

Inclusion and integration of disadvantaged groups in society through para swimming

(ParaSwInclusion)

ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-CB
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A report from performed needs analysis

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1. ParaSwInclusion identification data

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Project acronym | ParaSwInclusion |
| Project full title | Inclusion and integration of disadvantaged groups in society through para swimming |
| Action | ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-CB 101183975 - ParaSwInclusion - ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-CB |
| Type of Action | Capacity Building in the Field of Sport |
| Coordinator Institution | Paralympic Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina (NPC B&H), Third country not associated to the Programme |
| Coordinator | Selma Karčić |
| Deputy Project Coordinator | Amra Džuho |
| EU Partner Institutions, Member state | The Croatian Para Swimming Association (HPPS), Croatia |
| Partner Country Institutions | Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, University of Niš (FSFV)), Serbia, Third country associated to the Programme Swimming club for persons with disabilities "MAKO" (PKOSI MAKO), Montenegro, Third country not associated to the Programme Swimming club SPID, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Third country not associated to the Programme The Faculty of Sports and Physical Education at the University of Sarajevo (FASTO UNSA), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Third country not associated to the Programme Verlab Research Institute (VI), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Third country not associated to the Programme |

Bosnian Representative Association for Valuable Opportunities (BRAVO), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Third country not associated to the Programme

Duration of the project 24 months (started in April 2025)

Project web address To be added

Executive summary:

Deliverable D2.2 presents the results of a comprehensive needs assessment on para swimming in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. A survey of 28 questions was distributed to project partners and relevant stakeholders to gather information on athlete numbers, club organization, classification, and training conditions. The findings reveal gender and age disparities, limited access to international classification, low participation in structured training programs, and equal representation of athletes with physical and intellectual impairments.

Importantly, the results highlight critical gaps in information centralization, institutional support, and educational opportunities for both athletes and coaches. These challenges are particularly pronounced when compared to Croatia and Serbia, where stronger infrastructure and support systems exist. The assessment provides a foundation for targeted interventions aimed at improving governance, access to classification, athlete development pathways, and overall sustainability of para swimming in the region.

1. Introduction

As part of Deliverable D2.2, a comprehensive needs assessment was carried out to provide a clear understanding of the current state of para swimming in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Building upon the situation analyses previously conducted in Croatia and Serbia, all project partners jointly contributed to the preparation and implementation of the assessment.

To ensure the collection of relevant and reliable data, a structured survey was developed and distributed in July to all project partners, their associated networks, and other relevant stakeholders in the field. The survey contained 28 carefully formulated questions, designed to capture essential information regarding the number of active para swimmers, the availability and organization of clubs, and the engagement of professionals in parasports. In addition, the survey explored the conditions under which para swimming is currently practiced in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, with the goal of identifying strengths, gaps, and areas in need of support.

The analysis of responses provides valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges faced by athletes, coaches, and supporting institutions. Importantly, the survey results highlight what is needed to improve the infrastructure, professional support, and organizational capacity necessary for the sustainable development of para swimming in the region. This needs assessment therefore serves as a critical foundation for designing targeted interventions and informed decision-making within the project.

