

# Coaches in the mirror

An exploratory inquiry on field experience and training needs of trainers and educators working in inclusive sport programs with refugees and migrants



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

Erasmus+ Programme, Sport · Collaborative partnerships · n° 612967-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-SPO-SCP

## The project

This publication is one of the products of the [SIMCAS project](#) (Social Inclusion Methodology in Critical Areas via Sport) promoted in the field of the Erasmus Plus Sport Project. The project aims at defining and testing a methodological approach that helps the sports operators to define and use efficient measures in critical contexts and allows continuity and replicability.

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[www.simcas.eu](http://www.simcas.eu)

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SIMCAS - Social Inclusion Methodology in Critical Area via Sport Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020 - Collaborative Partnerships in the field of Sport (AGREEMENT n° 612967-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-SPO-SCP)  
Output No. 3 bis- Survey on coaches' experience and training needs (task 2.3 bis)

## INTRODUCTION

The coach is a key figure in any sports program, especially when the aim is to include underprivileged groups such as refugees and migrants in critical areas (camps, prisons, disadvantaged neighborhoods). This evidence emerged clearly in previous research activities carried out within the Simcas project: critical review of the scientific literature on sport inclusiveness; interviews with stakeholders (scholars, public officials, leaders of sport grassroots organizations, etc.) from European partner countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Denmark, Germany, Slovenia) to understand the social context in which integration sport activities take place; case studies on local best practices, in order to identify the organizational and cultural factors that can facilitate (or constrain) the success of sport for all programs.

The idea of conducting a web survey on coaches who work daily to defeat migrants' marginalization in disadvantaged areas arose by the end of research activities (tasks 2.1-2.3), just before the beginning of the implementation phase, whose purpose is to develop and test an innovative methodological approach (task 3.1 and 3.2). At that point, the project committee has become aware of two fundamental issues for the continuation of the Simcas initiative: on the one hand, the need to deepen the understanding on coaches' experience (instructors, educators and other sports operators) in field activities addressed to athletes with a migratory background; on the other hand, the opportunity to comprehend if (and to what extent) these trainers need to be involved in reskilling or an upskill courses to cope with their demanding work within critical areas. Both of these questions have been amplified by the extreme conditions that sport for all movement has had to face as a result of the pandemic. It is not easy to conduct inclusive activities in a period in which it is urged to respect social distancing rules and health prevention protocols, since contact is a basic component in all sports, particularly in team disciplines, even more so when the intent is to overcome social and cultural barriers in places where segregation of minority groups and ethnic cleavages are a persistent features. For this reason it was decided to carry out an exploratory survey to capture the mood of people who work on the frontline to make our societies more welcoming and inclusive towards migrants and refugees. In the following pages the main findings of this research will be examined after providing some information on the ways in which it was carried out.

Before proceeding with the exposition of survey's salient passages and main results, it is however necessary to underline that the present report is not a study with strictly academic purposes, but rather a focused analysis having Simcas' very pragmatic goals in mind. In this sense, it should be noted that the preliminary results of the web survey have already been presented to the project staff during an on line meeting held the 21<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 via Skype. Soon after a very concise communication on research findings, the participants began to discuss the ways in which these evidences could be employed in the imminent launch of the experimentation tasks; this informed debate was very useful to make partner organization aware of their role in field activities that were about to be undertaken under their close surveillance, committing them in sensitization and networking tasks to make European Cities (in which they are active) more open to diversity. In our opinion, there is no better way to do action-research, standing on the shoulders of a giant such as the great social psychologist Kurt Lewin<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>For an examination of the role that Kurt Lewin has played in the birth of action research see C. Adelman, *Kurt Lewin and the Origins of Action Research*, in «Educational Action Research», Volume 1, No. 1, 1993, pp. 7-24. An application of action research in a project based on sports activities and aimed at students living in low income areas in Edmonton (Canada) is reported in N. L. Holt T. F. McHugh, L. N. Tink, B. C. Kingsley, A. M. Coppola, K. C. Neely & R. McDonald,

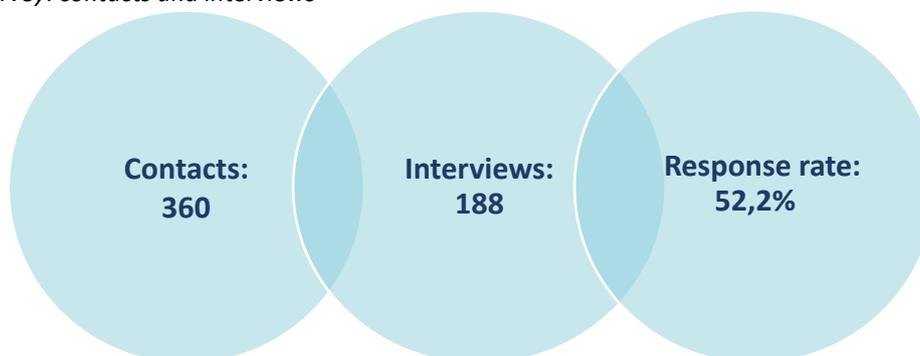
## A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE WEB SURVEY

The scope of the survey was not to carry out a wide range study in order to make inferences and in-depth statistical analysis; the approach was rather more pragmatic, in order to acquire relevant information through a consistent number of interviews among coaches and other sports instructors/educators who are part of the environment in which Simcas partner organizations operate. This choice has also been motivated by the practical nature of the investigation, which aims to collect, as far as possible, useful data for the subsequent experimentation phase. For this reason, a list of potential interviewees was drawn from the databases of the organizations involved in the project. While leaving the latter free to contact people with whom they collaborate closely, three eligibility criteria have been adopted in order to select interviewees:

- coaches (educators, instructors, operators, etc.) must be involved for at least six months in an inclusion sports project/program targeting migrants or refugees within critical areas (disadvantaged neighborhoods, refugee camps and prisons);
- they also must come from both grassroots sport (no more than two thirds) and professional sport (at least on third);
- finally, among coaches interviewed in each country at least one third should be women and the same share should have a migratory background.

As we shall see in the next section these stratification criteria have been substantially fulfilled at the end of the interview campaign, which was opened in the last decade of March and concluded by the end of July 2021 . In any case, in the respondents recruiting process each partner organizations first provided a list of 60 potential recipients to Iref, having previously informed them (and obtaining their consent) that they would receive a link to the Survey Monkey platform via e-mail or on their smartphone, where they could answer to the Simcas questionnaire. Subsequently, after the first wave of communications, at least three recalls were made to reluctant interviewees, to urge them to fill in the questionnaire. Figure 1 shows the results of this online survey. A total of 360 eligible coaches were contacted and 188 completed the questionnaire, with a response rate of 52.2%. All in all, this is an acceptable outcome for a survey based on a self-administered questionnaire, moreover filled in remotely by the interviewees.

*Fig. 1 – Web survey: contacts and interviews*



Source: Simcas project, 2021



Considering the distribution of interviews by country (Table 1), there is a sufficient internal articulation of the sample, although a concentration is evident especially in Denmark (62 interviews, 33.0% of the total), Italy (40, 21.3%), which alone scored more than half of the respondents (51.3%). In Slovenia (27, 14.4%) and Spain (26, 13.8%) less than a third of respondents were registered, while fewer than a fifth of interviewees come from Greece (15, 8.0%), Germany (13, 6.9%) and other countries (5, 2.6%). This uneven stratification of the sample does not allow to make cross-national comparison, nor to generalize trends found in single countries.

Tab. 1 – Interviews carried out in each country

| Country       | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Denmark       | 62        | 33.0       |
| Italy         | 40        | 21.3       |
| Slovenia      | 27        | 14.4       |
| Spain         | 26        | 13.8       |
| Greece        | 15        | 8.0        |
| Germany       | 13        | 6.9        |
| Other country | 5         | 2.6        |
| Totale        | 188       | 100        |

Source: Simcas project, 2021

The topics included in the questionnaire are summarized in figure 2<sup>2</sup>. In broad terms coaches have been stimulated to answer a wide range of questions that have to do with their personal and professional profile, the type of organization in which they act, opinions on coaching and sport for all activities and, ultimately, on their skills needs. In the next session we will try to find out in which organizational context these professional figures are engaged and which are their personal and professional characteristics.

Fig. 2 – Topics included in the questionnaire



Source: Simcas project, 2021

<sup>2</sup> The full version of the questionnaire in English is included in the appendix. To facilitate the understanding of the respondents, the questionnaire was translated into the official languages of the countries where the web survey was carried out (Italian, German, Spanish, Greek, Slovenian). Only in Denmark the English version was used, since it is a language widely spoken by Danes.

