

# IT IS AMAZING!

## SPORTING JOY WITHOUT BOUNDS

A project about participation as audience at football matches for people with Dual Sensory Impairment/Deafblindness.



The project represents not only football matches, but also, more importantly, the right to participate.

This brochure is a concise presentation of the project, which has been developed and carried out by Eikholt in collaboration with five experienced consultants with Dual Sensory Impairment/Deafblindness, as well as Hapti-Co ([www.hapti-co.com](http://www.hapti-co.com)). The project has received support from the DAM Foundation through “Hørselshemmedes Landforbund”. For more information, please refer to the Scientific Report available on Eikholt's website (see also QR code on the last page).



## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project explores the experiences of people with DSI\* as spectators at football matches. The main focus includes facilitating accessibility, both physical and sensory, through interpreters, assistive technology, and adaptations of the arenas.

Furthermore, the project looks at the participants' psychosocial and emotional experiences, and how the adaptations affect enjoyment and engagement during sporting events. The project advocates for a progressive approach to the rights of people with disabilities, particularly in cultural events and shows that assistive support for sensory loss increases participation.

Experience consultants, people with DSI\*, played a central role in the project by providing insight into challenges and experiences. Their participation helped to identify barriers and propose solutions, as well as acting as a bridge between organizers, researchers and society to create a more inclusive environment.

*\*Abbreviation for Dual Sensory Impairment/Deafblindness*





Photo by Eikholt



## SPORTS AND CULTURE

Being a spectator at sports events is as important as other cultural activities. It provides health benefits comparable to theater performances, concerts, and art exhibitions. Participation in cultural activities reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, and fosters a sense of belonging and purpose.

Cultural engagement offers opportunities for social interaction and community, strengthens relationships and networks, positively impacting both mental and physical health. Participation in cultural activities enriches life and enhances quality of life. To ensure that everyone can enjoy these benefits, inclusion and accessibility in the cultural sector are crucial.

Individuals with DSI experience limitations in activity levels and full participation in society. DSI affects social lives, communication, access to information, orientation, and safe movement. Studies show that people with DSI are vulnerable to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. While physical activity has traditionally been crucial for good health, for individuals with DSI, extra efforts are needed to promote assessments for inclusion and participation.

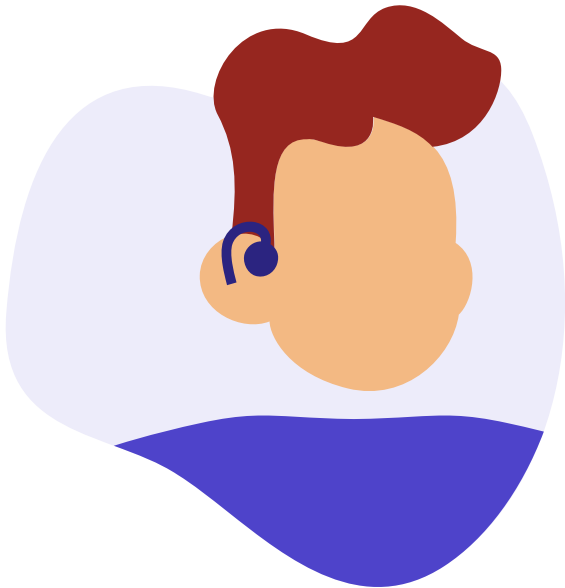






Photo by Eikholt

# FOOTBALL

Football is a cultural experience that brings people together across different backgrounds.

Through the emotional traditions and artistic aspects of the match, a unique experience is created. Participation as spectators holds particular significance for people with DSI. It gives them a sense of community and belonging, despite the challenges they face with their sight and hearing. Being a spectator at a football match gives them a sense of being part of society and contributes to their social inclusion. Our project focuses on exploring facilitation measures, such as accessible information and adapted communication, to improve the experience and strengthen the participation of people with DSI during football matches.



Photo by Michal Jarmoluk på Pixnio

# FOOTBALL AND DEAFBLINDNESS

For people with DSI, usual ways of receiving information are limited, and therefore alternative methods play an important role. Tactile communication, such as tactile sign language or haptic signals, provides a unique way of conveying information, regardless of visual or hearing function.

Technological devices such as tactile platforms give them the opportunity to follow the match by reproducing the movements of the ball and the players' positions. Auditory descriptions and comments via hearing aids and haptic signals provide a detailed understanding of the events on the arena. This requires knowledge of football and adaptation of commentator methods to capture the game's intensity and development in an accessible way.







Photo by Eikholt

# PREPARATION FOR FOOTBALL MATCH

For people with DSI who want to be spectators at football matches, it is important to plan interpreter and companion services well in advance. Cooperation with the organizer can contribute to better facilitation and understanding of the needs of people with KSHD. It may be a good idea to get tickets in good time and contact the organizer for a good position in the stands. Arrive at the stadium in good time to avoid queues and to have time to test that any aids work. Plan to arrive early to accommodate special needs and adhere to safety protocols for a more comfortable football experience.

