

The making of inclusion

Sports best practices that promote migrants' and refugees' social integration in critical areas. A cross national analysis in Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Italy, Spain and Greece



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INTRODUCTION

This is the third research report developed within the Simcas project. Preceded by a bibliographic review on scientific literature focusing on the role that sport can play in refugees' and migrants' social inclusion within host societies and by a survey in which experts' opinions and reflections have been collected on this (and related) issues, the present working paper examines the main findings of an analysis of National Best Practices (NBP) conducted in Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Italy, Spain and Greece. The main purpose of the study is to gather first-hand information on how social inclusion processes work within sports programs addressing migrants and refugees in critical areas (disadvantaged neighborhoods, prisons and refugee camps). Empirical evidence on these NPBs is crucial for the definition of a methodological approach that will guide the subsequent implementation phase envisaged by the project. In this report we consider NPBs as consolidated sport programs that engage migrants and ethnic minorities through playfield, training, and other physical activities. The criteria with which these practices have been chosen are the following: 1) they must operate in at least one of the critical areas addressed by project (disadvantaged neighborhoods, prisons or refugees camps); 2) they have a certain degree of stability showing over time the ability to reach tangible results in the sport for all sector; 3) they are also initiatives where the effort to take charge of the ethnicity of beneficiaries is explicit, although it can be carried out in different ways (in mono or multi-ethnic groups, with or without the presence of natives, etc.); 4) finally, they receive diverse types of financial support (self, public, or private).

Following these criteria a considerable number of NPBs has been identified in each of the countries where the project takes place: ranging from two cases in Slovenia to 6 in Spain and Denmark. Overall, 28 practices have been detected by the Simcas partners in their own countries (see the list in annexA). These are very different experiences, making it possible to compare a variety of contextual and organizational factors that can favor or hinder the inclusion of migrants through sport. A semi-structured questionnaire has been elaborated in order to collect data on each of the selected NPBs (see annex b). Partners handled the survey, after receiving a briefing from Iref researchers. Fieldwork has been carried out from the beginning of September 2020 to the end of February 2021. It was a very complicated and lengthy research task in order to ensure that the information gathered was complete and accurate. In every country, project coordinators used two techniques to fill the questionnaires: desk data collection (by consulting NPBs websites, social media, press releases, official documents, etc.); face-to-face or online interviews with key informants. Only in a few cases it was possible to send the questionnaire and have it filled in autonomously by the heads of the NBP¹. In the next pages, the main results of the inquiry will be reviewed, starting with a general overview of activities and services through which migrant's inclusion within local communities becomes effective, being fostered by the commitment of sport grassroots organizations volunteers, coaches, managers and leaders.

¹ Due to the repeated restrictions introduced by public authorities in order to cope with the emergency caused by Covid-19 in almost all the countries where research on NPBs has been conducted, it has not been possible to carry out the usual research field activities. This prevented carrying in presence interviews and participant observations within the structures where sports programs are developed. Despite these limitations, information on which this report is based is sufficiently solid and in-depth to compare different cases and to advance interpretations on the results of the survey.

AN OVERVIEW ON NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Where and when

The selection of national best practices provided by the project's partners returns a variegated and complex scenario regarding the diffusion of sport programs addressing the obstacles to migrants' inclusion into society. The first of the aspects we must consider is the geographical location of these practices, where they are, or have been, implemented. Indeed, we can notice a balance between sport programs taking place in capital cities or major urban centres and initiatives implemented in smaller cities². An entirely different phenomenon is then that of programs that have been engaging with contexts, such as prisons, refugees' camps, Roma's settlements, where the boundary with the broader social world is more evident. While this is clearly due to the selection criteria and cannot provide generalizable information about what is common at the European level, this heterogeneity of places allows us to discuss what can be implemented and where. For instance, even in small cities such as Banyoles, Catalonia, at the border between Spain and France, there has been the possibility to provide access to sport training to foreign-born communities, professional training for coaches, tournaments, and access to leisure facilities. This is not limited to Spain. The case of *"Tam Tam Basket"* in Castel Volturno, Italy, *"Equality in society"* in Trikala, Greece, and the *"Cross-generation centre Gorenjska"* in the cities of Radovljica, Kranj and Jesenice, Slovenia, show that small cities have an important role in the diffusion of sport for social inclusion programs all around Europe. The case of Banyoles, Catalonia, is a particular example of how in a small community where the presence of migrants is important it has been possible to organize a number of initiatives to improve their wellbeing. The Spanish partner (Sports Council of Pla de l'Estany - CEPE) reported a detailed picture of how the city, where almost 20% of the population is of foreign origin, has been providing in the last years access to sport to migrants' children. The segregation of these communities at the socio-economic and spatial margins of the city does not allow them to provide their children with sport education. There are currently three programs - No child without playing football, Cruyff Court 6vs6 Banyoles, and Barris 10 (Neighbours 10) - running in Banyoles. These initiatives address many of the needs related to sport for social inclusion programs: training for coaches, free and open places to play, training to players, tournaments, advocacy and sensibilization events. The synergic presence of different programs allows for the establishment of networks, bridging social contacts and the creation of collective practices and spaces, which are all indicators of a potential for migrants' further integration into the life of the broader community.

