

REFUGEE INTEGRATION THROUGH SPORTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

RESEARCH ON GOOD PRACTICES

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Current refugee crisis has pictured the newly arrived in many ways, most of which are rather negative. This is especially seen in Lithuania, where media, government and ordinary people are expressing concerns about refugees taking up ‘scarce’ resources and posing perceived risks to security.

To tackle these issues and promote cooperation between refugees and locals, 1-year project “Sports Together” has been initiated. Main idea of the project is to create sustainable programme for refugee integration through sports and lower existing fears and phobias towards refugees. This project is co-funded by European union.



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INTRODUCTION

During the last few years refugees from Asia and Africa became part of the world's most vulnerable populations. Since 2015 immigrant crisis has added hundreds of thousands of people to European population. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (*UNHCR*), there are approximately 65.6 million refugees forcibly displaced globally and more than half of them are under the age of 18. Germany alone had 1.2 million asylum applications from the beginning of 2015 until the end of May 2017. Across 28 European Union (EU) countries, 2.6 million people filed for asylum in that period (*HSBC calculations based on UNHCR, Eurostat*). After experiencing war, violence, and years of living in overcrowded camps, refugees arrive in Europe with few resources and must acclimate to an unfamiliar local language, economy, and culture.¹ In order to solve these issues related with refugees and promote their integration EU Integration Action Plan has been adopted on 2016. New plan have provided Member States with a comprehensive framework in order to address the specific challenges faced by refugees. Plan included specific integration guidelines for: 1) education; 2) employment; 3) housing and healthcare; 4) social inclusion.

It is important to use all the necessary tools that could help integrate refugees into their new host countries. In order to promote successful integration within new communities, the usual practice is to engage people in collective sport activities. From a cultural standpoint, sport does not have anything particularly against having different interests and views. Moreover, these activities can create an environment that fosters teamwork and respect. Essentially, sport can facilitate social inclusion of refugees. The EU White Paper on Sport (2007) states that "Sport can facilitate the integration into society of migrants and persons of foreign origin as well as support intercultural

dialogue".² It offers a universal language that overcomes national, social and cultural boundaries. Many EU countries have embraced sports projects which have demonstrated the ability to connect communities and contribute to the integration of refugees. Furthermore, it is significant to ensure equal gender opportunities in various sport initiatives. Gender equality can assist by building respectful relationships between men and women. Participation in physical activities can facilitate good mental health for women and promote their well-being through building self-esteem, confidence and social integration. This is particularly important as physical activities, such as sporting can help women to reduce stress, loneliness and depression. Various social integration activities through equal sport initiatives was successfully adopted by many European countries. Therefore, it is important to present a brief research about the situation on good practices of refugee integration through sports in the EU countries (*list of countries and research provided below*).

Ireland

In 2015 Ireland committed to accepting 4,000 refugees (Irish Refugee Protection Programme) as part of Europe's response to the migration crisis. However, with a deadline of autumn 2017, less than half of the expected 4,000 people have arrived to Ireland from relocated from Greece and Italy. Those who have arrived were sent to towns across Ireland and provided with the supplies to recover and start a new life³. One of the main organisation that promotes integration and enhances lives of the refugees in Ireland is the Irish Refugee Council. Organisation had created the program "Arabic Interpreter Training program" that provides people with all the necessary information about social support possibilities.

¹ *Science*, 19 Jan 2018, Vol. 359, p. 325-329.

² White Paper on sport: *Using the potential of sport for social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities*, 2007, Art 2.5, at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

[content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0391&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0391&from=EN).

³ Immigrant Council of Ireland, *Refugee Crisis*, at: <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/campaign/refugee-crisis>.

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Organisation made a large step into refugee integration by creating “Employment Programme for Refugee Women”⁴ that helped to break the employment barrier which was experienced by women who have refugee status in Ireland. One of the project goal was to provide program members with possibility to receive a 6-month work placement and trainings for language skills improvement.

A large number of sports associations and clubs in Ireland have taken active measures to promote inclusion and fostering integration among refugees. However, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) has also played a major role in promoting refugee integration through sport in Ireland. UNHCR distinguished integration as a two-way process involving efforts by the refugee and the host country to create the conditions that will allow individual refugees to start rebuilding their lives. In 2014 UNHCR had submitted RICE Report to the Irish government outlining the main challenges that refugees face and how they can be resolved through using sport. According to these recommendations specific measures should be taken to enhance access refugee participation in sporting organizations. Secondly, additional measures should be taken to tackle racism, discrimination and to raise awareness about these measures among refugees⁵.

