The World Table Tennis Day (WTTD) Diversity and Inclusion Handbook has been developed by the ITTF Foundation in collaboration with Pro Sport Development (PSD), with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).
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It is with great pleasure and excitement that the ITTF Foundation brings the WTTD Diversity and Inclusion Handbook. As we prepare to celebrate another year of passion and joy through table tennis on 23rd April, the ITTF Group – spearheaded by the ITTF Foundation – centres our attention on this theme for two years. We recognise the immense value of cherishing our differences and fostering an environment where everyone, regardless of gender identity, age, ethnicity, religion, and background, feels welcome and valued.

With the commitment to prioritising inclusivity and equity and making table tennis accessible to all, the ITTF Foundation with the valuable support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, has created the WTTD Diversity and Inclusion Handbook phase one. It is designed to guide organisations and individuals in transforming the spirit of inclusivity into tangible realities within table tennis communities worldwide.

Furthermore, we eagerly anticipate delving into global good practices and on-ground experiences in phase two of the handbook. Through the exploration, we aim to promote sustainability, enrich the sport of table tennis, and foster a more inclusive world for all.

As you embark on your journey with this handbook, I encourage you to dive into its guidance wholeheartedly. Let us join hands to create a table tennis community that celebrates diversity, champions inclusion, and empowers every individual to reach their full potential.

Warm regards,

Petra Sörling
Promoting gender equality and fostering diversity and inclusion has been the goal of German development cooperation for a long time. Therefore, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) welcomes ITTF’s Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Action Plan as a significant stride towards advancing gender equality, protection, and empowerment within the domain of table tennis. This handbook as part of the wider project around the World Table Tennis Day 2024 represents a valuable resource, offering practical insights and strategies pertinent to diverse geographical and contextual circumstances.

Encompassing guidance on delivery, planning, communications, and policy development, this handbook provides comprehensive support for promoters around the world and individuals and organisations beyond this project engaged in the field of table tennis. As GIZ, we take pride in having contributed to the creation of this handbook and eagerly anticipate the positive social impact it will catalyse through the dedication of individuals and organizations who share a passion for table tennis and understand the great value and potential of a diverse and equal society.

As head of GIZ’s global programme “Sport for Development” and someone who enjoys table tennis both as a leisure activity and as a coach in my spare time, I am excited to see the impact this resource will have on the wider sports community. Guided by the principles of diversity and equality, GIZ and ITTF Foundation form a valuable partnership, committed to fostering an inclusive environment where the benefits of a diverse society are realised by all.

I extend my best wishes for the success of this manual!

Kind regards,
Jens Elsner
Sport can be a powerful catalyst for celebrating diversity and inclusion, enriching our lives with unique experiences. When delivered purposefully and equitably, individuals from varied age groups, nationalities, abilities, and gender identities can contribute to vibrant and thriving sporting communities. Diversity in sport unites us, encouraging growth and learning, while creating inclusive and welcoming spaces for everyone.

Table tennis has emerged as a sport that can become a universal medium to embrace diversity and inclusion, creating an environment where the participation of people from all walks of life is valued.

**About the handbook**

The WTTD Diversity and Inclusion Handbook offers practical insights and strategies relevant to various geographies and contexts, aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion in and through table tennis.

The handbook assists in assessing, integrating, and advocating diversity and inclusion in table tennis settings, with guidance on delivery, planning, communications, and policy development.

**Who is it for?**

Whether you are an established organisation, a seasoned coach, or completely new to the world of table tennis, this resource is for anyone passionate about creating a more inclusive and safe environment within the sport.

**Organisations and institutions:** Table tennis clubs and academies, non-profit/ social purpose/ sport for development/ community-based organisations, educational institutions, private corporations, media institutions, local and provincial table tennis governance institutions, ITTF Member Associations, ITTF Continental Federations, and National Olympic Committees, among others.

**Individuals:** Community practitioners, table tennis coaches and facilitators, organisational administrators and leaders, table tennis referees, school educators and students, table tennis players, parents, volunteers, consultants and policymakers, among others.

**The primary objectives of this handbook are to:**

- Assist various stakeholders in understanding diversity and inclusion within the context of table tennis.
- Offer practical guidance and actionable strategies to improve diversity and inclusion in and through table tennis.
Diversity and inclusion are interconnected concepts that aim to create and nurture environments where individuals from all walks of life are welcomed and feel valued and respected, with the ultimate goal of fostering a sense of belonging.

What do we understand by diversity and inclusion?

**Diversity**

Diversity refers to the differences amongst individuals that could encompass factors such as **ability**, **age**, **gender identities and expressions**, **sexual orientation**, **religion**, **ethnicity**, **socio-economic status**, and **race**, among others. It helps us understand that everyone comes from different backgrounds and has unique stories.