Beside the experiences currently taking place in small urban areas, capital cities and major centres have been playing a considerable role too. In Germany, for instance, Berlin is a particularly active context and the area around Cologne, too. The project *"Cabuwazi beyond borders"*, offering free circus training to refugees, operates in some of Berlin's disadvantaged neighbourhoods - Kreuzberg, Tempelhof, Treptow, Altglienicke and Marzahn; its organizers have been cooperating with refugees' accommodation facilities. Also, the *"RheinFlanke HOPE Program"* has been providing training to young refugees, supporting them in their life choices. Many initiatives are also currently

² We consider small cities those with no more than 50.000 residents.

found in the Copenhagen capital region. Capital cities, by definition the seat of a nation's wealth and political power, are among the main destinations of migrants and refugees because of increased occupational opportunities and the presence of fellow countrymen and women. This is also the case of Rome, Italy, and Athens, Greece.

Drawing a picture from the information we managed to gather thanks to partners' contributions, sport for social inclusion programs have a wide reach and are able to address the needs of peripheral foreign-born communities. These social programs are not limited to metropolitan areas, where migrants' presence is more evident and pervasive, but they are also found in internal areas, zones that are attractive and, for many reasons, allow for migrants' settlement. Different locations imply different starting conditions and routes for development. More populated cities can offer the possibility of wider networks, which are essential to the constitution of sustainable social programs, as well as increased opportunities for funding and advocacy. However, these conditions cannot be excluded in smaller communities which might as well benefit from a more direct contact with institutional bodies.

Regarding the temporal dimension, most practices have a recent starting date, having begun in the past five years; there are however a few older cases which have begun in the past decade. In many instances, seven, the starting date has been 2016-2017, the year following Europe's most acute phase of incoming migratory flows of past decades. Some programs, five, have started in 2018. While it is unlikely to understand whether this is an effect of the increased presence of migrants in Europe, it can at least be noticed that the reaction of European societies to the question of how to support foreign born communities' inclusion has rapidly come. In the year following the Migrants Crisis many sport programs have been initiated, probably as a response to emergent needs.

There are, though, a number of best practices dating prior to 2015. The Barça's Foundation social inclusion programs in Catalonia (Spain), "Street to Football", now concluded, in Denmark, and "CABUWAZI Beyond Borders" and "RheinFlanke Hope Program" in Germany, all started when Europe was not facing the serious humanitarian crisis of 2015. To some extent, then, this shows how sport programs for social inclusion have a long tradition in European countries, especially in those areas where ethnic diversity has become evident and promptly became a political question to be addressed, such as in Catalonia and in Berlin and Cologne (Germany).

Most programs are still ongoing, an information that tells us about the overall degree of sustainability of similar initiatives, especially if we consider that most of the programs are organized on a weekly basis and revolve around sport training and related activities. The emphasis, in the majority of recorded cases is on regularity and frequency, which are the main factors influencing the establishment of habits and lifestyles. It is indeed an acquired knowledge that sport programs addressing social marginality must be based on a constant and solid presence in the contexts that the initiatives intend to change. In this regard, regular, weekly, training sessions are often paired with a broader objective related to the training itself: tournaments, year-long championships, or competitive matches in the weekends seem to play a central, yet not primary, role in the success of the practices. It is the case of "Tam Tam Basket" in Italy, the Roma Football Academy in Slovenia, the "Cruyff Court 6vs6 Banyoles" in Spain, and others; every partner country has at least one example of a training program that is linked with some form of sport competition for its participants to take part in. Thus, the function of a broader objective – that of training for a challenge such as a competitive

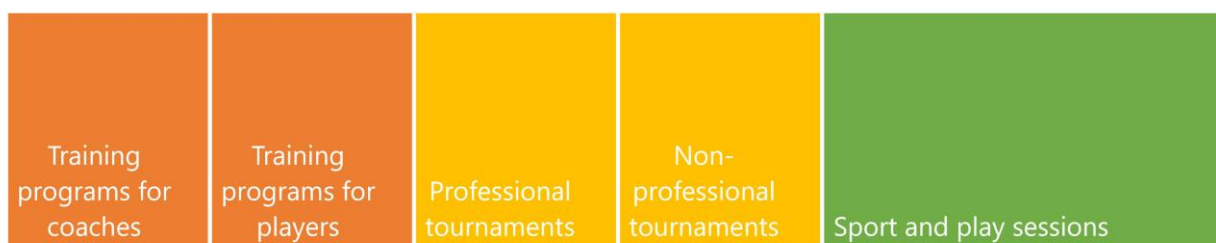
match – might be that of providing a more extensive, long-term, meaning to the practice of sport. Indeed, it is arguably more engaging, especially for youth in deprived socio-economic conditions and limited opportunities to access leisure facilities, to participate in a program that has more purposes: the first being the pleasure of practising sport right here and now, every week, and the second being looking-forward for a yearly championship.