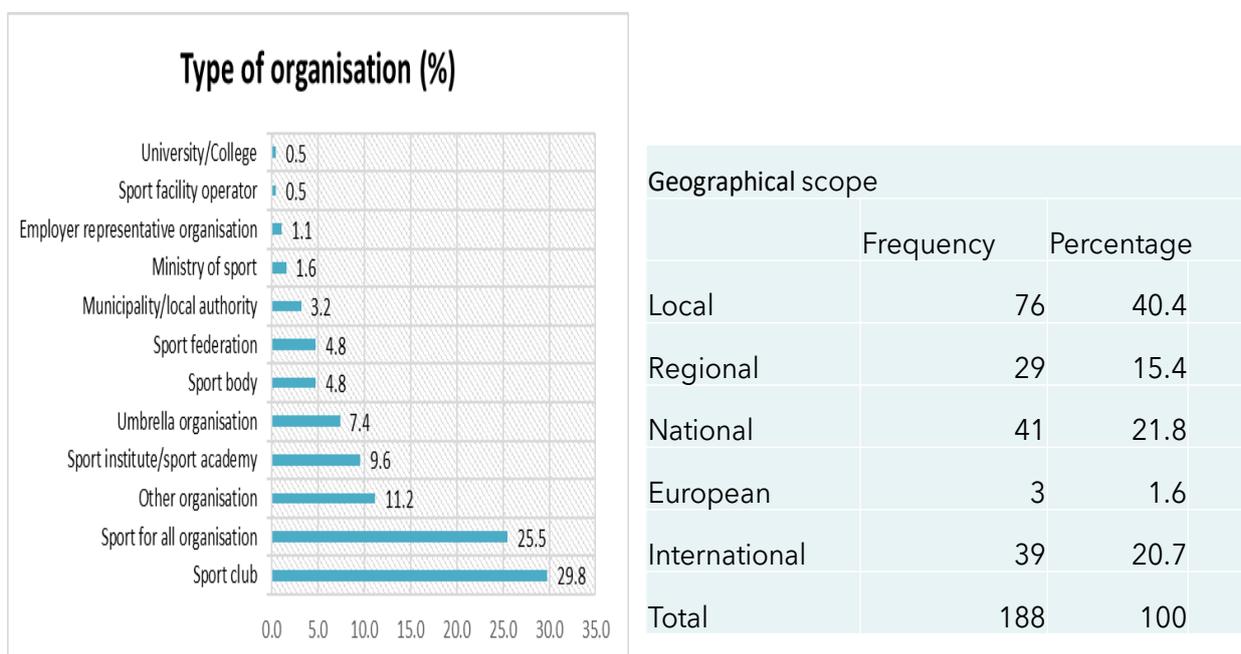


By answering the questionnaire, coaches reflected to some extent on personal experience, being stimulated to address essential aspects such as their work style, the meaning attributed to inclusive programs to which they contribute and their own professionalism. From this point of view, it is not inappropriate to think that participating in the survey is as if they were standing in front of a mirror.

### WHO ARE THE COACHES AND WHERE THEY ACT

A first element that helps to contextualize the work of respondents are the characteristics of the organizations in which they are involved (Figure 3). As can be seen in the graph and table below, their main area of intervention are sport clubs/sport for all organizations (55.3%) acting in local or regional areas (55.8%).

Fig. 3 – Type and geographical scope of respondents' organizations



Source: Simcas project, 2021

Both empirical evidences indicate that people contacted in the research are mainly active in grassroots organizations dealing with socially inclusive sports programs<sup>3</sup>. In this sense we have a confirmation of the fact that the survey has attracted activists (both volunteers and professionals) who in one way or another are part of the network of collective subjects with which the Simcas partners usually cooperate to bring forward their initiatives. If the horizontal and local dimension seems to prevail, we must not underestimate other settings in which respondents move, such as sport academies and institutes (9.6%) or umbrella organizations (7.4%). Taking into account the

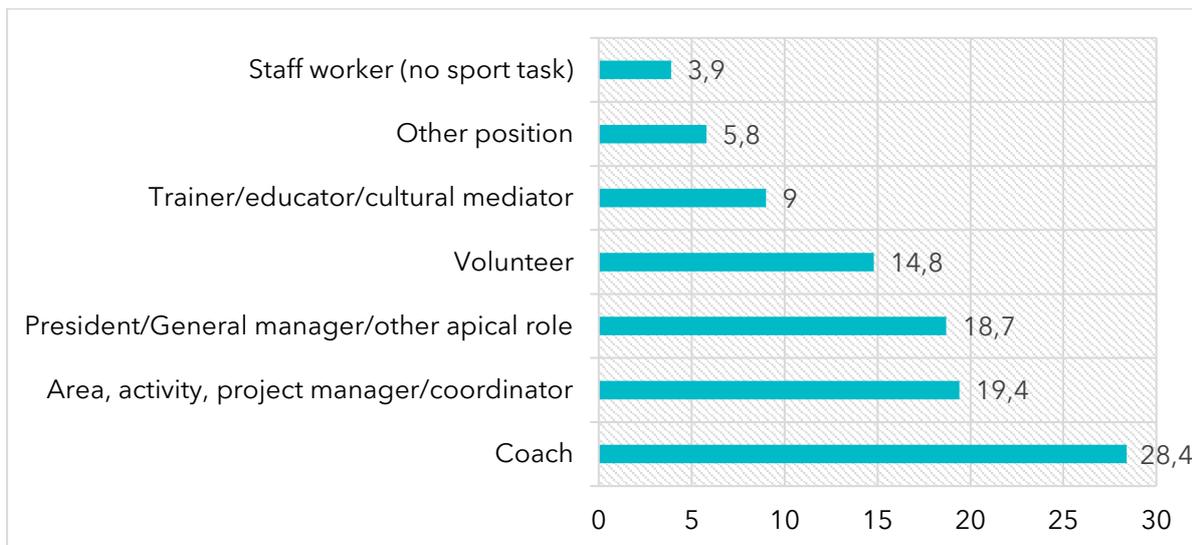
<sup>3</sup> 86.7% of the people interviewed in the survey stated that their organization is engaged (or has been engaged) in inclusive sports programs aimed at migrants and refugees present in critical areas (data not shown in the figure).



range of action of these sport bodies, it is also interesting that more than four interviewees out of ten act at national (21.8%) or international (20.7%) level.

It should be added that respondents play different roles within sports organizations (Figure 4): although being a coach is their preponderant position (28.4%), it is not uncommon that they are in charge of important activities and services as project managers and area coordinators (19.3%), or that they are decision makers (president, general manager, other apical role, 18.7%). Furthermore, the share of those who act as simple volunteers or trainers is not negligible (respectively 14.8% and 9.0%), while staff workers (3.9%) and other unspecified positions (5.8%) are far more unusual to be found among people who compiled the questionnaires. The sample is therefore composed not only of coaches, but also of other crucial actors for the success of sports programs: project managers, area coordinators, volunteers, trainers, as well as of decision makers, who in flat organizations that act locally are almost never detached from practical activity. There are no large hierarchies or heavy structures in sport for all organizations, as evidenced by the scarce presence of staff workers and other technicians (administrative workers, legal advisors, data scientist, brand managers, marketing specialists, copywriters and so forth). Technostructure is not contemplated in organizations that carry out their function literally on the pitch, making many efforts to build social ties with athletes who are often isolated or disadvantaged.