2. Results of the analysis in Bosnia and Herzegovina

2.1. Distribution of female and male paraparathletes according to the age categories

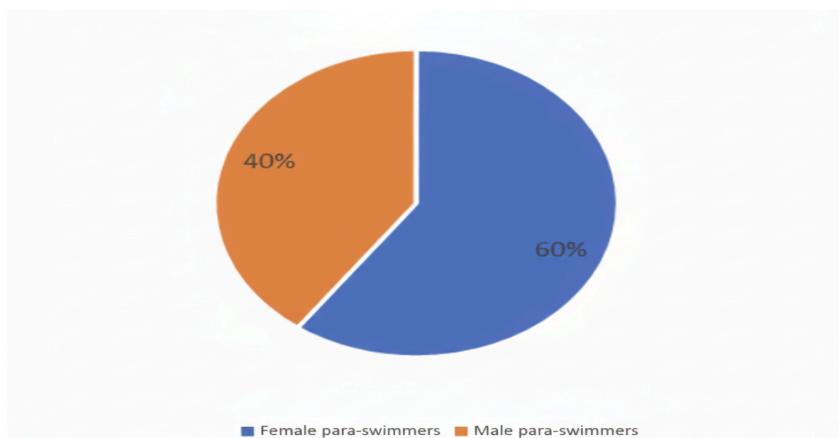


Figure 1. Percentage of senior male and female paraparathletes

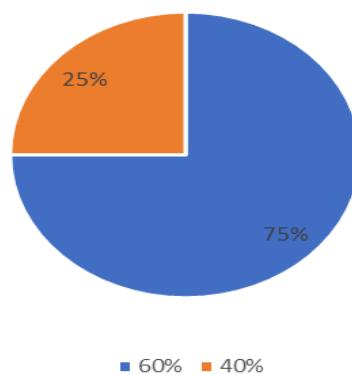


Figure 2. Percentage of junior male and female paraparathletes



The analysis of the collected survey responses reveals a clear disparity in gender distribution across different age categories in para swimming. Among senior paraswimmers, female athletes are more prevalent, representing 60% of the category, whereas male athletes account for only 40%. Conversely, in the junior category, the trend is reversed, with male para swimmers comprising 75% and female para swimmers representing 25% of the total.

These findings suggest notable differences in participation patterns between genders at different stages of athlete development. The higher proportion of female athletes at the senior level may indicate stronger retention or engagement of women in para swimming over time, while the predominance of male athletes in the junior category could reflect broader recruitment trends or early-stage participation dynamics. Understanding these patterns is essential for the design of targeted development programs, resource allocation, and interventions aimed at promoting balanced participation and supporting athlete progression across all age groups.