The two aspects of sport – training and competition – thus seem to be interdependent, even though there are cases of more informal, less structured, practices. However, it would be particularly interesting to understand how the coexistence of these two aspects of sport are managed in each case. For instance, the organization of tournaments requires a significant effort in terms of mobilization of human and economic resources and calls for the constitution of networks of organizations which, at least at the beginning, can be complicated to structure.

Concerning the contents of the best practices, it is not unusual to notice the prevalence of football training programs. There are of course some cases where the chosen approach is that of multi-sport trainings, or social sport sessions, where the type of sport practiced is secondary to the socialization taking place through sport. At least in Italy, rugby and basketball have been at the core of some programs. The majority of initiatives however revolve around various approaches to football training, from professional to more casual and less performance-oriented programs. To summarize what we observe in these best practices, it is possible to conceptualize a spectrum that goes from activities aimed at providing places and means to socialize and have fun to activities organized around the principle of professionalization and skill. Of course, this does not consider what are the goals of the practice, just how these goals are pursued. As in the case of the project “Tornare in campo”, professional training (for rugby) has the mid-term goal of allowing players (prison inmates) to take part in a ranked national championship; but short- and long-term effects are still evident: fighting social deprivation and shape a habit around a meaningful and generative activity.

On top of that, the project’s partners have also decided to highlight some particular practices. For example, “CABUWAZI Beyond Borders” in Berlin, that offers free circus training to refugees, or, also in Germany, “Integration through Sport”, a federal program providing support to sport organizations, or “Barris 10” which also includes training sessions for coaches that will later take part in sport for social inclusion programs.

Figure 1. Types of best practices



To summarize, three types of best practices, often combined together in a single program, can be identified (figure 1). The first group includes training activities, both for players and coaches; the second, tournaments and competitions, professional and non-professional; and the third, defines all

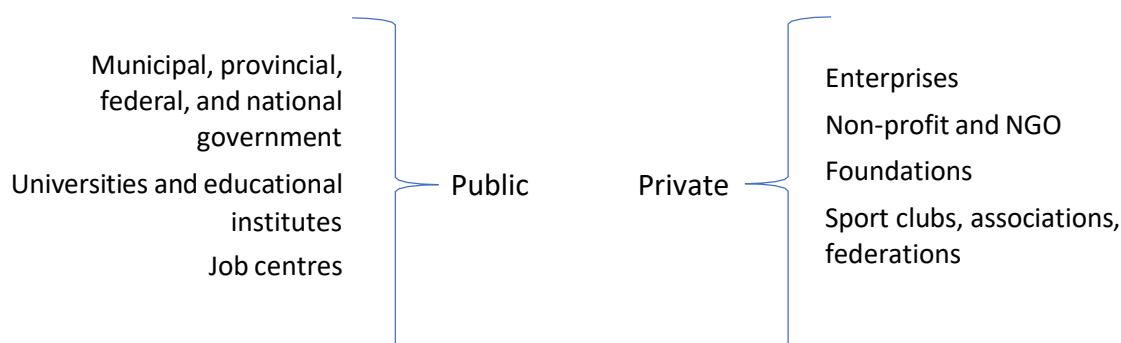
the other activities related to the practice of sport that have a strong focus on the play and leisure component of it.

Figure 2. Synoptic table for best practices' activities, by country

Country	Keywords
Spain	Regular football training, social sport sessions, education of sport coaches, multi-sport sessions, national championship, tournaments
Denmark	Regular football training, social-sport and play sessions, tournaments, social gatherings
Germany	Circus training, support to sport associations and professionals, free sport facility, regular training in various sports, open football training
Greece	Regular football training, educational activities related to sport, non-professional matches, tournaments, regular sport sessions, open sport and football training and activities
Italy	Regular basketball training, professional tournaments, social gatherings, regular rugby training, social sport activities, cultural integration
Slovenia	Social gatherings and social sport-physical activities, regular football training

The organising network and funding strategies

The best practices we gathered, as it is common in programs aimed at intervening in disadvantaged social contexts, have been relying on a wide spectrum of institutional actors. They can be included in classic two categories of public and private. The general rule is the involvement in a single program of actors from both domains. It is common, indeed, for the organizers of these practice to receive support from various governmental bodies and, at the same time, to communicate with private interests. Private actors usually means non-profit enterprises, NGOs, and organizations related to the practice of sport. Though, the participation of for-profit actors in the role of sponsors and providers of goods and services is not uncommon.



What is probably interesting is the involvement of a group of public actors, such as educational institutions and labour market-related actors, in some of the best practices. To some extent, it is an

indicator of how the practice of sport is, in these cases, associated with a series of other types of support to participants' inclusion into society. For instance, "RheinFlanke Hope Program" in Germany associate sport training to professional counselling, thus addressing participants' needs concerning their occupation. Similarly, in Italy, the project "Gioca chi studia" (tr. Who studies, can play) uses sport and play sessions as a means to encourage Roma's children to attend school. It is also common to make use of the appeal of sport to promote cultural and educational initiatives, as it is the case in the two Slovenian best practices, "Cross-generation centre Gorenjska" and "Roma Football Academy", and Greece's Hestia FC project, where the practice of sport is closely related to other activities and the promotion of social values. In a similar way, important private actors like the Barça Foundation and the Cruyff Foundation in Spain, the German Children and Youth Foundation in Germany have been the main promoters of some relevant initiatives where the role of sport in supporting broader processes of social inclusion was specifically pursued.