**Inclusion**

Inclusion refers to creating a safe environment where everyone, regardless of their differences, is **respected**, **heard**, **represented**, and **able to participate in various facets of life**. It involves creating opportunities for individuals to express themselves while ensuring **mutual respect**, **learning**, and **growth**. By welcoming and supporting individuals regardless of their background, inclusion cultivates a sense of belonging for all.

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UNICEF (The United Nations Children’s Fund) defines diversity as “the wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings. Diversity includes many characteristics that may be visible; it also includes less obvious characteristics like personality style, ethnicity, disability, education, religion, job function, life experience, lifestyle, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, migration status, geography, regional differences, work experience and family situations that make us similar to and different from one another.”

- UNICEF, 2023

The United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) refers to social inclusion as “the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that they can achieve their full potential in life. It is a multi-dimensional process aimed at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of the society in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision-making processes.”

- UN DESA, 2019
Dimensions of diversity

The **inner circle** represents inherent or immutable aspects of diversity, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, and age. These are fundamental to an individual's identity and are not easily changed.

The **outer circle** represents more fluid or changeable aspects of diversity, such as education, socio-economic status, and geographic location, among others. These characteristics may vary throughout an individual's life and are influenced by social and environmental factors.
The WTTD is an annual celebration that takes place on 23rd April to celebrate the universality and positive impact of table tennis globally. Initiated in 2015, WTTD unites individuals and communities across the globe to celebrate the joy and fun of playing table tennis.

Emphasising participation over competition, WTTD highlights the inclusivity of table tennis, uniting people of diverse ages, backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, and identities in the shared love of the game.

Partners of the ITTF Foundation across the world unite annually to honour WTTD, celebrating the sport’s profound influence on individuals and communities globally through addressing a theme chosen each year.

Past themes have included:

- WTTD 2020: World Table Tennis at Home Day
- WTTD 2021: FEMpowerment
- WTTD 2022: Peace on the Table
- WTTD 2023: Think Sustainably, Act Now

*Click the links to view videos showcasing WTTD celebrations across the world.

By celebrating on 23rd April, WTTD also pays homage to Ivor Montagu on his birthday, a pivotal figure in the sport’s history, commemorating his legacy as the founder of the ITTF and the organiser of the inaugural World Table Tennis Championships in 1926.

Suggestions to support WTTD 2024

1. Start by identifying issues of diversity and inclusion within your community, focusing on marginalised groups.

2. Utilise table tennis as a platform for change, organising sessions, matches, or events.

3. Don’t forget to register this event on the ITTF Foundation’s website here.

4. Invite the target groups to participate, leveraging the opportunity to initiate meaningful dialogues about their challenges.

5. Regularly organise such initiatives over time, continuously striving for progressive change.

The theme for WTTD 2024 and 2025: DIVERSITY and INCLUSION

#TTBelongsToYou
Why diversity and inclusion for WTTD?

The theme of diversity and inclusion for WTTD in 2024 and 2025 comes from the ITTF Foundation’s commitment to creating a more inclusive and sustainable future in and through table tennis. The theme celebrates table tennis’ potential to unite people, no matter their backgrounds, identities, nationalities, or abilities, in order to learn and grow together.

What does it help you achieve?

Embracing diversity and inclusion practices within table tennis offers significant advantages for individuals, organisations, and the broader community.

- Expand the support base by attracting a diverse range of participants, members, volunteers, coaches, and officials, ensuring equal opportunities for all to participate.
- Create a safe space for everyone to express themselves freely and connect with others from diverse backgrounds in innovative ways and using peaceful behaviours.
- Contribute to improved social, mental, and physical well-being across the entire community.
- Help break prevalent social stigmas and barriers within individuals and communities.
- Improve opportunities for individuals to reach their full potential, within and beyond table tennis.

For the first time, the ITTF Foundation is using the same WTTD theme for two consecutive years, facilitating progress assessment and feedback collection in the first year, and sharing best practices and their impact in the second year.
Our club provides LGBTQ+ inclusion training for all stakeholders, creating an environment where everyone feels accepted, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Did you know there are many table tennis tournaments where teams are mixed with players of different genders? It’s incredible to see such inclusivity in action.

That’s amazing! I witnessed a tournament where individuals with Parkinson’s were able to compete, fostering a true sense of community and belonging.

My table tennis club offers classes for adults and seniors, ensuring everyone can enjoy the sport regardless of age.

Our academy recently installed ramps for wheelchair accessibility and introduced gender-neutral bathrooms, creating a welcoming environment for everyone.

I heard about a table tennis club actively welcoming refugees, providing them with support to integrate into the community through the sport.

At our club, we have specialised classes for individuals with disabilities, while also hosting sessions where everyone, regardless of their ability, can play together.