2.2 Classification of paraswimmers

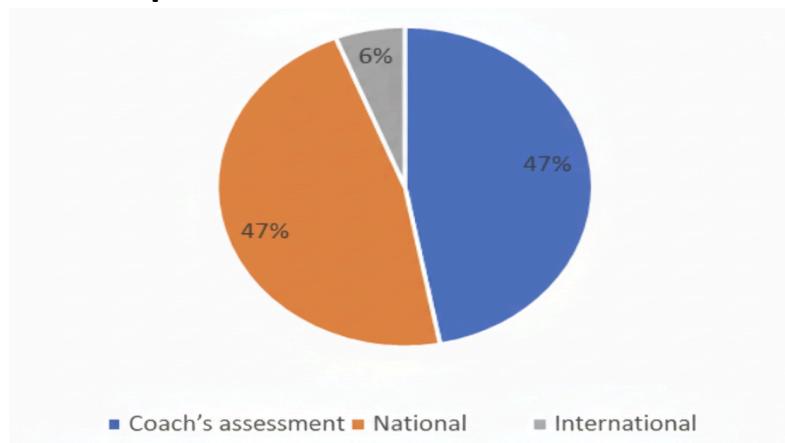


Figure 3. Classification of female paraswimmers

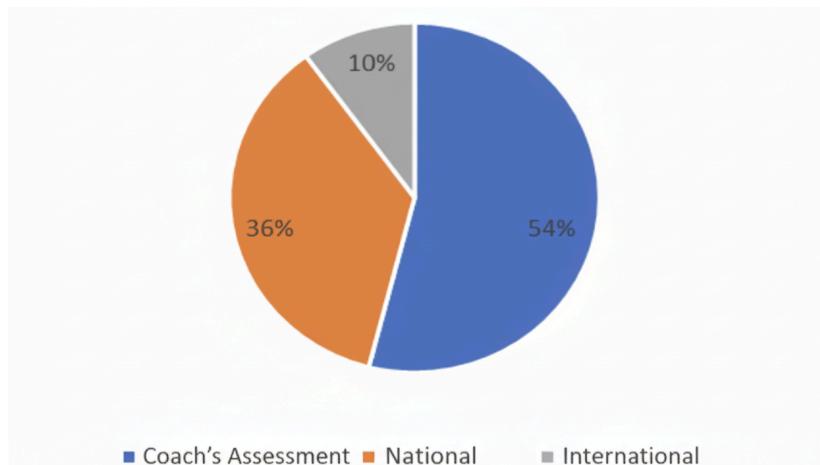


Figure 4. Classification of male paraswimmers

The analysis of the classification status of paraswimmers highlights significant trends in the level at which athletes are evaluated. Among female para swimmers, the majority (47%) have been classified either through coach assessment or at the national level, while only a small proportion, 6%, have undergone classification at the international level. This indicates that most female athletes are currently assessed within national structures or by their coaches, with limited exposure to the international classification system.

A similar pattern is observed among male para swimmers. Specifically, 54% of male athletes have received coach assessments, 36% hold national-level classifications, and only 10% have been classified internationally. This distribution demonstrates that, while a substantial number of athletes are evaluated domestically, the proportion with international classification remains low, potentially limiting their participation in international competitions and affecting recognition within global para swimming frameworks.

These findings underscore the need to strengthen pathways for international classification and to provide greater support for athletes to access standardized evaluation procedures. Enhancing classification opportunities at the international level is crucial for ensuring equitable competition, facilitating athlete progression, and aligning national para swimming programs with international standards.

