

# INTRODUCTION



## Why do we need a Charter for Gender Diversity in Sports, and what purpose does it serve?

We are pleased that you are interested in the topic of gender diversity in sports. When we take all people into consideration, everyone benefits – and so do our communities. Often, individuals are excluded unintentionally because structures generally suit the people in them, and thus are not (or do not have to be) called into question. Taking people and their lives into consideration is a skill that must be learned and a (lifelong) process. We would like to invite everyone to join us in reshaping the way we think about and consider others.



To begin with, some of the information you read here might be new, unfamiliar, or even confusing for you. Some readers might think: “We don’t have a problem with trans, intersex, or non-binary people. Everyone who wants to join is welcome at our organization.” This is a very common sentiment, and from the perspective described above, it is easy to understand where it comes from. Here is an example to illustrate our perspective: Have you ever been to a party where you simply felt out of place? You had really been looking forward to the party, but when you arrive, you notice that you just don’t fit in somehow. Everyone else seems to be on the same wavelength, telling inside jokes that you don’t understand and sharing a similar taste in clothing. Maybe the people are even nice to you, but that doesn’t change your feeling that, on a basic level, you are different and do not belong there. Trans, intersex, and non-binary (TIN) individuals experience these types of “parties” in many different situations and contexts – including sports clubs – and it happens frequently, or even daily. This is not because the people there “aren’t nice enough” to them, but because these groups or associations are tailored for specific types of people, generally those who are not TIN themselves. As a result, some clubs may draw very few TIN participants or none at all.

This **Charter for Gender Diversity in Sports** consolidates the information on this topic in a single document. It is a collection of both basic and, most importantly, critical topics that are key to creating a sports organization designed for all genders. The Charter is designed to be signed by an organization's board of directors on behalf of all its members, employees, and coaches. In this way, the club or association states its intention to carefully consider the subject of gender diversity and become an organization for all genders. We at Seitenwechsel will also be signing the Charter – after all, we are still working to achieve that goal for ourselves. Introducing the Charter at a general assembly can be a good way to start. From there, members can vote on whether the board should sign the Charter. The Charter contains nine articles, and for each article, we have developed an **educational module** to illustrate the main points and include recommendations on how to proceed.

Maintaining a culture of openness and diversity is not only beneficial for TIN people – it helps many people feel more comfortable at an organization. We would be very pleased if you decided to use these educational modules to explore how you can make your organization an even better place for trans, intersex, and non-binary (TIN) people. Maybe you are already on your way; maybe some of this information is new to you. Whether you are just starting out or whether you already have a lot of experience in this area, our educational modules provide you with concrete ideas and information for your daily work as a coach, referee, board member, or manager. This Charter and the individual educational modules were developed to help TIN individuals participate in and enjoy athletic activities without barriers to entry.

It is NOT our intention to point out everything you are doing “wrong” or “right.” Even monumental changes can begin with tiny steps, and every person who has ever held a training session knows that nothing goes according to plan 100 percent of the time. The most important thing is to take those very first steps and be open to trying new things along the way. Try to understand it as a process of learning by doing – and to see our educational modules as tools designed to offer you concrete support as you make changes at your organization. So, our ten educational modules contain both typical problem areas and recommended solutions as well as a range of practical examples.



## What do the terms trans, intersex, and non-binary mean?

In this section, we would like to define a common vocabulary so that all readers understand the terms we use throughout this document.

**Gender** is generally understood as a category assigned to an individual at birth by medical personnel (such as physicians or birth workers) based on external sex characteristics (for example, a “penis” or “vulva”). It is frequently assumed that there are only two genders, male and female. A person’s gender is considered to be immutable, meaning that it remains constant throughout their life. Most people do not question these basic assumptions. Many countries, including Germany, have introduced a third gender option (e.g., “diverse”) in civil records, and such developments are beginning to shift rigid notions about binary gender assignment. This binary concept of gender also contradicts the lived experiences of trans, intersex, and non-binary (TIN) individuals:



**Trans** (or transgender, trans\*) people know that they do not – or do not fully – identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.



**Non-binary** or abinary individuals identify outside of male/female categories; they may not feel they belong to any gender or have multiple gender identities at the same time.



**Inter** (or inter\*) individuals have innate, physical sex characteristics that do not align with the typical categories of male or female or have attributes associated with both sexes. Some intersex people identify as female or male, and some have an intersex identity based on their experience of living in an intersex body (see Oll Deutschland). Intersex people may also be trans if they do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Because most people believe that the gender of a person can or should be determined as either male or female at birth based on external physical characteristics and that gender cannot change over the course of a person’s lifetime, people whose identities align with these beliefs have a privileged status in society. This **privilege** means that those who conform to these societal norms receive better treatment, preferential status in certain situations, or simply do not have to think about certain things.

In contrast, TIN people are subject to discrimination in society; they are disadvantaged in certain situations and, for example, may be forced to take legal action to have their

own gender or name officially recognized. Legal situations frequently present challenges for TIN individuals. Therefore, we have included a tenth educational module dedicated specifically to this topic (→ EM Legal issues).

Societal privilege has an unfortunate counterpart: discrimination. In this case, we are referring to discrimination against trans, intersex, and non-binary people. Although our educational modules focus on this type of discrimination, there are many different power dynamics at play in society. People's experiences stem not only from their (perceived) gender; their experiences are always the product of simultaneous interactions between multiple power structures, such as racism, ableism, classism, or sexism. This means that different TIN people can have widely divergent experiences. (→ EM 8 Intersectionality). We, the white, largely non-disabled trans and non-binary authors of this text, do not share the same experiences as a trans, disabled woman of color, for example. Our social status influences the way we write this text, which examples we choose, and which topics we omit. Recognizing these limitations is part of the learning process, and we must reflect on our own status if we wish to understand and prevent people from being excluded from our communities.

Confronting the topics of gender and gender diversity may be disconcerting or uncomfortable for some readers. But in sports, we are used to facing challenges. We simply take a deep breath and keep on trying. We hope that this Charter and our educational modules will help you on your journey and provide you with a bit of support as you work your way through this learning process. Change is not always easy, but we know from experience that it's worth the effort!

We look forward to working with you and welcome your feedback on our "tool kit"! If you have any questions regarding the educational modules, please contact Seitenwechsel e.V. or your local TIN association.

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#genderdiversity #lifelonglearning #sportsforeverybody



For additional information on this topic, please visit the websites of some organizations such as:

**Intersexuelle Menschen e.V.**, [im-ev.de](http://im-ev.de) (German only)

**OII Deutschland**, [oiigermany.org](http://oiigermany.org)

**Bundesverband Trans\***, [bv-trans.de](http://bv-trans.de) (German only)

**DGTI**, [dgti.org](http://dgti.org) (German only)

**LesMigraS**, [lesmigras.de/en/](http://lesmigras.de/en/)

**GLADT**, [gladt.de/en/](http://gladt.de/en/)

**Migrationsrat Berlin**, [migrationsrat.de/en/](http://migrationsrat.de/en/)

**ISL**, [isl-ev.de](http://isl-ev.de) (German only)