



Celebrating 10 Years of Adapted Sports

Editorial



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As our societies strive to become more inclusive, one reality remains: persons with disabilities continue to face disproportionate discrimination, exclusion, and limited access to sport. Participation rates in schools and sports clubs remain significantly lower for people with physical, temporary or permanent disabilities. Not because of a lack of interest or potential, but because access, equipment and environments are still not designed with them in mind.

And yet, sport can be a powerful lever for change. It builds independence, strengthens confidence, and fosters the social skills that enable individuals to advocate for themselves and for others. Beyond performance, sport transforms perceptions. It shifts the focus from disability to ability, from limitation to potential. It creates belonging.

At Decathlon, we believe that access to movement is not a privilege. It is a right. Since 1976, our ambition has been to make sport accessible to all. Ten years ago, this ambition took on a new dimension. What began as a local initiative driven by lived experience evolved into a dedicated Adapted Sports offer. What started with a simple conviction, that everyone deserves the right equipment to move independently, has grown into a European journey built on collaboration, trust and long-term commitment.

Celebrating 10 years of Adapted Sports, this commitment takes on particular meaning. We know the path ahead remains demanding. Barriers persist, participation gaps endure, and perceptions continue to evolve. But we are convinced of this: when movement becomes accessible, it does more than enable sport. It empowers individuals, strengthens communities, and contributes to a more inclusive society. Looking ahead, we will continue to expand our adapted range and explore new categories. Because accessibility should not stand apart. It should shape the future of sport for all.

Sabrina BONANNO,
Product Manager Adapted Sports

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From a client's need to a European movement

In 2016, Adapted Sports began with a client.

As his daughter was selecting her bike, our client realised he could not buy a handbike for himself. What should have been a simple, shared sporting moment became a reminder that access was still unequal. Because at DECATHLON we listen to users and customers, and we believe that sport must be accessible to everyone, this feedback became the starting point for action. It inspired a group of teammates within DECATHLON Italy Production to start working on a dedicated project with one clear objective: to enable truly everyone to practice sport.

-  Each product is a response to a **real need**.
-  Each innovation is shaped through **dialogue**.
-  Each design choice carries the same ambition: to make **autonomy** tangible.

What started as a pilot project, with a first series of adapted products, quickly revealed a much broader need. Over the years, this local initiative evolved into a structured European program. Today, a dedicated Adapted Sports team works exclusively on designing and developing tailor-made products for para-athletes and people with disabilities. Designers, engineers, product managers and industrial experts collaborate with one shared objective: to remove barriers to participation through thoughtful design and long-term commitment.

Across categories, our approach is guided by the same conviction: accessibility and sustainability must progress together. From responsible material choices to durability testing and repair solutions, sustainable design principles are integrated from the earliest conception phases. Because enabling movement today also means ensuring that products remain reliable, repairable and responsible over time.



From the very beginning, one principle has guided this journey: we do not design alone.

Over the past decade, more than 800 users with disabilities, para-athletes and parasport organisations across Europe have contributed to the development of our equipment. Through field testing, workshops, feedback sessions and continuous exchanges, this collaborative ecosystem has become a true space for shared knowledge and adaptive solutions. It ensures that every innovation is grounded in lived experience, not assumption.

This collaborative approach has contributed to positioning Adapted Sports as a recognised reference within the industry. In 2025, the World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI) recognised DECATHLON's Adapted Sports initiative and highlighted the brand as a reference in the field of disability and inclusive sports.

CH4 Sporting Club

Engineered with an extended range of adjustments rather than individual custom builds, DECATHLON wheelchairs are specifically developed for shared use. Partnering with a club environment is therefore strategic: it enables the same chair to be configured quickly for different athletes within a single session, validating its multi-user performance in real training conditions.

La Cometa

With La Cometa, an Italian social cooperative active in education, work and sport, adapted tracksuits are tested in everyday contexts. Designed to enable greater autonomy when dressing, while remaining suitable for regular sports practice, the daily feedback from users helps refine functionality and comfort beyond purely technical performance.

IAAD University

In collaboration with IAAD, one of Europe's leading design schools, dedicated research and user studies explore expectations around ergonomics, usability and design language. This academic partnership strengthens the understanding of how inclusive products are perceived and experienced.

Ten years later, Adapted Sports is no longer a pilot. It is a collective movement powered by teammates, shaped by sportlovers, and sustained by a shared belief that accessibility is built together.



Questions to *Maximilien Seeger,*
Paralympic alpine skier (vision-impaired category), qualified for the
Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Games & DECATHLON teammate



Why is co-design critical when developing adapted sports equipment?

Because assumptions fail quickly. If you design without users, you only design average products. Co-design forces precision, in adjustability, ergonomics, etc. It shifts the logic from “adapting an existing product” to engineering from real-life usage.

You balance para-elite sport with your role as a DECATHLON project manager buyback. What does that dual perspective bring?

