

National approaches to promote sports and physical activity among people with disabilities: a comparison between Canada and the Netherlands

Hoekstra F^{1,2}, Roberts L³, van Lindert C⁴, Martin Ginis KA⁵, van der Woude LHV^{1,2}, McColl MA³

¹ Centre for Human Movement Sciences, University of Groningen, University Medical Centre Groningen, Groningen, the Netherlands; ² Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Centre for Rehabilitation, University Medical Centre Groningen, University of Groningen, Groningen, the Netherlands; ³ Centre for Health Services and Policy Research, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, Canada; ⁴ Mulier Institute, Centre for Research on Sports in Society, Utrecht, the Netherlands; ⁵ School of Health and Exercise Sciences, The University of British Columbia, Kelowna, BC, Canada

Background

What is the best way for governments to promote sports and physical activity among disabled citizens? An effective nationwide approach is complex and little is known about the best way to govern sports at the national level. Identification of approaches of different countries gives the opportunity to learn from each other and share 'good examples' of national approaches on disability sports.

The aim of this study is twofold:

- 1) to describe how Canadian and Dutch governments promote elite, recreational sports and physical activity among adults with disabilities on national level
- 2) to identify similarities and differences between both governmental approaches

Methods

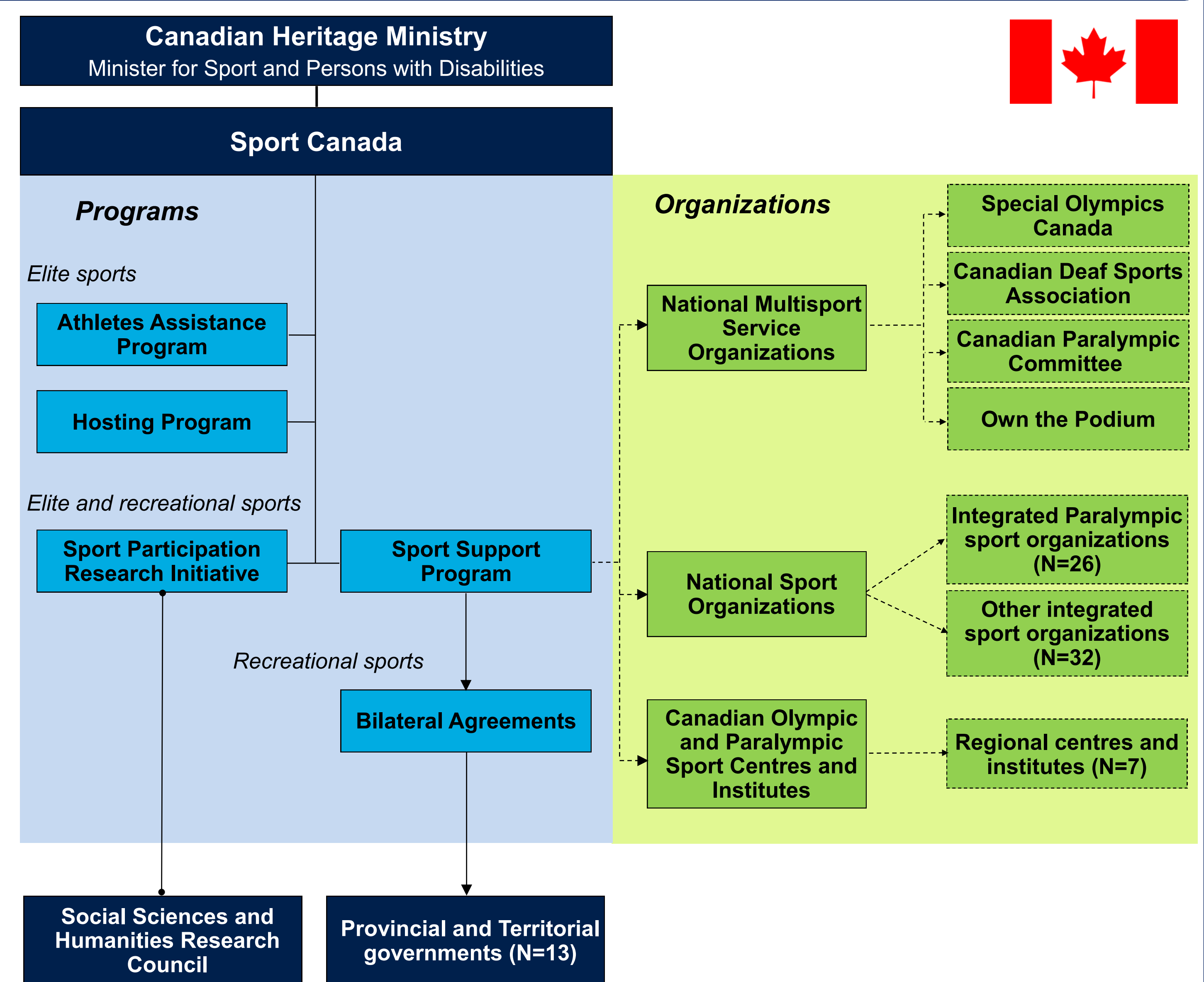
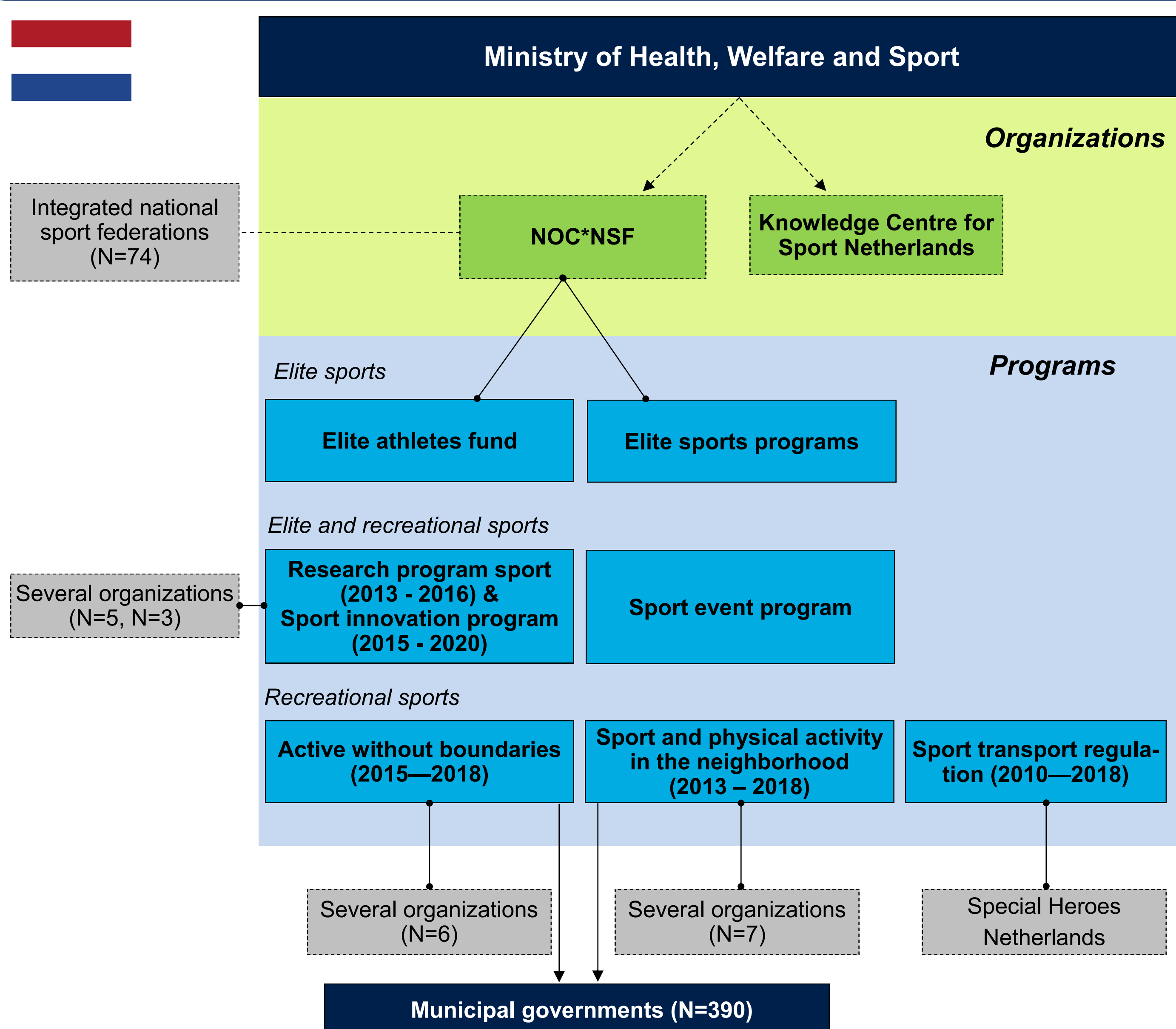