In terms of integration Ireland has several organisations that have been working with promotion of various sport initiatives and social inclusion of refugees into local communities. For example, “Football Association of Ireland” (FAI) managed to execute successful “Integration Through Football” (AMIF) project. One of the primary objectives of FAI project is to promote social cohesion and inclusion for people from ethnic or immigrant communities (including asylum seekers), through football.

⁴ Immigrant Council of Ireland, *Employment Programme for Refugee Women*, at: <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/news/employment-programme-for-refugee-women/6369>.

⁵ UNHCR, *Towards a New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Ireland*, May 2014, p. 68. At: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52ca8a6d4.htm>.

FAI is one of the national governing sport clubs in the country that come up with a program to focus on refugee integration and their social connection. FAI worked to ensure that refugees felt free to join and participate in sports activities on the basis of equality and with the confidence that they will be genuinely welcomed if they decide to join. The association in collaboration with significant stakeholder’s work to ensure a 10-15% participation of refugees⁶.

Second good practice on refugee integration in Ireland is called “Show Racism the Red Card”. This project was led by United Kingdom as anti-racism educational charity. The main idea of the project was to provide educational workshops, training sessions, multimedia packages, and a whole host of other resources, all with the purpose to tackle racism in society. After the project, “Sligo Rovers Football Club” was awarded as one of the main organisation that helped to involve large number of refugees and asylum seekers in grassroots sport around Ireland. Sport club organised training sessions were at least 30 refugees and asylum seekers took part each week.⁷ The result of the project was an unprecedented success, with asylum seekers and refugees in Sligo becoming more active in the community by means of football while also becoming more familiar with Sligo Rovers as a whole.

Germany

According to recent statistics Germany has been ranked as one of the biggest refugee hosting country. It facilitates refugee integration with a program known as "Integration through sport" (since 2015) programme and executed

⁶ SPIN, *Inclusion of Migrants in and through Sports: A guide to good Practise*, 2012, p. 4.

⁷ Sligo Rovers Football Club, *Show Racism the Red Card: Award for Rovers for work with refugees*, at: <http://www.sligorovers.com/news/18/jan/award-rovers-work-refugees>.

by the German Olympic Sports Confederation.⁸ Project programme was founded in the 1989 in the form of “Sport with Resettlers” for ethnic Germans and ran successfully for more than ten years. Later program was reformed for work with refugee inclusion. DOSB programme “Integration through sport” become the main body that advocates for refugee inclusion and integration through sport in Germany. The programme was provided with a strong governmental support (5 mill € per year) from Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).⁹ The aim of the programme is to allow immigrants to participate sport in various different associations and in training and competitions over the long term. Secondly, it aims to increase the number of refugee participation in sports clubs and to ensure that they feel like part of the community in all aspects. Therefore, a wide range of sporting and leisure programmes were offered by the clubs: In addition to volleyball, handball, basketball and gymnastics, there are also specialist courses such as Sambo, boxing and wrestling. In conjunction with other organisations, events are organised such as street football tournaments, midnight sports, indoor tournaments, intercultural parties and holiday leisure events.

For more than 25 years, the DOSB used the integrative power of sport and was appointed as one of the main stakeholders in the “National Action Plan for Integration”. As a result, the confederation initiated another program which is known as “*Welcome to Sport*”. Project has been created in collaboration with the BAMF and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as a result of the global refugee crisis that had hit Europe. The programme has been designed to help refugees coming from war-torn countries,

such as Syria, and enable them to participate in sport as a way of welcoming them to the country.¹⁰ Till the end of 2016 had unified 13 regional sport confederations and offered sporting activities such as dancing, cycling, cricket and swimming to refugees for the purpose of integration.