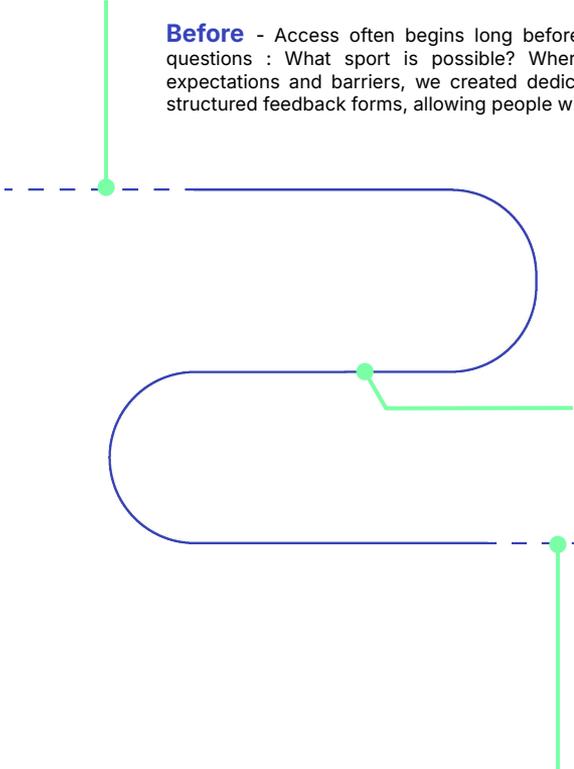
In elite sport, performance depends on small adjustments. In retail, it's similar. Accessibility is often about very concrete details: Can you move independently through the store? Is information readable? Can you test a product without assistance? These may seem minor, but they determine whether someone feels autonomous or dependent. Both in high-level sport and in retail, you can never be satisfied with what you already know how to do. There is always a need to go further, to reinvent yourself, to innovate, to be creative, and to go the extra mile.

How does trust influence performance in your discipline?

In vision-impaired alpine skiing, I follow my guide's line at high speed. If I hesitate, we lose time. If we miscommunicate, we lose control. We started as amateurs and quickly realised the level required. Building performance meant building trust through repetition, honest feedback and shared setbacks. Today, much of our communication with Jérémy is non-verbal. It's rhythm, anticipation. At that speed, trust is a performance condition.

Empowering every stage of the journey

Today, DECATHLON offers 30 dedicated references within its Adapted Sports range. From sports wheelchairs for racket sports, basketball, fencing, athletics and cycling to easy-to-wear undergarments designed to simplify everyday autonomy, the range continues to expand across disciplines and needs. But our approach goes beyond developing products. We design experiences that empower people before, during and after practice.



Before - Access often begins long before stepping onto a court or track. It starts with questions : What sport is possible? Where can it be practiced? To better understand expectations and barriers, we created dedicated listening tools, including user surveys and structured feedback forms, allowing people with disabilities to express their needs directly.

During - Performance and autonomy matter. Rather than developing individually customised products, we have engineered a range of adjustable sports wheelchairs designed for multi-use. Seat position, balance and key settings can be configured according to specific needs. This approach makes the range particularly relevant for clubs, schools, public institutions and companies, where equipment must serve different users over time.

After - Support continues. Through ongoing dialogue with users and clubs, we aim to provide continuity beyond the moment of purchase. DECATHLON mapped more than 8,000 adapted sports and parasport clubs across Europe ([European club mapping](#)) that identify accessible sports clubs across countries, making it easier for users to find local opportunities. Because facilitating participation includes clarity and connection.

Adapted Sports is not only about enabling access to equipment. It is about removing barriers at every stage of the journey. From the first intention to practice, to long-term engagement in sport.



Questions to *Francesco M. Cusaro,*
President of the Cooperativa Sociale La Cometa



How does sport contribute to strengthening confidence for the people with intellectual disabilities ?

Sport is one of the most important tools in managing cognitive and intellectual disabilities. It works on several levels:

- it strengthens the confidence a person with a disability has in themselves to achieve the goals that sport (and life) sets.
- It helps a person with a disability work as part of a team and overcome barriers to social inclusion.
- it puts into practice the Latin saying "mens sana in corpore sano", meaning that if a person takes care of their body, they will also benefit mentally.

In everyday life, how can adapted equipment make a difference for the individuals you accompany?

Appropriate equipment, tailored to the individual, helps a person with a disability not only move more easily, but also further reduces the psychological gap that disability typically creates. In this way, the person feels even more confident in their own body, and this positively improves their self-awareness in relation to reality.

In your view, what barriers still need to be removed to enable truly inclusive and autonomous access to sport?

There are still many barriers, both because there are too few suitable facilities free of architectural obstacles, and because very few sports clubs proactively devote themselves to the inclusion of people with disabilities.

In my view, the Paralympic Games are an example of what I mean. I dream of truly inclusive Olympic Games in which events are held in a "double format", for able-bodied athletes and for athletes with disabilities, rather than having two separate events. Anything that separates does not help inclusion.

Designing for diverse bodies, diverse journeys

Adapted equipment is not intended for one single profile.