2.3 Recreative paraswimmers and competing paraswimmers

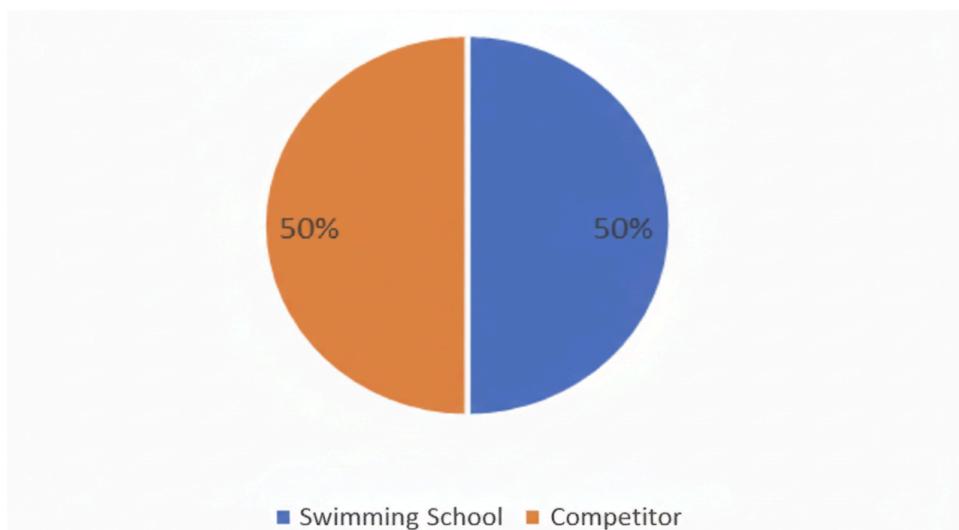


Figure 5. Recreative female paraswimmers and competing paraswimmers

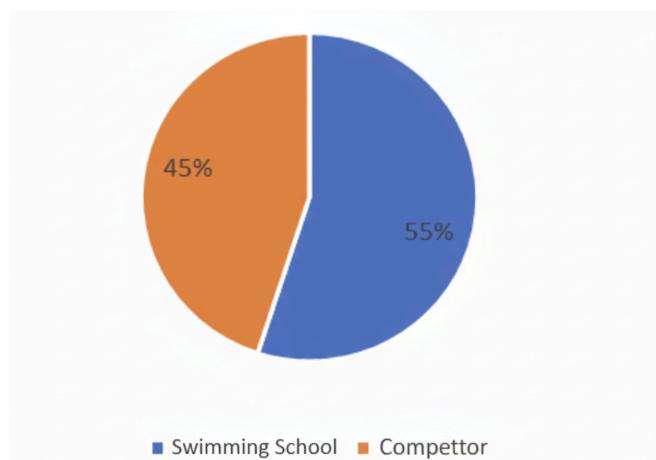


Figure 6. Recreative male paraswimmers and competing praswimmers

The analysis of paraswimmers' participation in swimming schools and competitive activities reveals notable differences between female and male paraswimmers. Among female paraswimmers, the proportion of athletes engaged in swimming schools is approximately equal to the proportion of those actively competing. This indicates a balanced distribution between those who pursue swimming recreationally and those involved in competitive para swimming, suggesting that female athletes participate in the sport both for skill development and competitive engagement.

In contrast, among male para swimmers, a larger proportion participates in swimming schools for recreational purposes compared to those actively competing. This suggests that, for male athletes, para swimming serves predominantly as a recreational activity rather than a competitive pursuit at this stage. These patterns provide important insights for program planning and resource allocation, highlighting the need for tailored strategies that support both competitive and recreational pathways. Such strategies could include targeted recruitment, development programs, and opportunities to transition from recreational to competitive participation, ensuring sustainable growth and engagement of athletes across all levels of para swimming.

2.4 Distribution of paraswimmers according to the classification categories

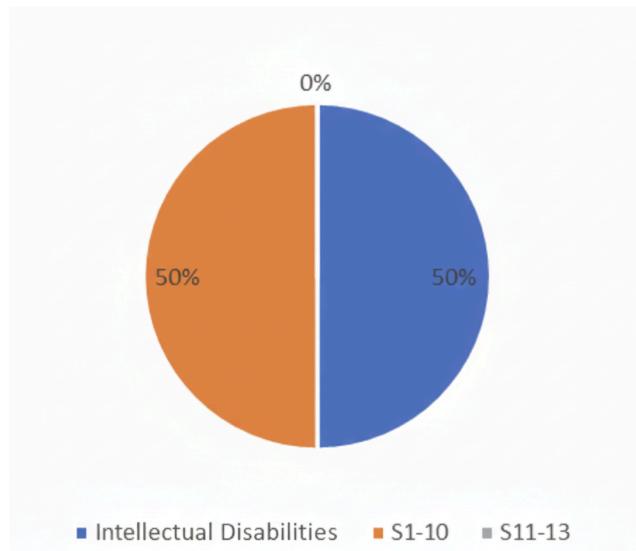


Figure 7. Distribution of female paraswimmers according to the classification categories

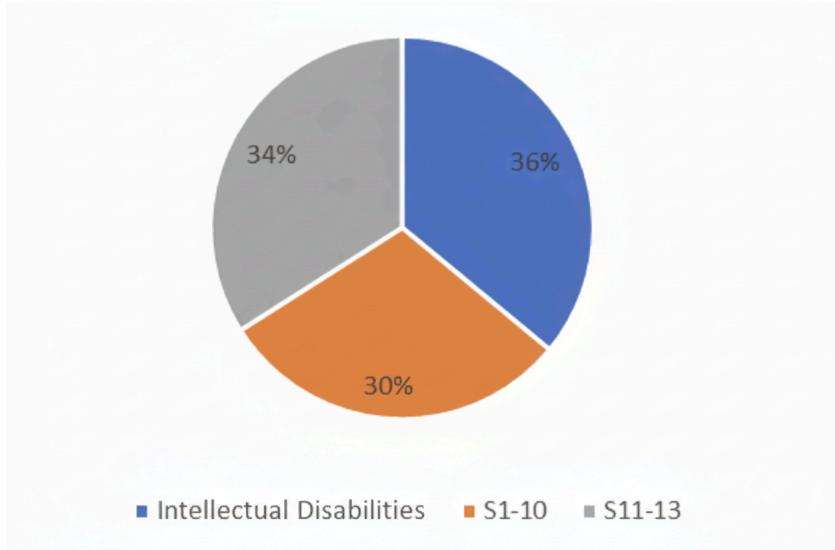


Figure 8. Distribution of male paraswimmers according to the classification categories

