry into the venue should have level pathways, handrails, and good lighting. The venue's interior should have wide corridors and lifts / ramps where necessary, appropriate doors (e.g. power assisted), good lighting and seating, and inclusive signage throughout.

A good starting point could be to cooperate with the Dutch initiative Sailability[22]. They work with sailing clubs to make venue and materials accessible to people with a handicap and organize sailing days.

Case study: "Sailabillity" makes sailing accessible

The Sailability Netherlands Foundation believes people with a handicap should also be able to enjoy sailing. Sailability makes sailing possible with almost all disabilities limitations. They organize sailing days to give people with disabilities the opportunity to (learn to) sail.
The sailing clubs that collaborate with Sailability organize approximately ten sailing days per season.

The Sailability Netherlands Foundation is affiliated with Sailability World. There are now 395 locations in 20 countries where sailing for people with disabilities is organized under the Sailability flag.

Sailability in Action - Photo © WVS Giesbeek and Sailability

In Spain, the "Adapted Sailing School" initiatives works towards including people with disabilities:

Case study: "Adapted Sailing School[23]"

The adapted sailing school, created in collaboration with the Royal Maritime Club of Sotogrande, the Alavela Nautical School and Helicópteros Sanitarios, teaches both initiation classes and advanced dinghy sailing courses. The initiative seeks to promote the integration of groups with difficulties in social insertion in normalized environments

The boats may be governed by people with or without disabilities, competing on equal terms, which allows the inclusion of groups with functional diversity. In addition, the school has a semi-rigid safety boat to control the practice area and the instructors necessary to provide the training.
The Port of Sotogrande plans to adapt, if necessary, both the structures on land, eliminating architectural barriers through an accessibility plan already under study, and the port area, using a floating dock suitable for the boarding of participants in the courses.

Another aspect concerns the organisation's **toilets, showers, and changing facilities and making them accessible and inclusive** to all. Having at least one wheelchair accessible and gender-neutral toilet, changing, and shower facility could already make a big difference.

The food and drinks available in your organisation also deserve attention. Is the **catering offered inclusive** to all? Think about offering options for vegetarians, vegans, Muslims (Halal), Jews (Kosher), and providing allergen information.

Deal with Unfair Treatment

We recommend **making clear what to do when someone is treated unfairly.** A grievance policy or disputes and disciplinary procedure should ideally be in place and communicated regularly to all members, including induction of new members. The best way to go is to make these available easily online for all current and potential members to access. See also the example from the RYA.[24]

5- Best Practices and Role Models from Around the World

We believe that role models and best practices can help to increase the participation from underrepresented groups in sailing. Inspiring initiatives that showcase inclusion and diversity in sailing exist around the world. We have listed a few below.

Mirno More Peace Fleet

Mirno More Peace Fleet[25] stands out as a model for using recreational activities to achieve broader social goals, demonstrating how organized efforts can lead to sustainable peace and integration. The initiative is a prominent sailing project dedicated to promoting peace, tolerance, integration, and inclusion. Established in 1994, the organization focuses on creating a platform for socially disadvantaged children and young people, including war orphans, refugee children, and individuals with various social, emotional, and special needs.

Every September, the Peace Fleet organizes an annual sailing flotilla in Croatia, involving over 100 ships. This event has evolved into a significant rally, allowing time for educational activities within crews and fostering exchange among the entire fleet. The program specifically caters to diverse target groups, including socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, war orphans, refugees, and those with special needs. The week-long sailing experience provides an

ideal environment for achieving the goals of peace, social integration, tolerance, and international understanding.

Their best practices include:

- Inclusive Participation: Mirno More ensures that a wide variety of participants, regardless of their background or needs, are included in its activities. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and community among all participants.
- Hands-On Educational Approach: By integrating educational work within the sailing crews, the organization effectively combines experiential learning with practical skills, enhancing personal development and group cohesion.
- Sustainable Impact: The annual sailing events create lasting effects by providing continuous opportunities for participants to engage in meaningful interactions and personal growth.
- Collaboration and Networking: The rally format allows for ample exchange among participants, promoting collaboration and understanding across diverse groups.

Impression from Fleet Week 2023 - Photo © Mirno More Peace Fleet

Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation

British sailor Ellen Mac Arthur became the fastest solo sailor to sail around the world in 2005. Spending 71 days alone at sea, confronted by the awesome power and dazzling beauty of nature, Ellen began to ponder the fragility of the systems we've built. Her boat was her world, and her survival was entirely dependent on the limited food, fuel, and other supplies she'd brought with her. She realised that our global economy is no different – it relies completely on the finite resources we extract, use and then dispose of. She returned with new insights, realizing that the decisions we make today affect what's left for tomorrow. Five years later, she set up the Foundation[26] in her name to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

Ellen MacArthur becomes the fastest solo sailor to circumnavigate the globe - Photo © Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Youth Development Foundation Sail Africa

In Durban, South Africa, an initiative by youth development foundation Sail Africa[27] raises funds to help under privileged youth to learn to sail. They cooperate with two yacht clubs in Durban that provide the necessary facilities.

Youth sailing in Durban - Photo © Sail Africa

The Maiden Factor

Thirty-five years ago, the yacht *Maiden*, with the first ever all female crew rounded Cape Horn in the Whitbread Round the World Race and secured their place in the history books. In April 2024, *Maiden* made history again by competing with the first black female crew members in the Ocean Globe Race around Cape Horn and finishing in first place.

The Maiden Factor Foundation[28] works with, raises funds for, and supports communities to give girls access to education. The foundation empowers and supports them to remain in school throughout their teenage years, so the girls can reach their full potential and create better futures for all.

Champagne finish for Maiden in the Ocean Globe Race - Photo © The Maiden Factor / Kaia Bint Savage

6- Checklist for an Inclusive and Diverse Sailing Environment

Based on the previous chapters, the checklist below summarizes practical tools and resources that your organization can utilize to create a diverse and inclusive environment.

- ✓ **Establish a baseline to determine where your organisation stands in its I&D journey**
- ✓ **Ensure inclusivity and diversity in your organization's board and committees**
- ✓ **Publicly state your I&D ambitions**
- ✓ **Create and provide clear policies and codes of conduct**
- ✓ **Stand up to inappropriate and offensive behaviour.**
- ✓ **Use inclusive language**
- ✓ **Actively create easy and open introductions to sailing**
- ✓ **Ensure (new) members know how to swim**
- ✓ **Help (new) members to acquire sailing skills**
- ✓ **Share boats and sailing equipment with others or buy used material to keep costs down**
- ✓ **Remove financial barriers by providing discount to youth**
- ✓ **Ensure your organisation's location, venue, toilets, showers and changing facilities are accessible and inclusive to all**
- ✓ **Ensure your organisation's catering offers enough diversity for everyone**
- ✓ **Make clear what to do when someone is treated unfairly.**

Sources

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