Since the 2016 there has been an encouraging number of stories all over the Europe that have demonstrated how refugees are being included in sports. One of the example is a boxing club in Hamburg, Germany, that was founded by Hussein Ismael, a Kurdish refugee. The club is called BC Hanseat and has seen significant growth in its membership since advertising to refugees who settled there. The club benefits refugees by providing them a social atmosphere to interact with other refugees and a place where they can learn about the German culture. The club has been quite successful, winning medals at the local, regional and national levels, and has actually encouraged other sporting organizations in Germany to open their doors to refugees. Furthermore, Afghan refugees have been rapidly joining German cricket clubs since arriving, tripling its membership. As a result, English cricket clubs have donated materials to continue to foster this increased interest in the sport. As a result of this inclusion, one of these German teams won the Division 2 cricket league that was led by two Afghani players.¹¹

Second organisation that is well known for work with refugee integration throughout sports is called “Rheinflanke”. Organization actively supports young people with migration backgrounds in their personal development to become responsible citizens in their society. Their focus is on linking street football activities to educational opportunities. “Rheinflanke”

⁸ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, *Integration through sport programme DOSB*, at: <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Integrationsprojekte/FreizeitSport/freizeitsport-node.html>.

⁹ Prof. Dr. Herbert Hartmann, *Integration through sport*, p. 1-4, at: <http://www.isca-web.org/files/Integration%20Through%20Sport.pdf>

¹⁰ *Refugees welcomed with sport by German Olympic body*, at: <http://www.beyondsport.org/articles/refugees-welcomed-with-sport-by-german-olympic-body/>.

¹¹ Richard Lapchick, *How sports are helping the global refugee crisis*, at: http://www.espn.com.au/espn/story/_/id/20683208/the-world-sports-offers-place-solace-refugees-worldwide.

runs two programmes for this target group. The first one is a football-based project called H.O.P.E and the second one uses an old US school bus fitted with sports equipment to visit refugee shelters (camps).

H.O.P.E socialises with the people via low-threshold football courses. The participants build trust and the organisation gets to know them and their personal needs to be able to provide individual support. In addition, the project H.O.P.E established a football team, which takes part in the lowest German division.¹² The team mostly consists of refugees, but also German players and players with different backgrounds. Through regular practice and matches they want to promote social skills and communal spirit. However, the BUS project is a low-threshold project catered to refugees in emergency accommodation. Therefore, their major need is a distraction from their everyday lives and their traumatic experiences as well as reasonable leisure activities and socialising. Football is a big part of such recreation. Thanks to the BUS project, children in particular learn to abide by the rules and are able to play again, an ability they've often lost in times of war.

United Kingdom

It is estimated that there were 1.3 million asylum applications with in the 28 European Union countries during the migration crisis of 2015 and 2016 (*Eurostat, 2017*). Currently there are about 117,234 know refugees that are living in the UK. (*Red Cross, 2017*). In the United Kingdom (*UK*), many refugees and British citizens live parallel lives with a lack of

shared experiences and little scope for the emergence of shared values. Therefore, it is extremely important to focus on integration through sports.

UK has football team in Glasgow (*UGFC*) that helps men in the asylum system to integrate for almost 7 years. The team plays in the anti-racist football league in Glasgow with a focus on integration and social inclusion as a two-way process, involving refugees as well as members of the host community.^{13,14}

Second organisation that is well known for work with refugee integration throughout sports is called "Sport 4 Life UK". The main aim of this project is to help disadvantaged children and young people that lives in the most deprived areas nationally. It is helping youth who have struggled at school, experienced long-term unemployment or been involved in the criminal justice system. "Sport 4 Life UK" believes that every young person has the ability to make a positive change in their lives and to be a success story. Therefore, it provides a helping hand on this journey through its sports-themed educational programmes¹⁵. Project motivates young people to build their confidence, develop their life skills and improve their health through a weekly football and education sessions for 200 young people (including 140 refugees/migrants) in Birmingham.¹⁶

On a national level one of the good practice examples of refugee integration is "Start Again" organisation. It's mission is to help young people to develop their personal and social skills. The organisation currently has the All Nations Football session, which has the focus of working with all young people from all nations taking part in structured football

¹² Streetfootballworld European Network Members Working With Refugees, *H.O.P.E // BUS // START-AGAIN*, at:

http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/documents/streetworldfootball-refugees_en.pdf.