To summarize, three kinds of models of development seem the most relevant: the first one, where private bodies such as foundations and associations provide the momentum to start the initiative; a second one, where public institutions, through specific funds and calls for programs, encourage the creation of initiatives; and the third one, where grassroots initiative is more evident in the starting phases and only in a later phase are private and public actors involved in the program.

Figure 3. Synoptic table for the main actors involved in the best practices, by country

Country	Main actors
Spain	Provincial and local governments; football clubs, Barca foundation, local sport clubs, Nike, Euroleague; NGOs
Denmark	European commission funding programs; local, regional governments; non-profit organizations; local football clubs
Germany	European commission funding programs; local, regional, national governments, job centres; sport federations and leagues, local sport clubs and associations; youth foundations and non-profit entities; for profit enterprises
Greece	European commission funding programs; football club associations; NGOs; Coca Cola foundation and private foundations; National stadium, labor union centres, local governments, universities
Italy	Sport associations and sport clubs, national sport federations; social enterprises; universities, public educational institutes, regional funding programs, prisons;
Slovenia	National and local governments, universities; charity societies; football clubs and sport associations

The discussion of the organizing network is necessarily related to the issue of funding and the financial stability of the programs. As we have seen, most of the best practices are ongoing ones, very often with many years of history. The question of financial support is particularly complex as it the sources through which the start of the program has been made possible are not likely to be always available. The success of a program is much related to starting funds than it is to running funds. This implies that a wide range of funding sources, both private and public, as well as self-financing and crowdfunding, are actively pursued. In the case of Spain, three practices have a mixed type of funding

strategy, with the local government providing for a portion of the budget and private or self-financing cover the rest; there is also the case of an entirely private funded program by the Barca Foundation. For the case of Denmark and Greece and Italy it is important to highlight some initiatives that are self-financed by sport clubs or by other civic associations. In Germany it has to be noticed the support at the federal and local level to these programs. However, what is more relevant is the wide range and number of actors that each project needs to have relations with in order to sustain itself. The common strategy is to have as many as possible supporters in order to guarantee a certain degree of stability and continuity: a greater number of partners is a protection to sudden withdrawals of funds. Thus, the side effect of these programs is also that of strengthening the capacity of the civic society to communicate with economic bodies and institutional actors, which is a further progress toward positive conditions to the social inclusion of migrants and refugees in society.

The case of “Tam Tam Basket” in Italy is an example of an almost autonomous project that sustains itself on donations from persons, local economic activities, and crowdfunding campaigns. Crowdfunding in particular allowed the organizers to upgrade their sport facilities. A similar case is that of “Street to football” in Denmark, entirely organized and self-funded by migrants for newcomers and youth to socialize through sport. In Germany, the initiative titled “Tentaja” sustains itself thanks to self-financing through economic activities like rentals of facilities, but the role of donations is equally relevant. In Greece, Hestia FC self-finances his program of football training targeted at foreign-born people while Arsis FC has relied on the contributions of many actors in the starting phase: the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki provided medical services, the European Commission funds for a football trainer, while the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Foundation donated equipment, not considering the partnership covering organizational aspects. The model of football clubs self-financing activities for the training of migrants and refugees is also present in Denmark with the initiatives AGF – Aarhus – “Girls Project” and FC Nordsjælland – “Give back”. Another type of financing model relies entirely on public funding programs that intend to address social vulnerabilities and marginality. It is the case of Slovenia’s “Cross-generation centre Gorenjska”, for physical education and social activities, and of Denmark’s “Helsingør – Frivilligcenter” and “SSP”, which have a similar vocation: regular events where people meet to spend time together doing games, sports, and other social activities.

However, the most common trait seems to be the frailty of these programs in terms of financial sustainability. While none of the projects we have at our disposal is free of uncertainties, especially in light of recent events, some are more clearly exposed to discontinuities of human and material resources. It is the case of volunteer-based programs like “Tam Tam basket” and “Gioca chi studia” in Italy, “Tentaja” and “Integration durch Sport” in Germany, and “Equality in society” in Greece, all relying, partially and on different degrees, on informal means to sustain themselves: donations of goods and services and volunteer work. While, of course, public backed programs are also susceptible to similar shortages of resources, more autonomous programs might be prematurely exposed to social changes. Thus, we can differentiate between two profiles, one type identifying best practices that are more linked to institutional bodies and therefore have a minor risk of discontinuity, and the other profile identifying programs where self-financing and grassroots support is stronger and therefore are more exposed to the relative risks.