## Universal design

The design of football arenas is critical for an inclusive experience, especially for spectators with disabilities such as DSI. Important measures include sound systems for visual interpretation, tactile indicators, audio induction loops, captioning for the hearing impaired, wheelchair ramps and universally designed toilets. Staff training and awareness campaigns contribute to an inclusive atmosphere. Collectively, these measures create an accessible and respectful football arena for all spectators, regardless of functional ability.

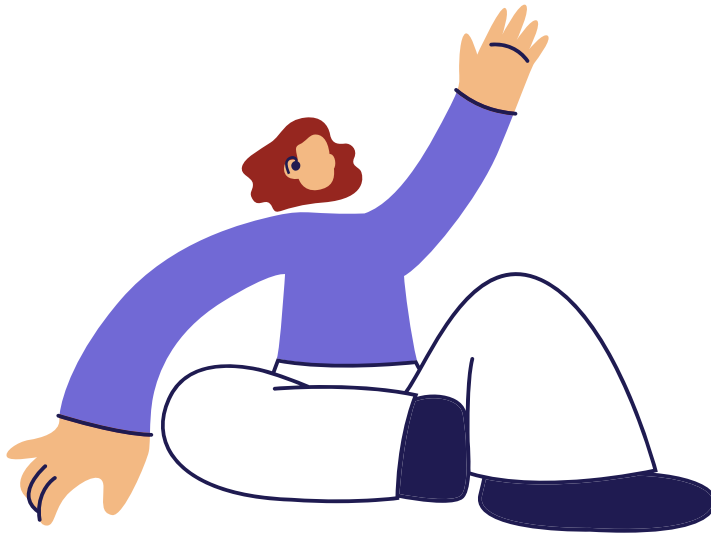






Photo by Eikholt

## LOCATION ON THE FOOTBALL ARENA

Positioning in the middle of the long side of the football arena is ideal for people with DSI and interpreters for several reasons. It provides a good overview, direct observation for those with functional vision, and a unique atmospheric experience in the stands. Being in the middle of the audience engagement is a special experience, far more than following the match from home.

For people with DSI, this location is strategic for interpreters, especially the visual interpreter who reports simultaneously. Communication takes place wirelessly with technology that provides the interpreters voice to hearing aids or headphones. The sign language interpreter should be visible without obstructing the view, and interpreting via tactile sign language is challenging but useful. Haptic signals play a key role, with the interpreter providing signals on the receiver's back to follow events on the field. Good contact with the audience, without being disturbed by noise, is important.

For participants sensitive to light, preparation with wearing filter glasses and a shade hat is recommended. The study shows that the right location, technological support and facilitated communication contribute to optimizing the experience for people with DSI as football spectators







Photo by Eikholt

## THE TACTILE BOARD

In our project, we have experimented with improving the football experience for people with DSI by using a tactile board. This board, a model of the football field, is placed in the user's lap. The interpreter uses his hands to indicate the ball's movements and communicate different situations through agreed movements. The receiver participates by following the movements with his hand. This approach has proven effective, especially when combined with other interpretation methods such as visual interpretation and haptic signals.

The tactile board gives people with DSI a more holistic experience of the football game, and when combined with visual interpretation, it gives a deeper understanding of the events on the field. This indicates the potential for integrating different interpretation methods to enrich the sports experience for people with DSI.