¹³ Olivia Booth, Salvator Cusimano, Evan Elise Easton-Calabria and Elisabeth Kühn (University of Oxford), *United Glasgow Football Club A pilot* April 2014

<https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/wp99-ugfc-study-integration-2014.pdf>

¹⁴ University of Manchester, *Jumpers for Goalposts: A Study of Refugee Integration in the UK Through Sport*

https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/jumpers_for_goalposts.pdf

¹⁵ Saad Mohammed, *FIFA Visit S4L*, May 2017

<http://sport4life.org.uk/fifa-football-for-hope/>
¹⁶ *SPORT 4 LIFE UK*, October 2016

<https://uefafoundation.org/action/sport-4-life-uk/>

sessions every week. “Start Again” also implements the Birmingham Communities League, which is targeted at new and arriving communities playing 11- a- side games to help develop teams for community members. Each of these programmes involves young refugee participants, with an eye to develop their belonging within Birmingham and the UK.¹⁷

Italy

In February, 2018, Italian basketball team from Trento “Aquila Basket” started a new project “BasketbALL TOGETHER”. A total of 25 refugees and asylum seekers from Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Togo, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Morocco and Pakistan are training once a week with team’s coaches Claudio March, Giuseppe Lucente and Matteo Tovazzi. The project is implemented with the help of different organisations, including women’s basketball team Belvedere Ravina.

The project seeks to improve physical well-being of refugees engaged in sports activities and to help create a cohesive group. But the project’s activities are not limited to the gym. There was first aid lessons with the medical staff of the first Juventus FC team. In the beginning of May, the participants went to the BLM Group Arena for a meeting with the physiotherapist Giacomo Beccucci to gain some practical knowledge about sport injuries.

All activities were closely monitored and thorough interviews with the participants were held since the beginning of the project in February to observe improvements on the physical condition, psychological well-being and knowledge of the Italian language. The interviews will be repeated until project’s scheduled end in June, 2018.

¹⁷ STREETFOOTBALLWORLD. EUROPEAN NETWORK MEMBERS WORKING WITH REFUGEES
http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/documents/streetworldfootball-refugees_en.pdf

¹⁸ BasketbALL TOGETHER: *quando il basket è inclusione sociale*, May 2018

Luigi Longhi, President of “Aquila Basket” says:

require sports clubs to question and to act. Sport today is no longer a world in its own right, devoid of links with reality, but stands as a tool to facilitate exchange of knowledge and

Project’s activities are offered for both males and females. According to Cristiano Vezzoni who coordinates the project’s evaluation work and participates in the training sessions that is particularly important for creating a more inclusive community:

morning, they arrive at the gym with their children and for two hours all their energy and all their attention is focused on sports. They practice together with other refugees, coaches and volunteers; thus, the game of basketball becomes an opportunity for them all to be together, to feel better and to

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Another Italian project for integration of young refugees and asylum seekers through sports is “Let’s Play”.¹⁹ The project, which takes place in the Province of Ravenna, northern Italy aims at their involvement in the life of the host communities. The project started in February, 2018 with a friendly game of cricket.

“Let’s Play” has a scope of actions planned, taking into account the physical capabilities, age, gender and the actual needs of the participants. The educational project will focus on sporting activities as a promoter of training values. Coaches, volunteers, teachers and sports operators work to create the right environment to encourage integration, understanding in the group and respect for the rules. To promote intercultural youth employment there is planned the specific

<http://www.aquilabasket.it/news/14744456710/basketball-together-quando-il-basket-e-inclusione-sociale>

¹⁹ *List of successful applicants proposed for funding call EAC/S16/2017*
https://ec.europa.eu/sport/sites/sport/files/results-call-eacs16-eacs17_en.pdf

training for sports operators and referees: boys and girls aged 16 and over.

Alessandro Bondi, president of CSI (Italian Sports Centre) Ravenna: *"For us at the CIS the founding principle is to use sport as an educational tool. We therefore believe that sport can also promote the pluralism of cultures of different ethnic groups, a precious resource that can make the society richer and more dynamic. Our desire is that with this project new and different relational dynamics can be born, including a multi-sports path that can highlight the national sports, customs and traditions to achieve concrete results of integration and sports inclusion".*²⁰

Austria

In 2017, Austria has received 24,296 applications for asylum.²¹ The government has declared social integration a key issue. German classes, vocational training and work subsidies is offered for the refugees as part of integration process. Apart from that, a number of sports initiatives are being implemented.