THE BEST PRACTICES IN DETAIL

Main objectives and activities

As anticipated in the previous chapter, the best practices that have been collected have different natures in terms of contents, structure, objectives, implementation strategy, and so on (Annex, Table A). However, there are some common goals and recurring themes.

A first group of best practices includes all the activities that specifically pursue objectives concerning participants' psycho-social change. A clear example is "SPA-1", where: "the main objectives are to foster and teach team values, to promote personal self-esteem, to transmit educational values, to promote acceptance of regulations and behaviours". Similarly, in "SPA-2" the focus is also on other aspects of the subject: "the capacity to self-manage emotions and feelings, interpersonal relationships, compromise and responsibility, communication skills, critical thinking, decision making skills". In Greece, we find a similar initiative in "GRE-3" where the focus is on "life values [...] such as respect, teamwork, ambition, effort, and humility" and in "GRE-2" where the practice of sport is aimed at supporting "refugee and migrant women psychological well-being", while at the same time promoting gender equality also outside leisure time; a similar emphasis is also put into Denmark's "DEN-5". There is also the case of Germany's "Cabuwazi Beyond Borders", where training is complemented by language learning moments:

"They regularly work with "Willkommensklassen". These are special introductory school classes for the children and teenagers of immigrants in Germany. Their training methodology is such, that participants need little or no German language skills to take part. They have activities to promote the learning of German through sport without it being a language class"

Other best practices focus more specifically on social change rather than on individual change. In Spain, the general objective of "Barris 10" "is to promote social cohesion and cohabitation in the territory by encouraging children and young people to practice sport, through the offering inclusive sports activities and measures that facilitate the participation of all groups of people". This goal is pursued with a combination of field activities, organizational change³, and institutional change⁴. For "SPA-4" the focus has been the creation of a space where mutual trust is encouraged and important social skills are developed within a group context ("promote respect to teammates, rivals, and the established rules").

Similarly, for "SPA-5" we observe how "Cruyff Foundation's goal is to give children as much space as possible to play sports and be active, with special attention to children in need and a commitment to sustainability", a step that precedes the achievement of "more specific goals at a local level such as involving the local community in the activities, fostering social inclusion with the realization of tournaments, promoting young girls' participation, contributing to the development of life skills and healthy habits, consolidating core positive values". A similar experience is reported in Greece's "GRE-

³ "Define a working and organizational model between the involved agents and participants to guarantee the management, educational and social transference of the program."

⁴ "Make the city and its natural and urban spaces areas to facilitate the physical activity and sports practice"

3”where what is considered important is to provide “a safe space for meetings, dialogues, and exchange of ideas. The ideal goal is that every participant can carry within them what they have been taught in the sessions, wherever they might go in the future”. Also in Greece, “GRE-4” had as main objectives “the promotion of physical activity and the use sports as a tool for promoting integration within the local community. In that sense, mixed groups (locals & refugees) are training together”.

On the same line of thought, the two Slovenian best practices have been set up with the specific intent of pursuing social change: to contrast social exclusion and socio-economic vulnerability by providing a link between marginal groups and institutions, or by providing to vulnerable groups alternatives to their current opportunities. Similarly, in Greece, ARSIS FC project’s “core values leave no room for discrimination and non-participation of certain groups, especially vulnerable and socially disadvantaged ones”; this has been pursued through the mobilization of the local community, advocacy, and networking with private and public stakeholders.

The theme of social contact, social capital, and the opportunity to make friendships through sport is emphasized in the best practices collected by the Danish partner, in particular for “GAME's Playmakers”:

“GAME's Playmakers are volunteer young people who want to make a difference for children and young people in residential areas or in GAME's Street Mecca by organizing or running weekly trainings in street basketball, street football, street dance or street fit. Equipped with a block rocker, balls, cones, etc., GAME's Playmakers conduct weekly trainings in 33 residential areas.”

The development of local communities and social networks is also among “GER-5”'s objectives:

“The main objective is to create points of contact in society through open training courses for young refugees and for that use the integrative strengths of football. The program aims at opening opportunities for social integration and personal development for young refugees and strengthen local structures and network. The program goal is also to create an innovative cooperation with different local actors in refugee aid and professional and amateur football”

Another category of best practices includes all the projects that more indirectly address the issue at hand, for instance, by training volunteers and coaches, or by empowering organizations. It is the case of “SPA-6”, where both have been set as main objectives. A similar approach is to be found in Germany’s “GER-4”:

“The aim is to allow encounters with normality, to offer a place for civil society engagement and to promote social participation. Their motto is “encounter strengthens society”. Therefore, they have the aim of bringing together social actors from politics, business, culture, sport, and education, as well as a wide variety of social milieus and taking responsibility for people in special situations”

A similar concern is also found in “GER-2” where the main objectives are: the promotion and support of sports organizations in their integration work; the promotion and recognition of voluntary work;

promotion of an intercultural vision of sport; the strengthening of the topic of integration in the structures of sport”.