Fig. 4 - Position within the organization (% , 155 respondents)



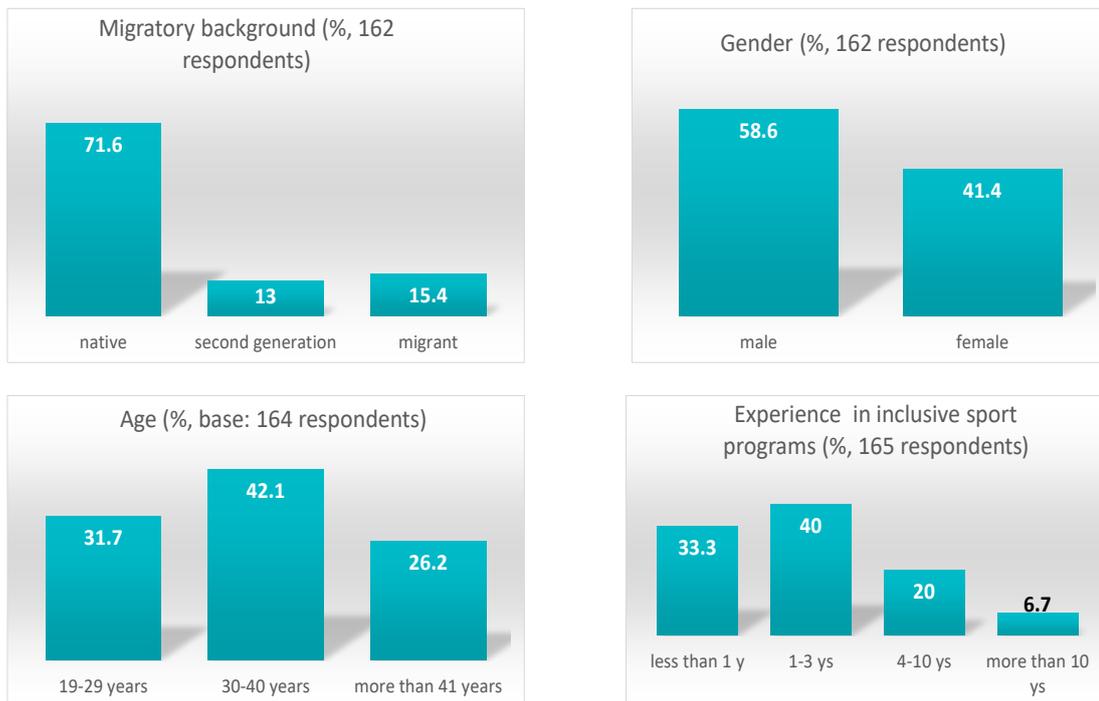
Source: Simcas project, 2021

After having outlined the framework in which coaches and other sport activists are engaged, it is now possible to focus on their personal characteristics. Data illustrated in figure 5 offer a rather detailed picture in this regard. Seven respondents out of ten were born and raised-up in the country where they operate, thus being in all respects natives (71.6%). The fact remains that a significant share, just under 30%, have a migratory background, either because they emigrated to the country (15.4%), or because they are second generations (13.0%), being son of people who have moved to the host nation before their birth. The latter is a respectable percentage given that all around the European Union second generations and migrants have a much lower numerical impact on the population of the countries in which they stay. Gender appears even more balanced with respect to



the migratory background: if men are in the majority (58.6%), the share of women is very significant in the measure in which it abundantly exceeds the threshold of the third (41.4%). We cannot generalize these empirical evidences too much, having fixed minimum quotas in the design of the sample both for national origin and gender, but it can be said that it was not absolutely difficult to reach females and people with a history of emigration behind their shoulders. A sign that grassroots sport organizations create structures and places where differences are welcomed and cultivated. This openness is a factor of great relevance considering that ethnicity is not the only source of discrimination in our societies, even a male-dominated culture prevents many women from being treated on an equal basis as men, especially in some popular national sports such as football.

Fig. 5 - Respondents characteristics: migratory background, gender, age, experience



Source: Simcas project, 2021

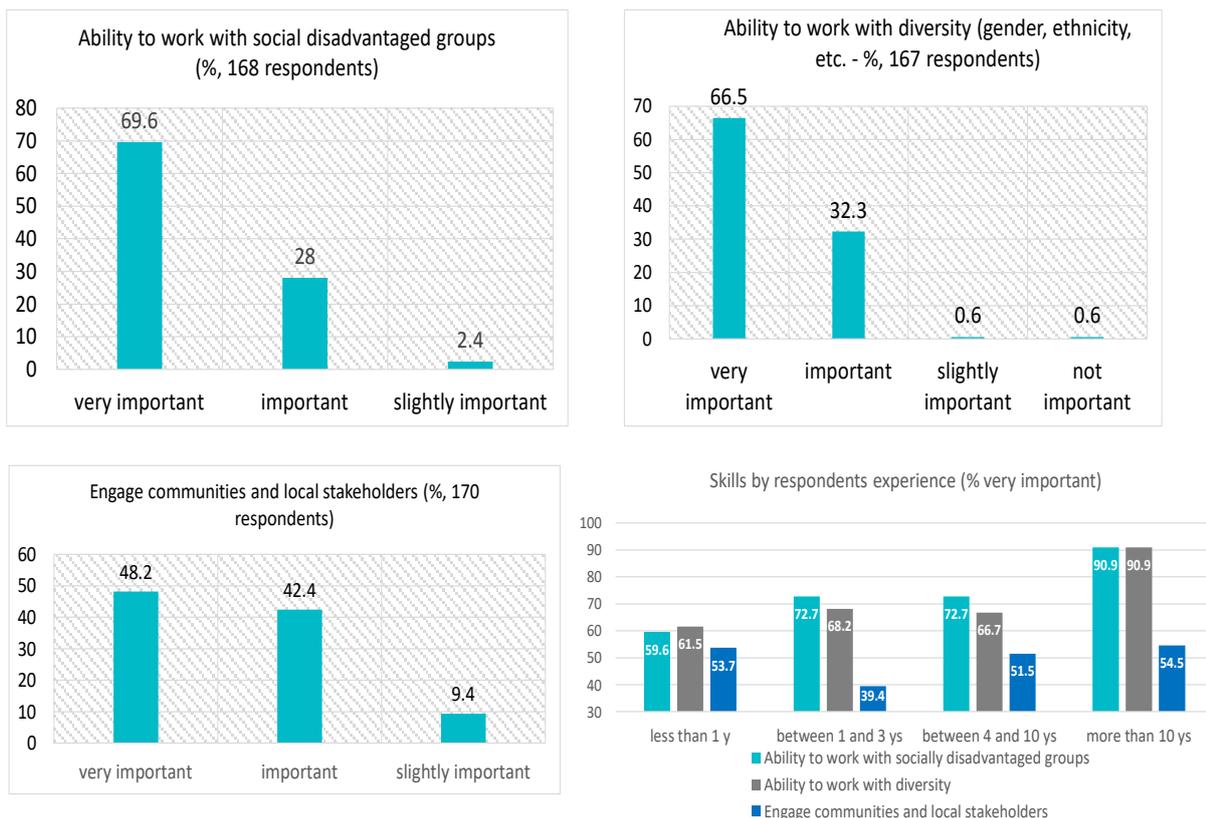
Sport for all organizations also give great space to young people, at least judging by the data collected in the research: 73.8% are between twenty and forty years old; while the over forties are just over a quarter of the sample (26.2%). Being quite young, the interviewees also tend not to have a long experience in the sports sector: 73.3% work on inclusive programs less than 3 years, only a fifth are those who have been doing it for 4-10 years (20.0%); seniors, people who have militated in this field for over ten years, are a small minority (6.7%). The human resources that give impetus to sport for all are therefore not particularly experienced and not infrequently between the age of twenty and thirty, in that phase of personal and professional biography where ideals and aspirations are pursued. The organizational environment in which they operate, being informal and dynamic, give this young audience of volunteers and professionals the possibility to learn how to manage activities with a high social value. This internship in the field can be a gateway to career paths in umbrella organizations or public institutions (local and national) that deal with the integration of migrants and refugees through sport and the provision of welfare services.

## COACHING BETWEEN REALITY AND REPRESENTATIONS

The research provides a wide range of information on coaching. Since respondents are key informants who participate in sports programs addressed to migrants and refugees, we can assume that their opinions have a double meaning, reconnecting both to the practical experience and to the sensemaking<sup>4</sup> activity which greatly affects every kind of social practice. Although a majority of the people who answered the questionnaire are not real coaches, they have nevertheless seen the latter in action and have acquired an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of this activity, having observed what happens in the their organizations.

A first topic on which the interviewees were asked to reflect are the skills that sport coaches should have in order to make an optimal contribution in projects involving migrants and refugees programs. This is a general opinion with respect to a series of competencies, on each of which a judgment of importance has been requested (very important, important, slightly important, not important). Among the various abilities, those that have to do with the social or cultural component of these programs stand out for the relevance attributed to them by people working on the field (Figure 6).