Our club provides LGBTQ+ inclusion training for all stakeholders, creating an environment where everyone feels accepted, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
Let’s explore how we can integrate diversity and inclusion within and through table tennis with some practical approaches.

**Strategies and key considerations**

Provided below are strategies and considerations tailored for three tiers of stakeholders engaged in table tennis, guiding them on integrating and promoting diversity and inclusion in the sport.

**Institutional level**

These strategies can be leveraged to drive policy reforms, enhance governance structures, and foster organisational changes to ensure a more diverse and inclusive table tennis ecosystem.

**Practitioner level**

These strategies are for stakeholders such as coaches, trainers, educators, programme managers, and others involved in delivering table tennis classes and programmes, aiding them in promoting diversity and inclusion within the sport.

**Participant level**

These strategies can be considered by all individuals engaging in table tennis activities, emphasising the importance of each participant’s internal passion to promote diversity and inclusion.
Institutional level

Fostering partnerships
Collaborate with diverse organisations at different levels of operation (local, national, or global) to develop inclusive programmes, interventions, and events. Identify partners who bring complementary expertise and experience to promote systemic diversity and inclusion in table tennis.

Policy development
Develop and integrate relevant policies, such as anti-discrimination and anti-harassment or comprehensive safe sport policies, which include clear protocols and mandates for a safe and inclusive table tennis environment. Make sure to build capacities of all relevant stakeholders, manage complaints and violations, and follow a procedure to support victims in recovery.

The ITTF Group became a signatory to UN Women’s Sports For Generation Equality Framework, aiming to promote gender equality within and beyond sporting arenas by aligning with shared principles and goals.

Infrastructure standards
Establish accessibility standards and protocols for table tennis facilities, covering a variety of aspects such as ramp access, parking spaces, handrails, lighting, and more, which promote diversity and inclusion.

Diverse leadership
Encourage diversity and inclusion within governing bodies and leadership groups of table tennis organisations and institutions, ensuring that policy development and decision-making takes diverse perspectives into account.

Inclusive hiring
Actively recruit staff members from diverse backgrounds, including board members, administrators, officials, and coaches, to create greater inclusivity within the governance, administration, and delivery of table tennis.

Funding allocation
Budget for diversity and inclusion initiatives within annual budgets, including financial aid programmes aimed at ensuring equitable access to table tennis.

Capacity building
Ensure regular capacity building programmes on integrating diversity and inclusion within table tennis for stakeholders and staff members involved in the governance, administration, and participation of the sport. Education has to start with preventing harm and identifying risks and barriers.
**Practitioner level**

**Co-design programmes and activities**
Involves participants from diverse backgrounds and the community in general while planning and developing table tennis programmes and activities, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging while better understanding their needs.

**Conduct needs assessments**
Gather insights and feedback from the community to understand relevant issues and challenges, as well as suggestions and solutions regarding diversity and inclusion in table tennis.

**Raise awareness**
Lead outreach programmes to introduce table tennis to diverse communities through workshops, programmes, and events. You can start by organising your own WTTD event.

**Inclusive coaching**
Engage coaches, facilitators, and community leaders in training and awareness programmes to develop and implement inclusive coaching practices. These trainings can encourage reflection on biases and promote using inclusive language and delivery mechanisms. Practitioners should ensure that all participants, regardless of their differences, feel welcomed, safe and can freely express themselves during programmes.

Practitioners can refer to the ITTF Foundation’s TT4D handbook for guidelines, practical activities, and tips to promote inclusivity in table tennis programmes. It is also available in Arabic, French, and Spanish.

**Recognise and address incidents**
Establish clear procedures to identify and resolve incidents concerning discrimination, harassment, abuse, and misconduct within table tennis.

**Sharing best practices**
Actively share success stories and best practices in promoting diversity and inclusion within table tennis programmes and in communities, and make sure to learn from the experiences of other individuals, organisations, and sports.
Participant level

Education and awareness
Participants build capacity and awareness to educate themselves about diversity and inclusion within and through table tennis. Education of participants can also be initiated by practitioners and/or respective organisations.

Lead by example
Serve as a role model within and beyond table tennis by demonstrating respectful and inclusive behaviour towards everyone. Create a positive and safe atmosphere where everyone feels valued by actively encouraging and assisting fellow participants.

Consent
No matter which table tennis activity or context you are in, make sure to identify your own limits and set your boundaries to feel included in the respective setting. Make sure to also acknowledge and accept the boundaries of your fellow participants.

Address incidents
Proactively stand against discrimination, harassment, and bullying within and beyond table tennis and speak up if you experience it yourself or as a bystander. Report instances of unfair treatment or misconduct to the appropriate authorities.