Moreover, the German partner also reports example of another type of sport for social inclusion program, one that includes projects that offer both training and counselling of various kinds. For instance, in the case of “GER-3”:

“The aim of the program is integration in the labour market and active participation in society. The program aims to make young people fit for the future. RheinFlanke goal is to improve the future prospects of children and young people through a wide range of offers that build on one another. Sport serves as a motor and as a low-threshold entry point for establishing contacts and developing skills and as a bridge to individual advice and support offers”

Sport training is accompanied with consultancy and support to migrants’ occupational and educational choices. A similar approach, to emphasise the aspects related to institutional social inclusion mechanisms, is common in the German best practices. Also two other projects, “Willkommen im Fußball” and “Tentaja” focus on the development of participants’ professional and life skills, offering counselling and workshops.

Regarding Italy, sport has been actively employed to promote personal growth and to contrast criminal behaviours in second generation migrants (“ITA-1”), to encourage school attendance (“ITA-3”) or to support the re-inclusion into society after a period of confinement in a detention centre (“ITA-2”). Thus, as in Greece’s cases, the emphasis has been put on individuals’ empowerment. Lastly, Denmark falls within the category that has been defining itself as “sport programs supporting leisure-oriented socialization and individual growth”, while the Spanish partner reports an equal dedication to these objectives as well as a focus on the prerequisite conditions to these activities: training of coaches, empowerment of organizations, and networking.

Therefore, reducing the complexity of these cases, it is possible to classify the practices into the categories we have seen so far. Of course, every project usually can pursue many objectives since they do not exclude each other, but according to what the partners reported, some programs focus more specifically on some dimensions, while others on the other. For example, “CABUWAZI Beyond Borders” “gives young refugees the opportunity to gain an insight into circus artistry and discover personal strengths, experience social cohesion in the community and create positive connections with their new environment, [...] and practice their language skills”.

Target groups and beneficiaries

Age groups

Most of the best practices that have been collected are specifically targeted to young migrants and refugees, from 4 to 18 years old. In Italy, “ITA-1” offers sport training to boys and girls 10 to 18 years old, and also “ITA-3” addresses the needs of a similar target group. In Spain, “SPA-1”, “SPA-2” and “SPA-3” cover this entire age span, with “SPA-2” being mostly attended by 12-16 years old children and “SPA-3” having a wider age range; “SPA-5” is of interest to pre-adolescents. Denmark’s best

practices too are attended by teenagers (“DEN-6”, “DEN-5”, “DEN-4”, “DEN-3”). Similar cases are often found also in Germany’s and Greece’s best practices.

Other programs engage both young and adult people. “ITA-2” has participants with an age spanning from 18 to 42 years old, and the same can be said for “GRE-2”, “DEN-2”, “SLO-1”, and “GRE- 4” where: “The participants of the program funded by UN were in total around 120-150, including around 25 children. The rest of them were adults, including parents of the children participants”.

In other cases, an intermediate age, between late teen and mid-twenties years (15-25), is engaged. It is the case of Spain’s “SPA-4”, targeted at young adults (18-24 years old) and Germany’s “GER-3” where: “The program is aimed at adolescents and young adults with reduced access to education, especially refugees between the ages of 16 and 27.” And also in Greece’s “GRE-1”: “The participants are people with little to no opportunities due to discrimination and marginalization; it aims to provide them with access to sport and educational tools. Our members till now are young boys aged 15-27 refugee, migrant and asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors and young adults living in Thessaloniki”. Some practices attract young adults without directly involving them in structured activities, such as it is happening in “GER-4”: “Many participants are young. Adults come often without participating in organized sport. They come in groups to play basketball or alone to use the gym and fitness equipment”.

The information regarding participants’ age is particularly interesting. Indeed, it can be argued that the impact of each program on participants’ social inclusion is, to an extent, related to their personal development. Younger participants are most likely in a more receptive phase of their life during which an experience of socialization like that taking place in sport can be particularly effective in supporting their psycho-social growth. Older children and young adults, on the other side, have mostly gone through most of the main period of socialization in our culture: family and compulsory school. Thus, it can be argued for them to have more stable personal identity and behavioural patterns. In other words, focusing on programs for children and teenagers might be the most effective strategy in the long term since the opportunities that are going to be provided might more deeply influence their life course. For instance, helping Roma children attend school by means of the “reward” of sport can produce evident and important results in the medium and long term.

On the other side, best practices focusing on young adults and adults have to confront with a different scenario. Their life experiences are certainly richer and more complex than children’s. We have seen how different strategies are adopted in this case, in particular, to accompany sport training with occupational and educational counselling, workshops, and general support in the areas pertaining adult life.

These two groups of practices are thus quite different in scope and implementation, at least in theory. With children, it is most important to support positive behaviours and self-growth, while with adults it might be more relevant to provide concrete and immediate support, due to the fact that their lives are already in the “productive” period.

Migratory background

The migratory background of the participants reflects the high heterogeneity of contexts as well as different migratory phenomena. In Italy, “ITA-3” has been supporting Roma children to attend school by means of sport activities; their countries of origin span from Bosnia to Macedonia and Romania.