Fig. 6 - Skill importance in sport programs targeting migrants and refugees: the social factor



Source: Simcas project, 2021

Almost all respondents (97.6%) believe that the capacity to work with socially disadvantaged groups is very important or important in order to be a performative coach; an even higher percentage, 98.8%, assign the same level of relevance in dealing with diversity (gender, ethnicity, etc.). The degree of significance assigned to the attitude of engaging stakeholders within the local

<sup>4</sup> Sensemaking encompasses all the meanings, beliefs and values that individuals and groups assign to events and to the context in which they are embedded.

community is only slightly lower (90.6% very important or important). These trends are so evident that they emphasize the centrality of cultural and social drives within inclusive programs, making them a plus for coaching to improve the condition of migrants and refugees through sport. It is remarkable that the perception of relevance of these skills is partly linked to the experience gained in the field: 59.6% of those who have been involved in sports programs for less than a year consider the ability to work with disadvantaged groups to be very important, the percentage increases to 72.7% among those who carry out these activities from 1 to 10 years, to reach the peak of 90.9% among senior activist (over ten years of experience). A trend in many respects similar emerges when analyzing relevance judgements on the ability to cope with diversity: the percentage is lower between people who have less than one year of experience in sport programs (very important, 61.5%), stands at intermediate values in central classes of expertise (respectively 68.2% amid 1-3years and 66.7% in 4-10years), while growing noticeably at 90.9% among experienced coaches/other sport professionals or volunteers (more than 10 years of activity). These data suggest that sensitivity towards cultural and social differences, as well as the awareness of how essential it is to mobilize stakeholders in the local community, is a quality that develops with the passage of time. It takes years to assimilate the idea that to be a good coach one must not only be profound connoisseurs of sports tactics and techniques, but also be able to tackle with diversity and inequalities.

In addition to moving well in the socio-cultural sphere, a coach should also be able to manage fieldwork, including processes and relationships among sport program's recipients (Figure 7). Roughly the totality of respondents state that team working is a skill that sports instructors cannot do without (99.4%); furthermore, 88.7% also says that monitoring and evaluating work is a priority (very relevant or relevant).

Fig. 7 - Skill importance in inclusive sport programs: organizing work and monitoring processes



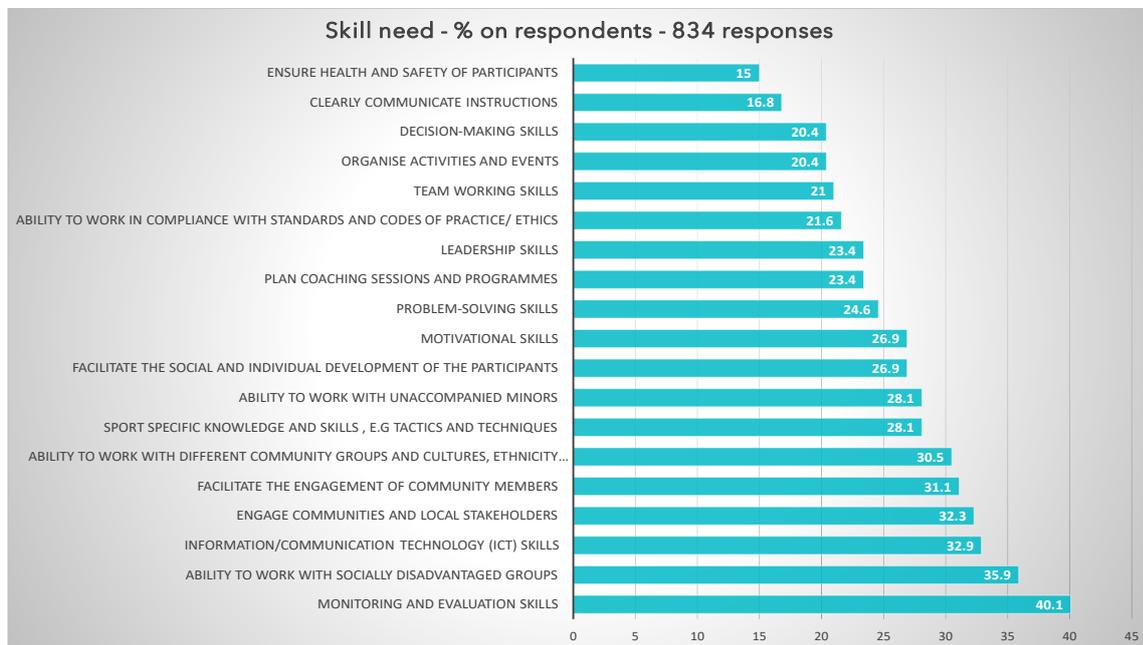
Source: Simcas project, 2021

The two activities are profoundly different: team work implies that a coach knows how to manage relationships (sometimes conflicting) between athletes and colleagues. While monitoring and evaluation are highly technical functions, for which it is necessary to cross information or observations, to process data in order to control progress and outcomes. It is revealing that the importance of both activities tends to diminish with increasing age of the respondents: team work

skills are very important for 70.0% of 19-29 years old and 73.5% 30-40 years old, while only 60.5% over 40 years old considers it equally essential. The correlation with monitoring and evaluation is even more pronounced: if the twenty-year-olds perceive them as very important in 50.0% circumstances and the thirty-year-olds in 44.1%, only 18.6% over forties believe this skill is vital for an effective coaching. Although such empirical evidence cannot be extended much to other situations, it is undeniable that new generations who approach sport for all movement seem more inclined to appreciate the importance of coach know-how for the integration of migrants and refugees, both under the more informal profile of teamwork (coping with complex group dynamics), and on the more managerial side of controlling the processes to achieve objectives.

After examining these broad views, it may be appropriate to shift attention to skill needs that should be improved in the staff of the organization in which people contacted in the research are involved. Basically, the same items seen previously were presented to the respondents, asking them to indicate which ones were more urgent to strengthen in order to improve daily coaching activities and organizational structures. Unlike the data presented in figures 6 and 7, those shown in figure 8 are not judgments of importance (measured through the so-called Likert scale), but are simply based on the choices freely expressed on a list of twenty skills. As can be seen from the graph, a total of 834 choices were formulated, this means that on average each interviewee has reported 4,4 items. Being preferences four times more than the volume respondents is in itself an indicator that in the organizations reached in the research there is a sustained and varied demand for upskilling and reskilling among the operators who take part in sports programs aimed at migrants and refugees in places such as prisons, camps and disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Fig. 8 – Skills needs within the organization where respondents are active



Source: Simcas project, 2021

Among the skills that respondents think should be enhanced in their organization the most mentioned are monitoring and evaluation (40.1%), ability to work with socially disadvantaged groups (35.9%), information/communication technologies (35.9%), engage community members and stakeholders (32,9%), facilitate the participation of community members (31,1%), ability to work with different community groups and cultures, ethnicity, etc. (30.5%). The portfolio of

competencies that should be enhanced is therefore very differentiated: from monitoring and evaluation techniques, to coping with superdiversity<sup>5</sup>, through the strengthening of ICT devices, up to the decisive chapter of networking, in order to mobilize stakeholders within the local community. It is a hard job for those who invest their time to facilitate the integration of migrants into society. Sport is not the panacea for solving dilemmas and problems that in the wider context are increasingly amplifying, following the humanitarian crisis that exploded in Europe between 2013 and 2015 due to the war in Syria and the health emergency brought by the pandemics for two years now. The latest conflict in Ukraine could drive millions of displaced people to the EU borders and make the scenario even more critical. If there is a form of empowerment that sport can make available to disadvantaged groups, it passes through a growing professionalism and expertise of coaches and other activists who operate in European cities, where migrants most frequently move, being too often segregated in critical areas.

It must be said that this hierarchical scale of priorities changes considerably according to the organization's size, although this correlation is not always uniform or linear (Table2).