Wheelchairs: performance through adjustability

Our range of sports wheelchairs, for tennis, basketball, fencing, athletics and cycling, reflects ten years of technical development alongside users and clubs. Designed to serve both beginners and experienced athletes, they stand out for their wide adjustability range. Seat angle, center of gravity, backrest positioning can be adapted to the user's morphology and progression. This flexibility allows the same product to support learning phases as well as national and international competition.

It is designed for people with permanent or temporary disabilities, para-athletes, individuals living with chronic illness, people with reduced mobility, seniors experiencing loss of movement, and those undergoing rehabilitation after injury or surgery.



Textile: autonomy in everyday movement

For many users, the challenge begins with dressing. That is why our textile range focuses on ease of use without compromising technical performance. From a front-fastening sports bra designed to be put on independently, to lightweight sweatshirts and pants adapted for quadriplegic and paraplegic wheelchair users, each product integrates ergonomic openings, accessible closures and cuts tailored to seated posture. These design choices may seem simple. Yet they transform preparation time, comfort during practice, and post-sport recovery.

Because the need for adaptation can be lifelong, occasional or evolving, our responsibility is to design products that respond to different stages of life and different levels of practice, from discovery and leisure to competitive performance. The objective remains the same: to enable independent movement, safely and confidently.

To make this tangible, our offer is structured around three main levers: mobility equipment, textile solutions and everyday accessories.



Accessories: enabling practice beyond the field

Accessories play a key role in daily organization and mobility. Wheelchair backpacks for example are designed for use before and after practice, storage solutions compatible with seated movement, and practical transport accessories help ensure continuity between everyday life and sport. By addressing these often-overlooked moments, we aim to remove friction points that can discourage participation.

Supporting the Paralympic Movement over time

DECATHLON's commitment to the Paralympic movement began with Paris 2024, marking its first partnership with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. What started there continues in 2026 with Milano Cortina.



DECATHLON's engagement with the Paralympic movement began with Paris 2024, marking the company's first collaboration with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. On that occasion, DECATHLON supported 8 athletes competing at the Paralympic Games through its Athletes Team.

This commitment continues through individual athlete partnerships across different sports. Among them, Italian wheelchair fencer Edoardo Giordan has been supported by DECATHLON for the past three years. A two-time Paralympian, he competed at Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024, where he won the bronze medal in the men's sabre A event. In Paris, Edoardo competed and secured his medal using the fencing wheelchair that DECATHLON teams refined and developed alongside him. Today, the Group provides him with the technical equipment he needs to train looking ahead to LA 2028.

As the Paralympic movement now turns to the Winter Games, DECATHLON continues its commitment at Milano Cortina 2026. The Group supports and equips the alpine skiing duo formed by Maximilien Seeger and his guide Jérémy Mestdagh, who compete in the "vision impaired" category. Beyond the slopes, Maximilien works at DECATHLON in Belgium, making this partnership a natural extension of shared values.

During the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Games, DECATHLON is also the Official Uniform Supplier of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) delegation. A total of 350 outfits and nearly 8,000 units, developed from DECATHLON's existing sport product ranges, equip the IPC teams with functional, high-performance and inclusive apparel adapted to the operational realities of the Games, while meeting the brand's eco-design standards.



Questions to *Raymon Blondel,*
President of the European Paralympic Committee



Why is access to equipment still one of the main structural barriers to para sport development in Europe? / What are the key priorities for developing para sport across Europe ?

All over Europe, access to equipment remains a structural barrier because adaptive sport equipment is highly specialised, produced in low-volumes, and therefore expensive. In many European countries, there is a lack of sustainable funding schemes, national equipment pools, and systematic pathways linking rehabilitation to grassroots and elite sport. Too often, this equipment is treated as a medical aid, rather than sport equipment. Without equipment, there is no entry point. The European Paralympic Committee advocates for better accessibility, stronger data collection and greater recognition of the right to play sport to expand the availability and affordability of adaptive sport equipment.

What role should the sporting goods industry play in scaling para sport participation?

With 90 million people with disabilities in Europe, this is a huge and largely untapped market. The sporting goods industry must move from niche production to the mainstream.

This includes investing in affordable, scalable product lines for grassroots and participation in physical activity as well as improving representation of persons with disabilities in advertising campaigns. Partnerships with Para sport organisations can help pilot and distribute equipment through structured programmes, utilising their networks who live and breathe their work.

Beyond competition, how does para sport transform lives?

Para sport has the same transformational impact on all sports and physical activity but with unique qualities. Inclusion lies at its core, showing that societies are stronger when everyone has the right to be seen and heard. What Para sport shows is there is great strength in difference. Originally rooted in rehabilitation, Para sport has become a vehicle for social inclusion, challenging perceptions of what people can achieve despite negative attitudes, inadequate infrastructure, or limited access to equipment. It ultimately shows that access to sport is a transformational human right.



About DECATHLON

A global multi-specialist sports brand catering for everyone from beginners to top athletes, Decathlon is an innovative manufacturer of sporting goods for all skill levels. With over 101,100 teammates and 1,817 stores worldwide, Decathlon and its teams have been working ever since 1976 to make the joys and benefits of sport truly accessible to all.

More information: [decathlon-united.media](https://www.decathlon-united.media)

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