Similarly, in Slovenia, “SLO-2” offers professional football training to Roma children. “ITA-1” instead addresses children of African origin living in marginal neighbourhoods in South Italy where the pressure of criminal organizations is evident. The experience of Italy’s “ITA-2” instead is a multi-ethnic one since the inmates come from East Europe and Africa. Spain’s “SPA-1” mainly engages youth of sub-Saharan origin, especially Moroccan. Greece’s best practices, due to the geopolitical relevance of this country in the past decade, have been engaging with migrants and refugees from the Near East and Central Asia - Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan – but also from North and Central Africa. The Greek’s condition is particularly relevant since most of the best practices take place in temporary accommodation areas like refugee camps, shelters, or marginal neighbourhoods, in other words, in contexts where different conditions and needs coexist. On top of some groups’ fragility – lone mothers, unaccompanied children – there is also the issue of the high linguistic diversity; in “GRE-3”, taking place near Moira: “They come from approximately from 20 different countries [and] speak Persian, Arabic, English, French and Greek”.

The Spanish experience, on the other hand, consists of programs mainly working with first and/or second-generation migrants who live in critical areas, that means, children of foreign-origin who are born in Spain and most likely are fluent in the national language (“SPA-2”, “SPA-3”, “SPA-5”). Thus, it is an entirely different situation from Greece’s. As the Spanish partner reports for “SPA-5”: “different cultures get mixed although one single language is spoken in these cases – Catalan. All of them, in any case, are studying in one of the either public or private schools in the city (there is only one private school, the rest are public)”. And also, for “SPA-3”: “Even though all children speak the local language (Catalan), some children of the same ethnic group do communicate between them with the language of their family’s origin”.

The German experience might be considered an intermediate situation since the best practices reach both recent migrants and refugees, mostly from the Near East, but also migrants with a longer stay in the country. It is the case of “GER-4” where: “The ethnicity is mixed. There is a noticeable number of participants with a migratory background. When the camp was still there, a lot of children or young refugees participated in the activities. People from more than twenty different nations participated in Tentaja’s activities.” Within the context of “GER-2” the focus has been “on people with a migration background and groups that are under-represented in organized sport”; similarly, for “GER-5”, offering football training courses, the participants “come mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In some alliances they also train together with the local youth”. Other programs, being implemented in a different area of the country, have different strategies, as in “GER-4”: “The beneficiaries are a mixed population from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. They work with children from “difficult schools”. In the project Beyond Border the focus is put on refugee children and young refugees. The mobile circus who travels in different refugee centres in Berlin”.

Thus, the most common experience is that of multi-ethnic participants, without considering the fact that a higher heterogeneity often goes unseen when we define people as of “Roma” or “Sub-Saharan” origin. A difference is found though regarding the duration of participants’ permanence in the country. This variable is likely the most relevant one since it is related to other situations. For instance, recently arrived migrants and refugees are going to face the trauma of adapting to a radically different society, while long-term residents and second-generation migrants are already

acquainted with the host culture. Thus, their needs are going to be different and, consequently, social programs should adapt to these needs in order to be effective.

Organizational aspects and obstacles to the implementation

Best practices' structure and schedule

A first element to consider is about the structure of the activities and their schedule. It is in fact a first information that tells about what kind of implementation strategy is likely to work out for future, similar, programs. As we have already seen, almost every best practice falls into the category of "training sessions with a regular schedule", while some others pertain to tournaments and a last group to social activities where sport is an activity amongst other ones. Here we will discuss, in particular, how the first category of best practices has been organized, since it is a type of program recurring in every partner country as well as the main objective of SIMCAS.

A typical structure is that found in "GRE-1", which focus on football training, regular training plus a match every week:

"The training sessions take place every Monday and Wednesday in a stadium located within the city of Thessaloniki for 1 hour and 30 minutes. Once per week, the team participates to a local championship or friendly game (usually during the weekend)"

The same can be found in "GRE-2" where to a regular training and a monthly competition a weekly workshop is added. In this regard, "ITA-1", which offers basketball training, provides three training sessions each week plus the – usually – weekly competitive match organized within the official non-professional leagues. A similar schedule is found in "ITA-2" where three training sessions per week are attended by the participants, plus the competitive matches that come with the participation to the official league. A fixed schedule is found also in "GRE-3":

"It is a structured activity providing daily sessions, all year long. For each location, there is a fixed schedule dividing groups by age and/or gender, which is in line with the school schedule, to avoid overlaps. Every child has the opportunity of having a session twice per week inside the camps and/or externally and at the school's yard of Moria village"

A tendency to shift from informal sport session to scheduled sessions is reported by the Greek partner for "GRE-4" where "Although the activities had started as a spontaneous way for providing recreation, each activity has a consistent schedule to promote participants' engagement". The Spanish partner instead gives us, regarding "SPA-1", an idea of the time commitment of the participants, children between 4-18 years old training football:

"They usually train twice a week, about 4 hours training per week; [...] participants also play one competitive game per week. The older participants have more training sessions they would have per week. In total, on average per month, children get between 24 and 28 hours of activity"