With a great love for sports, particularly football, Austrian nation believes that part of the answer to successful integration lies within their stadiums. Famous clubs are trying to become role models. Austria Vienna FC, one of the most successful Austrian sport teams holds trainings for young refugees. Every Friday, for an hour, the 30 teenagers gather on the pitch and exercise with professionals of the more than 100-year-old club. According to the club's

²⁰

Piangipane, February 2018
<http://www.csi-net.it/index.php?action=pspagina&idPSPagina=3731>

²¹ *Applications and granting of protection status at first and second instance: 2017*

<http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/austria/statistics>

²² Denise Hruby, *Through Sports, Austria Tries to Give Migrants Traction*, October 2015

head of communications Christoph Pflug, it is vital that the club showed its hundreds of thousands of fans what social responsibility meant.²²

SKV Altenmarkt Frauen is a women's football team that organises activities for asylum seekers and refugees living in Austria. They often invite refugees to football matches and provide training session for young refugee girls.²³

Fadi Merza, a Syrian-born Austrian who won several world champion titles in Muay Thai boxing, offers kickboxing classes for teenagers from Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Syria and Austria altogether.²⁴

On a governmental level, the National Action Plan for Integration (NAP) was introduced in 2010. It is a nationwide integration strategy which aims to optimise, focus, and systematically develop measures for a successful inclusion at different levels in seven spheres of activity. In the sphere of sports and leisure, the integrative potential of sport is emphasised. Associations that seek the inclusion of migrants through sporting activities are encouraged, especially those, who promote sports to girls and women. Best performed organisations can get awarded with cash prizes.²⁵

The need to make sports available for migrant females is obvious. Organisation Kinderfreunde (Friends of children) in Vienna holds a separate girls' and women's day in a public swimming pool twice a month. On this

<https://www.voanews.com/a/through-sports-austria-tries-to-give-migrants-traction/3002397.html>

²³ *Refugees and football Who is doing what and where*

<http://farenet.org/campaigns/refugees-football-database/>

²⁴ Denise Hruby, *Through Sports, Austria Tries to Give Migrants Traction*, October 2015

<https://www.voanews.com/a/through-sports-austria-tries-to-give-migrants-traction/3002397.html>

²⁵ *Sport Inclusion Network*

<http://www.sportinclusion.net/>

day, men are denied access. The large influx of Muslim women shows that there is additional need for such offers, where females can have space to do sports without males, as practising sports together is not customary according to Islam.²⁶

Finland

In Finland, a research and practice programme named Benefiting of Sports for Social Inclusion (BOSSI) has been running since 2005, supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The programme was started by collecting and distributing information about migration and sports in Finland. Later BOSSI got funding from the European Refugee Fund and for several years now BOSSI has been funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The primary objective of the effort is to increase knowledge of both the challenges of multicultural sport and the benefits of sports in integrating migrants. The programme has three parallel target groups, namely municipal sport clubs and federations, migrants and their own sport clubs. With each target group BOSSI aims to take a look at multicultural sports from their particular viewpoint introducing good practices, relevant background information and the basic legislative framework. BOSSI is meant to support both professionals and volunteers working in the field of multicultural sport.²⁷

Finland's "The Multinational Women's Welfare and Sports Association" starting 2018 spring is introducing sports activities for families and persons with refugee background or status. This initiative is meant to support the integration process and growth of social network of refugees. The activity is arranged approximately once a week and offer instructed

football or other sports activities 2-3 times a month and a possibility to have information about and visit independently other sports groups or sports venues of your own choice with a help of a person volunteering in the activities.

The activities take place in Espoo, Vantaa and Helsinki. All activities for refugees are free of charge and are arranged in cooperation with local sports clubs. Participants of the activities get a compensation for transportation to a sport venue, financial support for independent sport hobbies outside the instructed activities and can get help with the costs of sports gear and clothing.²⁸

Portugal

Under the European Migration Agenda with the involvement of civil society, Portugal has so far accommodated about 1600 refugees, around 16% of the total agreed with the European Union. A significant increase in the number of refugees in Portugal is expected in the coming years. Aware of the awaiting challenges, Portuguese NOC (National Olympic Committee) has implemented the 2-year project "Live Sport – Embrace the Future" (Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro). The project aimed to promote the cohesion and social inclusion of refugees through sport.

NOC Portugal believes in the strategic importance of sport in the future foundation of a multicultural society, anchored in the fundamental Olympic values of respect, friendship and excellence. Working by these values, NOC contributes in creating a better world for future generations and to those who hope to start a new life away from home.