Tab. 2 - Skill needs in different organization's size

| Skills to be improved (or which are weak) within the organizations   | Organization's dimension     |                           |                                   |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|  | small size (no -4 employees) | mid size (5-49 employees) | big size (more than 49 employees) |
| <b>Social and cultural responsiveness</b>                            |                              |                           |                                   |
| Facilitate the social and individual development of the participants | 28.6                         | 33.3                      | 12.5                              |
| Ability to work with socially disadvantaged groups                   | 33.8                         | 40.0                      | 45.8                              |
| Ability to work with diversity                                       | 37.7                         | 26.7                      | 12.5                              |
| Engage communities and local stakeholders                            | 31.2                         | 44.4                      | 25.0                              |
| <b>Technical requirements</b>  |                              |                           |                                   |
| Sport specific knowledge and skills , e.g tactics and techniques     | 39.0                         | 22.2                      | 20.8                              |
| Plan coaching sessions and programmes                                | 31.2                         | 17.8                      | 16.7                              |
| Clearly communicate instructions                                     | 19.5                         | 15.6                      | 20.8                              |
| Organise activities and events                                       | 28.6                         | 15.6                      | 8.3                               |
| Ensure health and safety of participants                             | 20.8                         | 15.6                      | 4.2                               |
| Ability to work in compliance with standards and ethical codes       | 24.7                         | 24.4                      | 4.2                               |
| Information/Communication Technology (ICT) skills                    | 37.7                         | 40.0                      | 20.8                              |
| Monitoring and evaluation skills                                     | 48.1                         | 46.7                      | 20.8                              |
| <b>Interpersonal abilities</b>                                       |                              |                           |                                   |
| Leadership skills  | 27.3                         | 31.1                      | 8.3                               |
| Motivational skills  | 31.2                         | 31.1                      | 16.7                              |
| Team working skills  | 20.8                         | 33.3                      | 8.3                               |
| Decision-making skills   | 23.4                         | 28.9                      | 8.3                               |
| Problem-solving skills   | 24.7                         | 37.8                      | 8.3                               |

Source: Simcas project, 2021

<sup>5</sup> Superdiversity has been defined by Vertovec as a condition “distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade [*in developed countries, A.N.*]”. S. Vertovec, *Super-diversity and its implications*, «Ethnic and Racial Studies», vol. 30, n.6, pp. 1024-1054, 2007. Indeed migrants and refugees are carriers of an intertwining of cultural, economic and social peculiarities, which make it extremely complex to provide them with inclusive services and activities. For this reason, sport operators should become more familiar with approaches and strategies that deal directly with hyperdiversity.



Starting from skills which are in some way associated with social and cultural responsiveness, it is quite clear that the organizational dimension has its own weight in determining their relative weakness or need to be improved: the necessity to fill gaps in the ability to work with socially disadvantaged groups tends to increase as the size of the organization grows (no-4 employees 33.8%, 5-49 employees 40.0%, 50 or more employees 45.8%). In larger and more structured organizational settings, the need to train staff seems therefore to accentuate in order to make workers more performative in reaching and supporting underprivileged people. From this point of view, it could be concluded that not always "big is inclusive": not infrequently, when organizations expand their number of employees activity multiplies with the risk of work overload, making it difficult to save time in order to help most vulnerable people and groups. Of course it is only an hypothesis which should be deepened with further investigations, more systematic and in-depth than the present one.

The trend is any case reversed when we examine the ability to work with diversity, here upskilling or reskilling needs considerably reduce as the number of employees grows: small size organizations 37.7%, mid size 26.7%, big size 12.5%. This latter empirical evidence could be explained by the fact that coping with ethnicity or different cultures requires the contribution of specific professional figures (first of all, educators and mediators) who presumably may be more frequent to find in organizations with larger staff than those with few personnel, where the demand for these skills is consequently much lower. The lack of the last two competencies included in the social and cultural area is amplified in organizations with intermediate staff (5-49 employees): facilitate the development of sport programs participants (33.3%), engage communities and local stakeholders (44.4%). In this case it is difficult to try to find a key to interpreting the data, being probably linked to specific contexts that cannot be analyzed with the information at our disposal.

The organizational dimension also seems to play an important part with respect to technical requirements that can facilitate inclusive work with migrants and refugees. There are a series of skills that need to be reinvigorated especially in small organizations as opposed to larger ones: sport knowledge (39.0% small size, compared to 20.8% in big size); monitoring and evaluation (48.1% vs 20.8%); plan coaching sessions and programs (31.2% vs 16.7%), organizing activities and events (28.6% vs 8.3%), compliance with ethical standards and codes (24.7% vs 4.2%), ICT development (37.7% vs 20.8%<sup>6</sup>). Increasing workers' and volunteers' know-how in these activities could bring benefits in order to achieve strategic goals in informal sport club and associations; but very often the problem, which is exacerbated in small organizations, is that of finding resources to invest in professional training and technical equipment.

The picture is rather similar in the last area of expertise: interpersonal abilities. Looking at the data in the last rows of table 2, it can be seen that leadership, motivational drives, team working, decision making and problem solving are perceived as weaker in small (and above all) in medium size organizations than in big size ones. It is no coincidence that the shortage of these character or soft skills is more evident in intermediate contexts where the need to align roles and tasks intensifies, when the number of people acting in the same organization begins to increase. Technostructure and managerialism are the tools with which the efforts of workers are coordinated and piloted. This kind of control is usually exercised in big size organizations, which not surprisingly score very low in the request for these skills.

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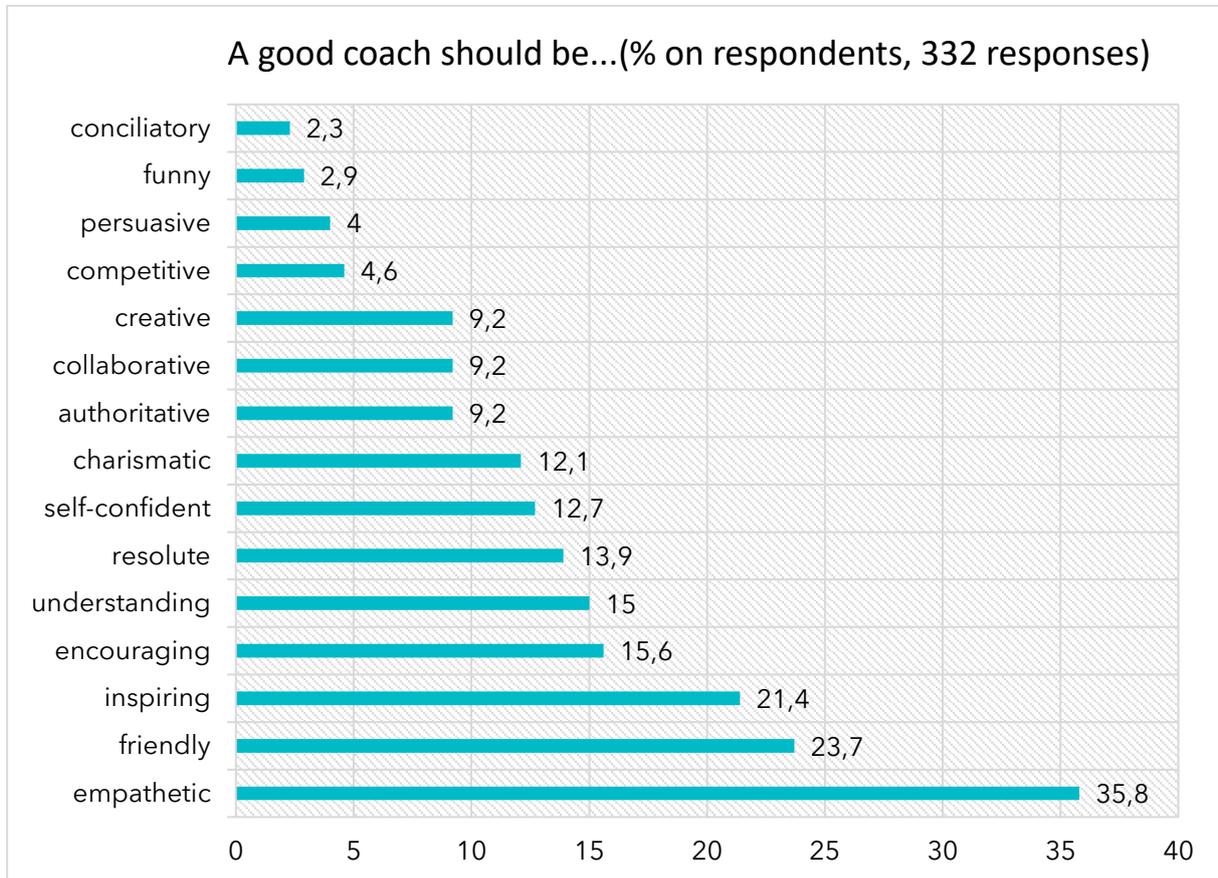
<sup>6</sup> In the case of ICT, the need for skills is even higher in mid size organizations (40.0%).





Before concluding this section of the report, we can turn to one last question: the style of work (or approach) that a coach should adopt in order to do a good job with migrants and refugees in local communities (Figure 9). The resulting ranking from the following graph reflects multiple preferences expressed by respondents: 332 responses, 1,8 average choices.