A **systematic internet-based study** was conducted to identify and select relevant documents and websites containing information about the national approach to promote disabilities sports in Canada and in the Netherlands. The selected items were classified into four groups:

- Legislation
- Organizations (government and non-governmental)
- Programs
- Sport policy documents

Items were included only if they contained information about the national approach, and applied in the year 2016. Items about sport in educational settings or for children only were excluded.

Afterwards, a **direct content analysis** was used to identify similarities and differences between Canadian and Dutch approach.

Results



Key differences:

- 1) **Legislation governing sports and physical activity**
 - Canada has a Sport and Physical Activity Act
- 2) **National governing organizations**
 - Non-governmental (NOC*NSF) vs governmental (Sport Canada)
- 3) **National approach to promote recreational sports**
 - Time-limited vs ongoing programs
 - Role of local governments (municipalities vs provinces)
- 4) **View on level of integration into non-disabled sports**
 - Integrated with non-disabled sport vs benefitting from having its own dedicated focus

Conclusion

The Dutch and Canadian governments promote elite disability sports via several national programs. Both countries use different approaches to promote recreational sports and physical activity among disabled populations which corresponds with their culture and infrastructure.

Take home message

The findings of this study may inspire policy makers from different countries to learn from one another's policies in order to optimize national approaches to promote disabilities sports on all levels.