Main goals of the project were to promote the dissemination of the cultural, educational and

²⁶ *Sport Inclusion Network*
<http://www.sportinclusion.net/>

²⁷ SPIN, *Inclusion of Migrants in and through Sports. A Guide to Good Practice*
<https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/Inclusion%20In%20Sport%20Guidelines.pdf>

²⁸ *Sports activities for families and persons with refugee background*
<https://www.monaliiku.fi/hankkeet-projects/together4sports/sports-activities-for-families-a/>

social values of Olympism and to inform and encourage females to participate in sports activities. And that proved to be the biggest challenge: most refugees arriving in Portugal are Muslims; in general, Islam promotes good health and fitness and encourages both men and women to engage in sport and physical activity to maintain healthy lifestyles. However, there are aspects of the religion which affect the way sports can be practised (for example, women following their faith cannot engage in mixed gender sports) and environment and dress code require consideration. Due to religious misinterpretations, many Muslim girls and women feel that they cannot participate in sports and also seem to have very negative views regarding any physical activity.

The program reported to have several refugees participating in the preparation for Tokyo 2020 Olympics, which proves that the methods taken to facilitate refugee inclusion were effective and successful.²⁹

Hungary

Budapest based humanitarian organisation “Mahatma Gandhi Human Rights Organization” was created in 1992 with the vision to fight for the rights of migrants and refugees, to combat racism and discrimination against foreigners and to encourage at all levels social inclusion in the community. The organisation is participating in a 2-year ESPIN (European Sport Inclusion Network) project “Sport Welcomes Refugees (SWR) - Social inclusion of newly arrived migrants in and through sport”.

The project is developed in Italy, Austria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Hungary to provide knowledge, training

and qualification to work with the new target groups. It was designed to enhance the social inclusion and participation of newly arrived migrants on different levels of sport (formal and informal) through training, awareness-raising and capacity-building of sport stakeholders. The project lays a special focus on involving female refugees into sports activities. The “Sport Welcomes Refugees” is co-funded under the ERASMUS+ Sport Programme/Collaborative partnerships in the sport field and Not-for-profit European sport events.³⁰

The project is divided in five work streams: 1) building an evidence base; 2) training for sport educators; 3) raising public awareness; 4) capacity building of sport initiatives with newly arrived migrants; 5) networking and policy development.³¹

Among the innovative activities of the project is the creation of the online multilingual platform “Clubs welcome refugees”: sports clubs and associations that want to include refugees and migrants in their activities can register on the platform indicating their characteristics and the sport they propose. Migrants who want to play sports in the country of arrival, but do not know who to turn to, can use the search engine of the platform to find the team closest to them, being sure to arrive in a friendly and open sports club.³²

To celebrate the World Refugee Day on the 20th of June, 2018 the Mahatma Gandhi Human Rights Organisation organises an event inside the biggest refugee camp in Hungary at Bicske, some 35 km from Budapest. Following a debate with representatives of UNHCR, the Immigration Office, the Bicske Refugee camp and African human rights activists, football matches will be

²⁹ *Live sport - Embrace the future. Action accessible to all including newly-arrived migrants*
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport-migrant-integration-directory/live-sport-embrace-the-future>

³⁰ The Mahatma Gandhi Human Rights Organization, *About us*

<http://www.gandhi.ini.hu/>

³¹ *Sport Welcomes Refugees (SWR) - Social inclusion of newly arrived migrants in and through sport*

<http://www.uisp.it/progetti/pagina/swr>

³² *Sport Inclusion Network*

<http://www.sportinclusion.net/>

<http://swr.sportinclusion.net/journal/>

played. The football teams in action are from the Debrecen and Bicske refugee camps as well as African Stars FC. Refugees will engage in cultural performances to display their rich culture.³³

The Netherlands

The Netherlands has also seen an influx of refugees into the country. To ensure that refugees and migrants feel welcome, an increasing number of integration through sports initiatives have been emerging. These stand-alone initiatives required coordination and support. To facilitate that, the project run by NOC*NSF ("Nederlands Olympisch Comité * Nederlandse Sport Federatie") was created in 2015.

In close cooperation with COA, the central agency for the reception of asylum seekers in the Netherlands, the Dutch NOC*NSF organised various sports activities for refugees staying in refugee centres. These activities enabled the refugees to get in direct contact with the local culture and to make connections with local people. NOC*NSF launched the activities by encouraging, supporting, and coordinating local initiatives, by facilitating knowledge exchange and sharing best practices, successful tools and approaches.³⁴

The Dutch NOC is the national Olympic committee as well as the National Sports Federation, the umbrella organisation for all 74 Dutch sports federations and their affiliated 25,000 local sports clubs with 5,3 million members. That means that it is well equipped to carry out the task of combining efforts from individual initiatives into a widespread support of refugee integration.