Fig. 9 – How should a coach approach migrants and refugees in order to be effective



Source: Simcas project, 2021

Being empathetic, friendly and inspiring are indeed attributes that should come first in the professional background of a coach engaged in inclusive sports programs towards disadvantaged minorities (respectively 35.8%, 23.7% and 21.4%). These personality traits (together with being encouraging 15.6% and understanding 15.0%) which entail an inclination (a posture speaking pedagogically) to listen and recognize others, are considered more appropriate for interacting with migrants than other characteristics such as being resolute (13.9%), self-confident (12.7%), charismatic (12.1%) or authoritative (9.2%). The image of the coach suggested by these data is less a compelling and directive guide and more an orientator capable of intercepting emotions and problems, discreetly accompanying the recipients of sports activities towards a path of autonomy and social emancipation. One could argue at length about this research result, but it would take many detailed accounts in the field to complete the profile on coaching that emerges from the indications offered by the interviewees. What is certain is that this way of portraying the coach style does not appear completely detached from a reflexive model of this job, open to a constant



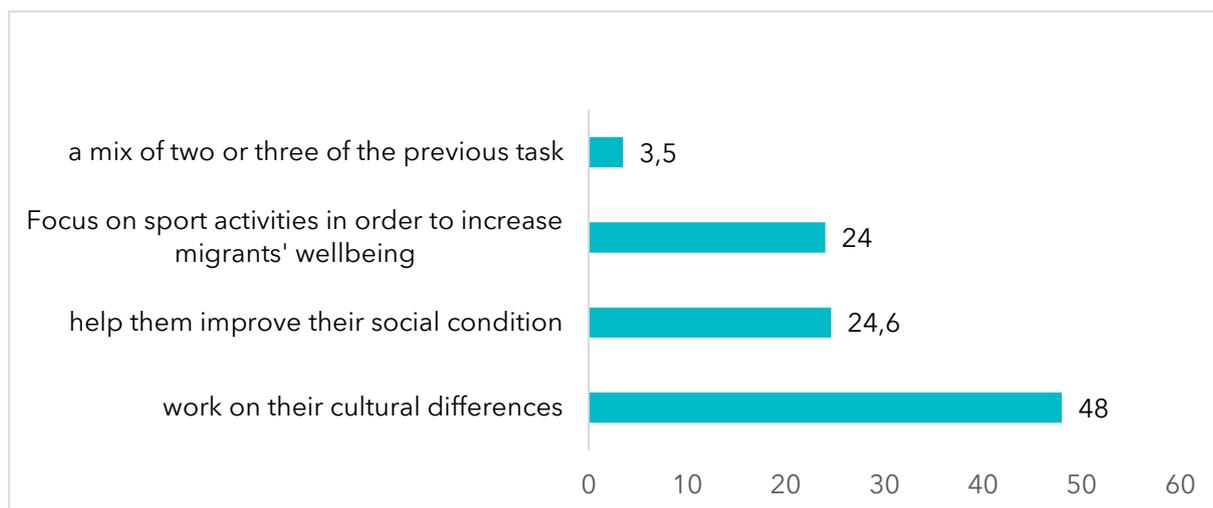


reinterpretation of the experience with athletes (more or less vulnerable), introduced by some experts and scholars of sports psychology in the early 2000s<sup>7</sup>.

#### SPORT INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS IN PERSPECTIVE

People engaged in research were not only called upon to express viewpoints on coaching and skills needs within their organizations; they were also stimulated to reflect on basic requirements and perspectives of sports activities and services designed to integrate disadvantaged groups into urban communities. Among the topics taken into account in the web survey there are fundamental tasks that organizations should carry out when launching a program addressed to migrants and refugees (Figure 10). For almost half of the respondents, the main goal should be to work on cultural differences to make the recipients of these projects feel included in the local community (48%). Choices towards the other two alternatives envisaged by the question are decidedly lower: focus on sport activities to increase participant's wellbeing and self-confidence (24.0%), provide services (job placement, housing, training legal status, etc. (24.6); lastly, really modest is the percentage for a mixed strategy, which combines two or three of the examined tasks (3.5%).

Fig. 10. – Most important tasks in sport programs targeting migrants (% , 171 respondents)



Source: Simcas project, 2021

If the lower propensity towards the provision of social services appears almost obvious (ultimately sport grassroots organizations could hardly be transformed into welfare agencies), it is indeed less evident that work on cultural differences collects twice the number of designations compared to the function of caring for people's well-being. This ought to be definitely the primary mission of sport for all movement, but overcoming ethnic barriers becomes an urgency for organizations that make efforts to foster the integration of refugees and second generations within European cities. It should be stressed that the drive to enhance work on diversities is stronger among women (55.2% vs 42.1% between men), younger people (18-29 years old, 55.8% vs 39.5% between people aged 41 or more years old) and, understandably among second generations (66.7% vs 46.6% among natives)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> A. G. Anderson, Z. Knowles, D. Gilbourne, *Reflective Practice for Sport Psychologists: Concepts, Models, Practical Implications and Thoughts on Dissemination*, in «The Sport Psychologist», vol.18, 2004, pp. 188-203.

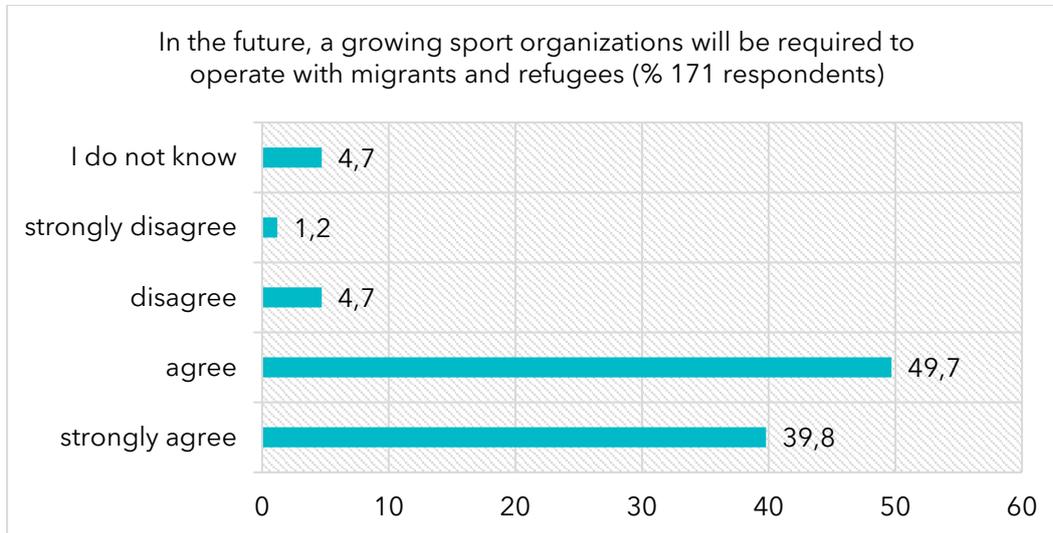
<sup>8</sup> Data not shown in the graph.





Another question raised in the research are the scenarios that sport for all movement will face in the years to come. Again, respondents expressed their level of agreement on a number of statements about what could happen in the sector in which they act. Respondents are persuaded that in the next future there will be an increasing demand for sport organizations working with refugees and migrants: 89.5% strongly agrees or agrees with this assertion.

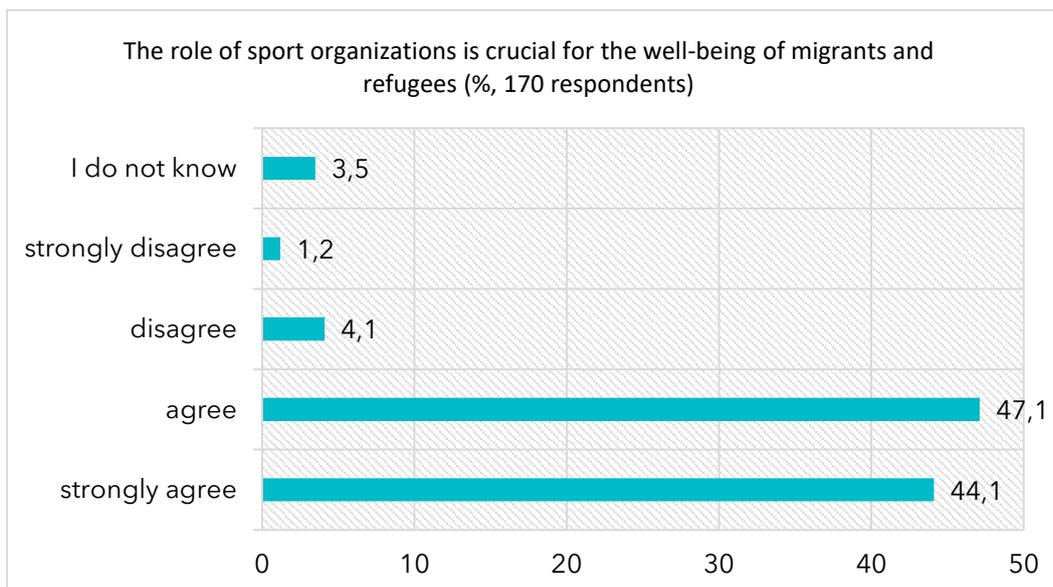
Fig. 11 – The growth of sport organizations working with migrants and refugees



Source: Simcas project, 2021

Recognition of the increasingly decisive role that grassroots sport can play in the face of migrations coming to Europe is certainly linked to various factors. First of all, the belief that sport can improve the well-being of people who come to European countries to get better than they did in their countries of origin: 91.2% strongly agree or agree with this assumption that acquires an ever wider consensus among decision makers and operators as well as in the public opinion (Figure 12). All of this inevitability increase the pressure for grassroots sports organizations to make the most of this inclusive function, as can be seen from other answers given to the questionnaire.