Advocate for representation
Advocate for inclusion within table tennis, promoting diversity in representation among players, coaches, and officials.

Enhance collaboration
Seek opportunities to engage players from diverse backgrounds in table tennis programmes and events. Engage in opportunities to learn from each other’s backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

Participants can refer to the International Olympic Committee Consent in Sport Animation to understand consent and safe sport on a personal level.
Mapping of diversity and inclusion practices for table tennis initiatives

As a starting point, organisations and individuals can proactively identify parameters to assess the levels of diversity and inclusivity within their table tennis settings. By understanding and addressing such parameters, together, we can create environments where people from all walks of life feel welcomed and empowered to participate in the joy of table tennis.

Important parameters and indicators to assess diversity and inclusion

Let’s explore some parameters to ensure our table tennis initiatives welcome individuals from all backgrounds. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of parameters, and we encourage you to add to these from your own experience, contexts, and geographies.

Key parameters

- **Demographics of participants**: Evaluate the diversity of groups engaged in table tennis activities, including consideration of:
  - Ability or disability
  - Age
  - Gender identities and expressions
  - Sexual orientation
  - Religion
  - Ethnicity
  - Socio-economic status
  - Race

- **Physical accessibility**: Assess the level of accessibility within facilities to ensure inclusivity, considering features such as:
  - Ramps
  - Handrails
  - Elevators
  - Designated parking spaces
  - Designated and accessible restrooms and changing rooms
  - Adjustable equipment
  - Visual and auditory alerts, and other assistive technology

- **Inclusive policies**: Review the presence of organisational and institutional policies promoting diversity and inclusion, ensuring fair opportunities for all at governance, administration, and participation level.

- **Financial accessibility**: Examine the affordability of participation in table tennis activities, covering aspects such as:
  - Membership fees
  - Equipment rental/ purchase costs
  - Availability of financial assistance programmes for individuals facing financial constraints

- **Diversity in decision-making**: Ensure diverse representation within table tennis governance to foster inclusive decision-making processes that leave no one behind.

- **Training and education**: Capacity building of officials, administrators, staff, coaches, volunteers, and participants on diversity and inclusion, ensuring a supportive and safe environment within table tennis settings.

- **Information accessibility**: Evaluate the organisation’s efforts to make information available and accessible for individuals with disabilities or physical limitations through suitable formats.

- **Incident reporting mechanisms**: Assess processes for preventing harm, reporting complaints, and addressing issues concerning diversity and inclusion.

- **Advocacy and outreach**: Assess advocacy and outreach efforts to ensure representation of diverse communities and individuals within table tennis.
Tools for implementation

The ITTF Foundation has worked on two tools to evaluate diversity and inclusion in the local reality of its headquarters in Leipzig, Germany. We encourage you to go through the tools and use them after adapting them to the needs and context of your region.

Questionnaire on diversity and inclusion

This survey is directed at table tennis clubs with the aim of understanding the level of diversity and inclusivity in participation within a given region. The goal is to look at overall trends, not to point fingers at any club or organisation.

Our advice is to use the questions provided as a thought starter and adapt them according to the local reality of your region. For example, in some parts of the world, a question on participants’ religion might be crucial to evaluate inclusivity.

Click on the icon to access the questionnaire.

Mapping table tennis tables

Our goal is to create a map of table tennis tables, encompassing not just their locations, but also diversity and inclusion attributes such as 'Wheelchair accessibility' and 'Lighting' for outdoor tables.

While we started mapping in Leipzig, we offer a simple tool for individuals to contribute to this mapping effort.

Click on the map to access a step-by-step guide on how to map tables and specify relevant parameters in your area.
The meaning of diversity and inclusion varies for people from different parts of the world and from different local realities. It is impractical to expect every place to fully embrace these concepts to their fullest form simultaneously – but we can make incremental changes to ensure tomorrow looks better than today and yesterday’s demons are slowly washed away. Table tennis can be a beneficial platform to champion diversity and inclusion in our daily lives. It can serve as an important tool to unite people, promote learning, combat discrimination, and nurture personal growth.

As we embrace diversity and inclusion as part of WTTD 2024 and 2025, we have the unique opportunity to celebrate the sport’s power to welcome individuals from all walks of life. Organisations and individuals are encouraged to utilise the strategies and practical guidance outlined in the WTTD Diversity and Inclusion Handbook to cultivate inclusive, safe, and welcoming environments throughout the remainder of 2024.

Looking ahead to WTTD 2025, we will publish a phase two of this handbook with a reflection on the insights from WTTD 2024. We hope this will empower us to pinpoint strategies, provide case studies that have proved effective, and identify areas for further enhancement in promoting diversity and inclusivity in and through table tennis.
Please contact us for more information, feedback, comments, or questions via email: info@foundation.ittf.com.