The graph illustrates the distribution of paraswimmers across different classification categories, highlighting notable differences between female and male athletes. Among female paraswimmers, an equal proportion is represented in the intellectual impairment category and in the physical impairment categories classified as S1–S10. This balanced distribution indicates that female athletes with intellectual or physical impairments are

equally engaged in para swimming, reflecting inclusive participation across different disability types.

In contrast, male para swimmers exhibit a more varied distribution across classification categories. Specifically, 36% of male athletes fall under the intellectual impairment category, 34% are classified in the visual impairment categories S11–S13, and 30% are classified in the physical impairment categories S1–S10. This relatively even distribution suggests that male athletes are represented across a wide spectrum of disability classifications, indicating a diverse participation profile. Understanding these classification patterns is essential for designing training programs, allocating resources, and developing support structures that accommodate the specific needs of athletes across all categories, ensuring equitable opportunities and fostering competitive development in para swimming.

3. Results of the analysis in Montenegro

3.1 Distribution of female and male paraswimmers according to the age categories

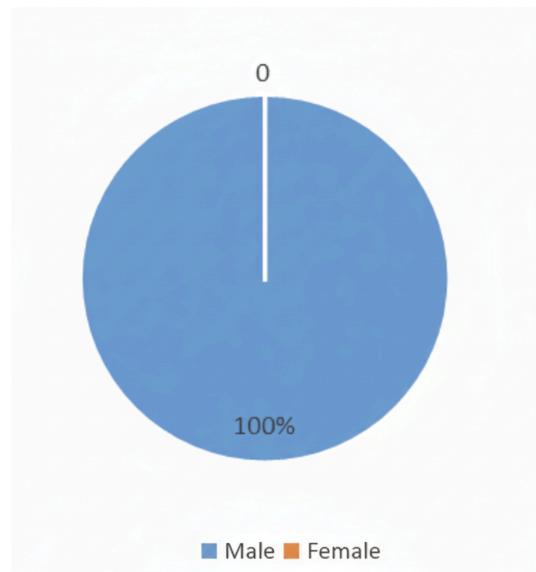


Figure 9. Distribution of senior male and female paraswimmers

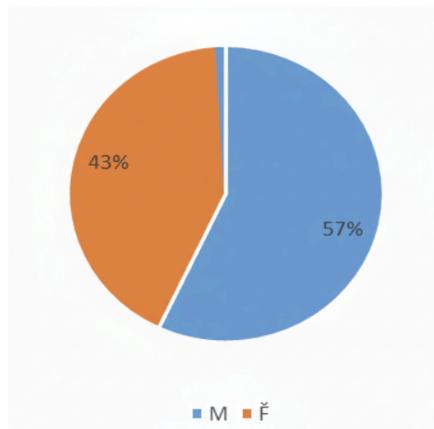


Figure 10. Distribution of junior male and female paraswimmers

The graph presents the distribution of para swimmers by gender and age category, distinguishing between senior and junior athletes. The total number of paraswimmers is 14, of whom only 3 are female. Among junior athletes, female para swimmers constitute 43% of the group, while male para swimmers account for 57%.

This distribution highlights a higher representation of male athletes in the junior category, reflecting current participation trends at the early stages of athlete development. Although female participation is lower, nearly half of the junior category consists of female athletes, indicating meaningful engagement and potential for growth in this segment. Understanding these demographic patterns is crucial for designing targeted programs to support both retention and development, ensuring balanced opportunities for male and female athletes as they progress from junior to senior levels.