Fig. 12– The growth of sport organizations working with migrants and refugees

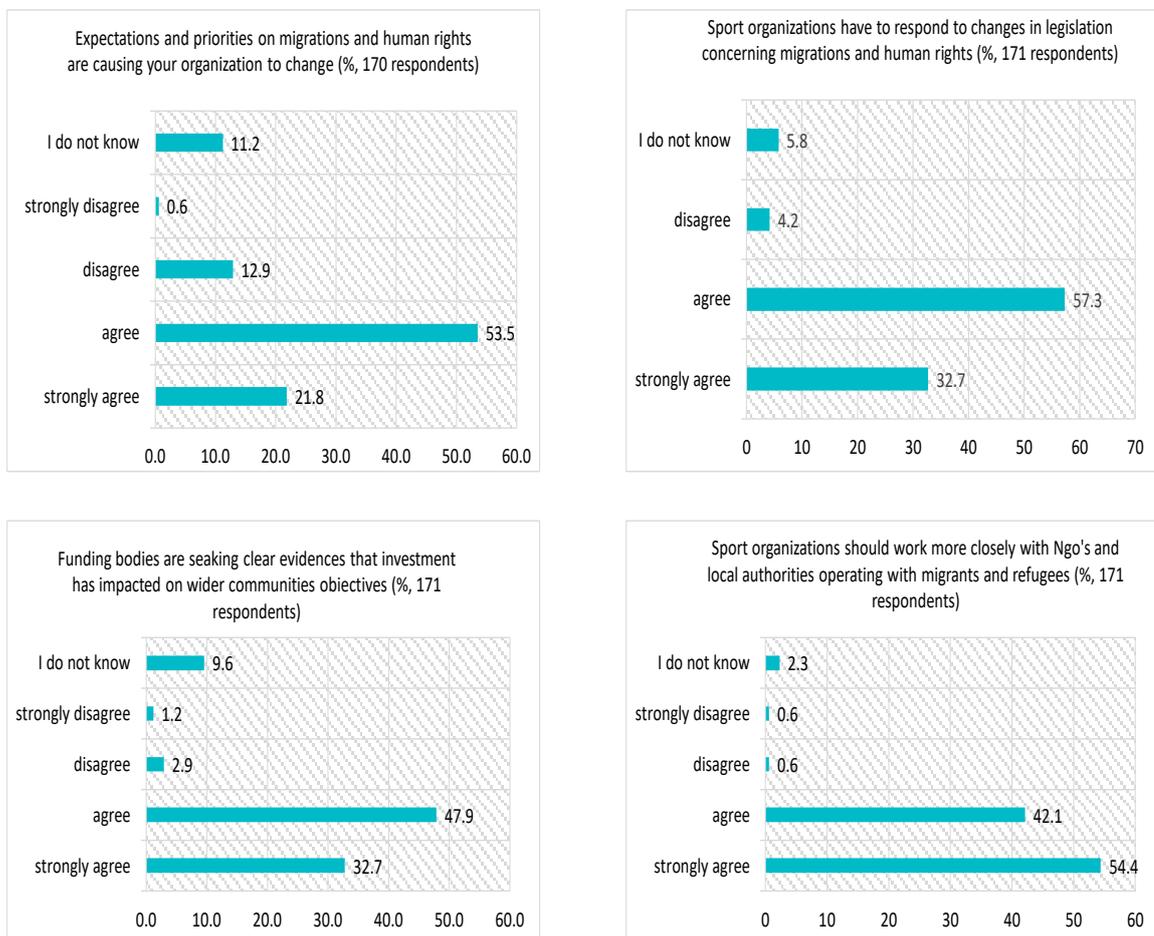


Source: Simcas project, 2021



In any case, respondents feel that priorities and expectations on human rights and migration policies push inevitably their organizations towards change: 75.3% strongly agree or agree with this trend (Figure 13). This trend places many constraints on organizations who want to continue developing inclusive sports programs: 90.0% of respondents strongly agree or agree that organizations working in this sector will have to adapt in the next years to changes in the legislation on human rights and migrants. Funding bodies too are exercising pressure in order to be sure that their investments will be really effective in achieving an impact on the wider community (80.7% of the sample strongly agrees or agrees with this statement). Having to produce tangible results and comply with the rules, local organizations are also induced to cooperate more closely with NGOs and local authorities (96.5% strongly agree now agree with this last sentence).

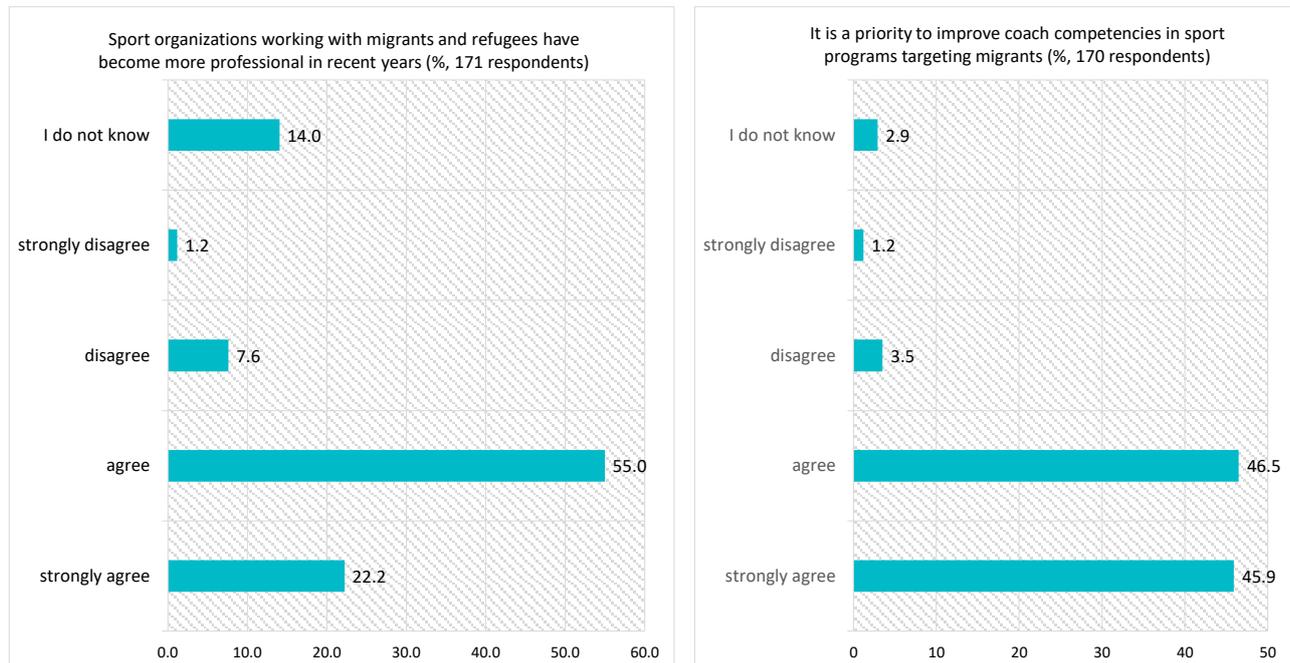
Fig. 13 – Factors affecting the future of sport



Source: Simcas project, 2021

Very briefly, sport for all movement does not act in a social vacuum. Several external forces lead it to coordinate with other actors operating in the arena of migrants' reception policies. On a strictly organizational level, this could drive grassroots organizations to become increasingly efficient and structured in order to face challenges and homologating pressures emerging in the social environment. A first dynamic concerns the professionalization of workers and activist who in various ways are engaged in the support of migrants and refugees (Figure 14).