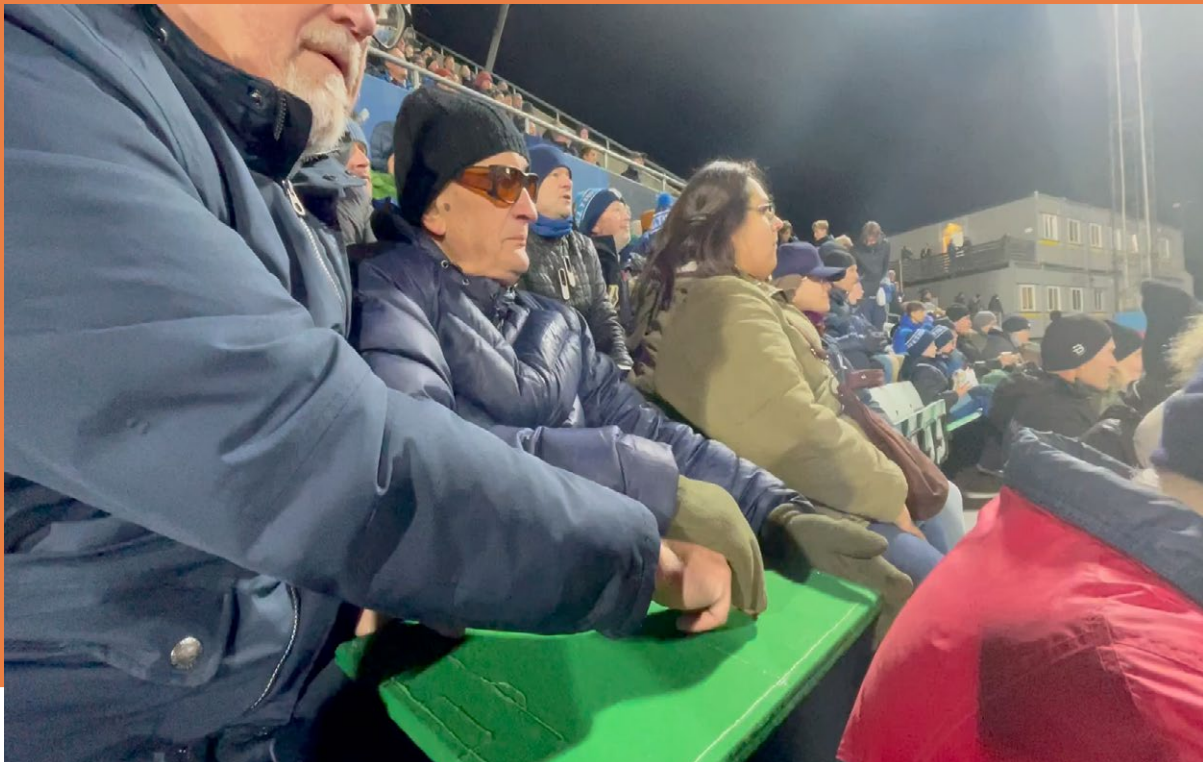


Photo by Eikholt

# FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

In the project, we use experienced consultants with various combinations of sight and

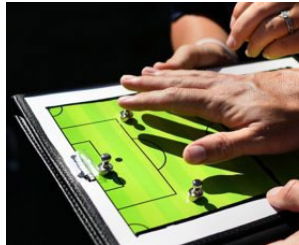
hearing impairment to better understand communication needs during football matches. It adds authenticity and insight into both challenges and opportunities. People with DSI use different communication channels, such as auditory, visual and tactile communication. Examples of adapted methods include tactile sign language, hand alphabet, braille, technological aids, tactile maps, and haptic signals.

Light sensitivity and a reduced field of vision challenge the visual experience, but available

technology, visual interpretation and tactile forms of information address these challenges. By recognizing individual needs and assessments, events such as football matches are made more accessible to people with DSI.



**Visual interpretation**



**Tactile board**



**Haptic signals**



**Sign language**



# HAPTIC SIGNALS

Haptic signals proved to be a valuable additional resource for the participants, regardless of whether they can hear the visual interpreter or have visual or tactile sign language interpretation. Haptic signals, which are tactile, touch-based methods of exchanging messages, add additional information and enrich the experience for people with DSI.

Haptic signals can be used for direction and orientation, guide through space and help with navigation. They can also represent letters, numbers or symbols, and thus convey written information tactilely, regardless of visual or hearing function.

The experience consultants received haptic signals to understand events on the football arena. All participants found this additional information valuable and saw it as complementary to other interpretation methods.

The project identifies the need for a "guide" for haptic signals specifically aimed at football matches. The guide, available in the project report, standardises the use of haptic signals to ensure a uniform interpretation of football events. The aim is to improve the accessibility of sporting experiences for people with DSI by providing a common platform for

interpreters and helping those who are new to this approach.

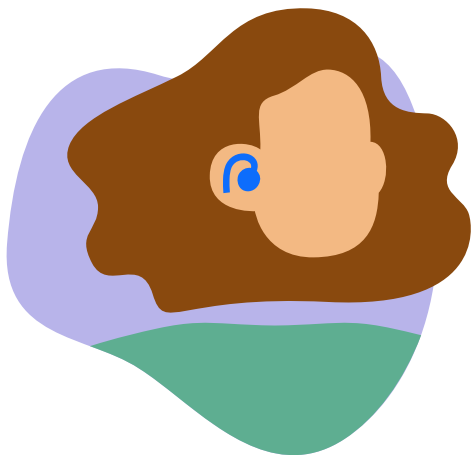






Photo by Eikholt

## Assistive devices

In the project, we are working on developing haptic signals for increased participation for people with DSI during social events. The collaboration with Hapti-Co provides consistency in the development of the "football signals". We are seeking funding for technical equipment and have a fruitful collaboration with INCLUDE for the systematic development of haptic signals. Our approach emphasizes independence and a holistic experience, with technology divided into individual aids and arena arrangements, both crucial for increased accessibility for people with DSI.

In the project, we have limited the exploration of new technology, although we are aware of the availability of promising solutions. We have reviewed a few selected examples in the report, with a conscious focus on today's available technology. Our experiences and findings can be used as the foundation for the development of new technology with the aim of improving participation in cultural events.

Future projects should focus on how new technology can provide people with DSI a more autonomous experience, with increased self-determination and control over their own experiences.

This includes in-depth exploration of technological solutions for a more personal approach, allowing participants to customize events in line with individual needs and preferences. Such an approach will strengthen the possibilities for a more inclusive participation in cultural events.

## **The last word has not been said**

Based on the successful experiences with accommodation for people with Dual Sensory Impairment/Deafblindness at football matches, we are convinced that this accessibility can be extended to other events.

The high degree of interpretation through all the senses has proven effective and helped to expand the boundaries of sports enjoyment for everyone.



**eikholt**

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