3.2 Recreative paraswimmers and competing paraswimmers

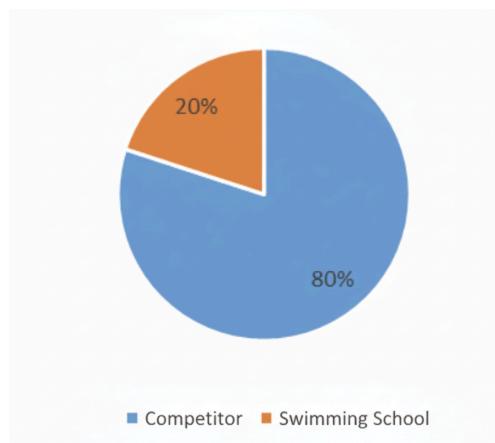


Figure 10. Distribution of recreative and competing male paraswimmers



The analysis of participation in swimming schools and competitive activities among paraplegic swimmers reveals distinct patterns between female and male athletes. Among female paraplegic swimmers, only one athlete is currently enrolled in a swimming school, while the remaining two athletes are actively engaged in competitive swimming. This indicates that, for female athletes, the majority of participation is oriented towards competition rather than recreational or developmental programs.

In contrast, among male paraplegic swimmers, participation is predominantly competitive, with 80% of athletes actively competing and only 20% attending a swimming school. This suggests that, while swimming schools serve as an entry point or developmental pathway for some male athletes, the majority are already engaged at a competitive level. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining structured pathways that support both recreational development and competitive progression, ensuring that athletes of all genders have access to appropriate training opportunities and resources that foster skill development, retention, and long-term engagement in paraplegic swimming.

3.3. Classification of male and female paraplegic swimmers

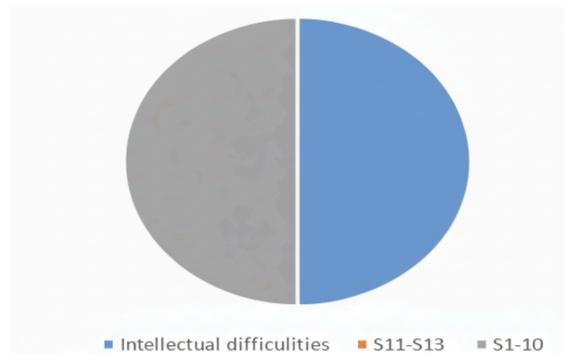


Figure 11. Classification of male and female paraplegic swimmers

The analysis of classification and club affiliation among paraplegic swimmers indicates an equal representation of athletes with physical impairments (S1–S10) and those with intellectual impairments. Among all classifications, only two athletes have undergone evaluation at the international level, while the remainder have been assessed by their coaches. This suggests that, although the majority of athletes are appropriately classified for domestic training and competition, access to international classification remains very limited.

All paraplegic swimmers, both male and female, are members of a single paraplegic swimming club in Montenegro, PKOSI Mako. This centralized affiliation provides a structured environment for training and development, but it also underscores the importance of expanding opportunities for broader participation and access to classification services beyond the club level. The equal distribution between athletes with intellectual and physical impairments highlights the club's inclusive approach and the need to ensure that training programs,



support resources, and competitive opportunities are appropriately tailored to the specific needs of different athlete categories.

4. Conclusion

The comprehensive needs assessment conducted for Deliverable D2.2 highlights both the current state and critical gaps in paraswimming development in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The analysis reveals that information on para swimming is limited and not sufficiently centralized, which hinders the coordination of athlete development, classification processes, and club activities. Moreover, the survey results indicate that there is insufficient support for para swimming, both in terms of infrastructure and access to professional guidance, as well as limited educational and training opportunities for coaches and athletes.

These challenges are particularly evident when comparing the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro with the more established structures observed in Croatia and Serbia, where centralized programs, greater institutional support, and broader access to education and classification pathways contribute to stronger athlete engagement and development. The findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve information systems, expand support mechanisms, enhance educational programs, and facilitate access to national and international classification. Addressing these gaps is essential to foster sustainable growth, equitable participation, and competitive development in paraswimming across the region.



ParaSwInclusion



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