Fig. 14 – Professionalization and specialization of grassroots organization



Source: Simcas project, 2021

Almost eight respondents out of ten believe that sport grassroots organizations targeting migrants have specialized in recent years (strongly agree / agree 77.2%); at the same time they know that it is necessary to enhance the skills of coaches involved in inclusive programs (strongly agree / agree 92.4%). Without exaggerating the extent of these findings, it cannot be denied that improving organization's performances and making sport operators more competent, is a an opportunity to make our societies more open and friendly toward people with a migratory background.

## APPENDIX - QUESTIONNAIRE

### Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to complete this important survey. SIMCAS - Social Inclusion Methodology in Critical Areas via Sport – is a project funded by European Commission under Erasmus+ and coordinated by US ACLI Italy. It is a European initiative with the involvement of the following partners:

Organization Earth – Greece  
 The Sports Council of Pla de l'Estany -CEPE – Catalonia – Spain  
 Sports Union of Slovenia – SUS  
 Champion Without Borders - Berlin – Germany  
 Girl Power Organization – Denmark  
 IREF – Italy  
 University of Cassino and Southern Lazio - Italy

SIMCAS aims at improving the skills and competences of sports operators in promoting the social inclusion of immigrants (first and second generation) living in critical contexts (prison institutions, urban ghettos, refugee camps). These contexts are characterized by situations of disintegration and social discomfort that make the processes of growth, personal affirmation and social redemption very difficult. In these social environments, sports practice can be a significant tool for empowerment. The role of coaches goes beyond teaching sports technique and approaches social work.

SIMCAS wants to deepen this dimension by soliciting the coaches to express their point of view. We therefore ask you to answer a series of questions about the role of the coach.

The questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes to complete and your responses will be treated anonymously and in confidence. Data will be processed in compliance with Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

For further information please refer to the official web-site of the project : <http://simcas.eu>

*Select your language*

### Section A – General Information

1. Information about your organisation

Organisation name \_\_\_\_\_ (in national language)

Organisation name \_\_\_\_\_ (in English)

2. Please indicate in which country your organisation is registered?

3. Which of the following best describes your organisation? (Tick one only)

- Ministry responsible for sport*
- Network Association (umbrella organisation)*
- Sport body (e.g., National Olympic Committee, Paralympic Committee, Sport Confederation, Sports Council, etc.)*
- Sport federation*
- Sport for all organisation*
- Employer Representative Organisation (social partner)*
- Trade Union*
- Sport club*
- Sport institute/Sport academy; (single or multi-site)*
- Sports facility operator (e.g., swimming pool operator, stadium operator); (single or multi-site)*
- Fitness club/centre*
- University/college*
- Municipality/local authority;*
- Other – Please specify \_\_\_\_\_*

4. What is the geographical scope of your organisation? (Tick one only)

- Local*
- Regional*
- National*
- European*
- International*

5. Your organization is (or has been) engaged in sport programs within disadvantaged neighborhoods, prisons or refugees' camps) (tick only one)

- Yes*
- No*

6. Approximately how many paid employees work in your organisation on average in a typical year? (include all full time and part-time employees and freelance/self-employed); for this question, do not consider those that operate as unpaid volunteers): (Tick one only)
- No employees
  - 1 to 4 employees
  - 5 to 9 employees
  - 10 to 19 employees
  - 20 to 49 employees
  - 50 to 99 employees
  - 100 or more
  - Don't know
7. Does your organisation engage any volunteers / unpaid staff? (Tick one only)
- Yes, regularly
  - Yes, occasionally
  - No
  - Don't know

**Section B - Sport coach operating in sports projects/programs targeting migrants or refugees within critical areas**

8. Thinking about a Sport Coach operating in sports projects/programs targeting migrants or refugees within critical areas (disadvantaged neighborhoods, refugee camps, prisons, etc.), in your opinion, what are the most important skills needed:

|   | Very Important | Important | Slightly Important | Not important/not relevant |
|---|----------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Sport specific knowledge and skills , e.g tactics and techniques  |                |           |                    |                            |
| Ability to work with socially disadvantaged groups  |                |           |                    |                            |
| Ability to work with unaccompanied minors   |                |           |                    |                            |
| Ability to work with different participants (e.g. Different community groups and cultures, ethnicity etc) |                |           |                    |                            |
| Plan coaching sessions and programmes   |                |           |                    |                            |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Facilitate the engagement of community members                             |  |  |  |  |
| Clearly communicate instructions   |  |  |  |  |
| Organise activities and events   |  |  |  |  |
| Ensure health and safety of participants                                   |  |  |  |  |
| Engage communities and local stakeholders                                  |  |  |  |  |
| Ability to work in compliance with standards and codes of practice/ ethics |  |  |  |  |
| Facilitate the social and individual development of the participants       |  |  |  |  |

|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Leadership skills                                 |  |  |  |  |
| Motivational skills                               |  |  |  |  |
| Team working skills                               |  |  |  |  |
| Information/Communication Technology (ICT) skills |  |  |  |  |
| Decision-making skills                            |  |  |  |  |
| Monitoring and evaluation skills                  |  |  |  |  |
| Problem-solving skills                            |  |  |  |  |
| Other (specify) _____                             |  |  |  |  |

9. Which skills (if any) are regarded as the weakest or in need of improvement in your organisation's current team? (Tick all that apply)
- Sport specific knowledge and skills , e.g tactics and techniques
  - Ability to work with socially disadvantaged groups
  - Ability to work with unaccompanied minors
  - Ability to work with different participants (e.g. Different community groups and cultures, ethnicity etc.)
  - Plan coaching sessions and programmes
  - Facilitate the engagement of community members
  - Clearly communicate instructions
  - Organise activities and events
  - Ensure health and safety of participants
  - Engage communities and local stakeholders

- Ability to work in compliance with standards and codes of practice/ ethics
- Facilitate the social and individual development of the participants
- Leadership skills
- Motivational skills
- Team working skills
- Information/Communication Technology (ICT) skills
- Decision-making skills
- Monitoring and evaluation skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Other (specify)

10. To your knowledge and experience, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

|   | strongly agree | agree | disagree | strongly disagree | I do not know |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|---------------|
| The sport organisations operating with migrants or refugees have become more professional in recent years   |                |       |          |                   |               |
| In the future, a growing sport organisations will be required to operate with migrants or refugees  |                |       |          |                   |               |
| The role of the sport organisations is crucial for the well-being of the migrants and refugees  |                |       |          |                   |               |
| The sport organisations should work more closely with other organisations (e.g. NGO's, Local Authorities, etc.) operating with migrants and refugees            |                |       |          |                   |               |
| Improving the skills and the competences of the coaches involved in sport projects/programs targeting migrants or refugees should be a priority                 |                |       |          |                   |               |
| Work experience is more important than qualification when recruiting coaches  |                |       |          |                   |               |
| Expectations and priorities on migration and human rights are causing your organisation to change   |                |       |          |                   |               |
| Funding bodies are increasingly seeking a convincing case for financial support and clearer evidence that investment has impacted on wider community objectives |                |       |          |                   |               |
| Sports organisations have to respond to changes in legislation concerning migration and human rights  |                |       |          |                   |               |
| It is easy to recruit coaches with the right skills to work with migrants and refugees  |                |       |          |                   |               |
| It is important that coaches have access to on-going training to keep their skills up to date   |                |       |          |                   |               |
| In the future there will be a demand for better qualified coaches   |                |       |          |                   |               |
| New training courses are required to meet the training needs of the coaches?  |                |       |          |                   |               |

11. In Your own opinion, which of the following tasks is most important when You carry out sport programs with refugees and migrants? (tick only one)

- Focus on sport activities in order to make them feel self-confident and increase their wellbeing
- Work on their cultural differences to make them feel included in the local community
- Help them in improving their social condition in the country (work, housing, training, legal status, etc.)

12. A good coach should be (thick at most two):

- authoritative
- empathetic
- charismatic
- competitive
- self-confident
- persuasive
- collaborative
- understanding
- friendly
- resolute
- encouraging
- inspiring
- creative
- funny
- conciliatory
- other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Section C - Information about the respondent**

13. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Family Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(optional)

14. Gender

- male
- female

15. Position within the organisation (in English)

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16. Experience in the area of sport for migrant and refugees

- less than 1 y.
- between 1 and 3 ys.
- between 4 and 10 ys.
- more than 10 ys.

17. Migratory background (tick only one):

- I was born, like my parents, in this country
- I was born in this country, but my parents are native from another country
- I moved in this country from another nation

18. Age:

|\_|\_|

Email address (optional)

Phone Number (optional)