³³ *Football for Equality*
<http://www.fair-play.info/projects/sport-inclusion-network/football-refugee-day/>

³⁴ *NOC*NSF: Projects and activities: Environmental, social, economic: Refugees*
<https://www.nocnsf.nl/en/projects-activities/social/refugees>

³⁵ International Review for the Sociology of Sport,
Sport in liminal spaces: The meaning of sport

The project is targeted for all refugees, regardless their age, gender, faith or nationality, however, different sports are suggested for each group, for example, a Sunday morning yoga sessions for women. That ensures that everyone's needs are met and they get the most of the activities.³⁵

The main goal of the project is to make long term benefits for the refugee integration. To reach it, a permanent provision of sports activities were presented and made it possible for more refugees to take part in sports. Van Schaik, project leader at NOC*NSF for Sport and Refugees, adds: 'We want to get the people living at reception centres themselves involved in organising sporting activities.'

However, refugees do not feel at ease initiating sports activities. A majority of people interviewed in refugee reception centers state that they would like to initiate or join sports. Despite that, a lack of social contacts, gender, ethnic and language barriers are seen as obstacles and primary reasons not to organise sports themselves.³⁶

Switzerland

In 2016, nearly 30 thousand of applications for asylum were submitted in Switzerland. The refugee crisis prompted swiss people to think about what contribution they could make towards integration. The country has been experiencing an inflow of refugees, especially in the Ticino territory. In June 2016, the people came up with an initiative known as PCI Camorino football project. The project aims to foster refugee integration and solve the social problems that have existed between the people

activities for refugees living in a reception centre,
April 2018
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1012690218768200>

³⁶ *NOC*NSF: Organisation and structure: Annual reports: Annual report 2015: Sport and refugees*
<https://www.nocnsf.nl/nocnsf.nl-engels-restyle/jaarverslag/2015/rechterkant/sport-and-refugees>

living there as a result of their diversities. This project bridges the diversity gap between the local people and refugees, allowing them to meet as they do something they all love and enjoy. As a result, the people get to know each other and share their culture and customs.

After one month of training, the team, diverse in their nationality and age, began to play matches with local football clubs. At the first matches they played, they were wearing old uniforms of the FC Camorino, football club of the town where they reside. That way, the players honoured their new home-town, which in turn brought more tolerance, empathy and willingness to help the refugees from the local swiss.

At the beginning, the project did not have any funds and all the materials used for the trainings have been recycled or donated by the local people and football clubs. One of the project's initiators noted that as the project moved along, more and more people donated sports gear, offered meals and gave positive feedback. Several football clubs (US Giubiasco, FC Camorino, AC Ravecchia) took players from the PCI Camorino into their teams. That in turn offered a greater chance for them to integrate and for the local players, a chance to get to know refugees better.³⁷

The football coaches admit that the language barrier still remains a major issue for the refugees. Even so, thanks to universal and widespread language of football, they now feel more self-assured and optimistic. Refugees feel more comfortable around the locals and more hopeful about their future.

At the moment (2018 06 04), the team has three coaches and 26 players. PCI Camorino participates in various tournaments and competes with other football teams.³⁸

CONCLUSION

All the initiatives gathered by this research is intended as a foundation for further continuous research rather than a complete project. Therefore, it is difficult at this stage to draw any comprehensive conclusions. Furthermore, research can be used as recommendations to create a various methodology on refugee integration through sports for youth sport volunteers and professionals.

However, the discovered results confirm that there are quite limited number of various sport programs and incentives available for refugees at the moment. Therefore, it is difficult to meet the needs of the majority of refugees in European Union. This research can be considered as an evidence of the need to increase the opportunities for refugees to participate in sport programs.

³⁷ *Integrating refugees through sport in Switzerland*
<https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/news/integrating-refugees-through-sport-switzerland>

³⁸ *Sdplanet - Progetti Sociali (Sport, Music & Social Projects): PCI Camorino*
<https://www.sdplanet.org/pcicamorino>



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Active Youth is a Lithuania-based NGO that unites young leaders, thinkers and doers, those who seek change and those who make change. Our goal is to create social, cultural and educational impact for groups and communities in need.

We do it through organising and getting involved in youth mobility/training; as well as improving infrastructure and opportunities around us.

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