And a similar commitment is found in "SPA-2":

“Activities are performed from October to May, during the scholar period, twice a week, every week. A total of 3 hours per session is performed – 2 hours of activity and 1 hour of organizational aspects -, thus making it 6 hours per week”

An important time-commitment, most likely, has the potential to positively influence children’s self-growth. A frequent and stable attendance helps in building a habitus, in defining one’s role within a group of peers and in expressing one’s needs and desires. Indeed, as pointed out for Spain’s “SPA-4”:
“The fact that the same routine is followed every week is key, so young participants have clear what is the structure and what is being done at every moment, even though a space for debate has always been promoted”. Of course, a regular schedule is also arising from funding and financial planning needs, as pointed out for “GER-2”:

“Despite sports associations being free to organise what they want; they do not have a lot of scope for spontaneous activities because at the start of every year they must ask for financial support and outline exactly what they want to do in advance (what time, where, which sport, and for who)”

This case is specific to public and European funded programs, which require an ex-ante planning of the activities, but can also apply to other kinds of initiatives, private funded or volunteer based. Indeed, a certain degree of complexity is necessary to ensure that level of stability that is required for the activities to effectively benefit participants. The case of Germany, where two best practices are of national relevance, gives us an example of this kind of best practices; “GER-5” indeed is thus organized:

“Every local alliance can organise activities as they please. It can be a training every week or a tournament once a year. Local alliances must fill in a grant application every year saying precisely what they want to do with the funding. However, the program is flexible enough to easily permit changes during the year and in this way adapt to the needs and wishes of the participants and organizers”

Another important element, though, is the availability of a place where to practice sport freely. For instance, as it has been happening in “GER-4”: “There is a fixed planning of activities. On average five sport activities take place every day. However, as the place is big, there is always room for flexibility. People can use the place without registration”. A certain degree of spontaneity and free availability of a place where to practice sport, while not common in our collection, should be considered as potentially beneficial. While the benefits of organized and regular training are somewhat clear or at least predictable, the impact of free sport practice on people in marginal communities could benefit from further initiatives and investigations.

Regarding the projects’ activities structure, an emphasis has also been put into the function of non-competitive games during training sessions (“SPA-4”):

“[these games] have been what broke the initial barriers down in terms of conditioning as well as the existing mistrust between participants. While participants are playing, they do not think about competition or the roles that they might have outside the court – they are all one team, and the goals are shared”

An important element in sport – regulated opposition and conflict – is here related to the development of trust and a sense of being together. The same context that can, in some cases, facilitate violence and inter-personal tensions, is here contributing to the opposite outcome. It might be argued then that sport, as a context for regulated opposition, can have both outcomes depending on how participants and coaches interact with it and with each other. What is important is then what people practicing sport feel, share, and receive feedbacks about, their feelings. This kind of attention to psycho-social dynamics is what is clearly sought after in many best practices actively involving professional figures with such expertise: psychologists, pedagogists, social workers.

In some cases, the structure of the activities can become quite complex. For instance, in the organization of projects with many phases, like Spain's "Barris 10", where sport training is but a part of the entire program:

"The program is planned taking in consideration a first phase of planification (revision and modification of existing activities and creation new ones if there are specific needs to be addressed), followed by a training program aimed at coaches that will then implement the activities, then the implementation phase is carried out where the four projects mentioned before (FutbolNet, Tarda Jove, Esport i Barris, and Joves en Dansa) are performed between October and May/June of the following year. Finally, an evaluation phase takes place to assess the performance of the projects and see if modifications need to be considered for the following year"

At the same time, some programs have an intense schedule, with many training sessions or activities taking place in a day, mostly related to different age groups and types of activities. For instance, in Germany, "Cabuwazi" shows this kind of complex arrangement:

"Every location has a site management and organizes their own activities, [with] at least one training per day. On average there are 4 trainings per day. There are trainings divided by age or capacities or activities. There is also open training where everyone without registration can take participate in"

Similarly, Slovenia's "SLO-1" offers "Free content for social inclusion, education and intercultural and intergenerational connections is implemented daily at the Gorenjska Multigenerational Centre at several locations in the region". And "SLO-2" has the structure of professional football training: "It is active through the whole year with around 30 active kids, in the summer even more. They are part of the Football Association of Slovenia and have official matches in official competitions. They usually have 3-4 training per week for 1 and a half hour".

The project's team and professionals involved

A distinction can also be made between different types of staff members usually involved in the programs: supporting professionals – psychologists, social workers, linguistic mediators, managers; sport-specific professionals – coaches and trainers; and non-professional figures – volunteers.

The Spanish experience shows a degree of complexity that is often found in sport for social inclusion programs. For instance, the project organized by the Barça Foundation, “SPA-2”, make use of technical and methodological managers on top of sport coaches, and a similar structure is explicit in “Barris 10” where, together with a social services manager, a project coordinator is made necessary due to the wide range of activities and modules of the project:

“The staff working in Barris 10 is composed by a sports project manager and a social services manager that oversees the general actions so that the measures considered for each strategic line are implemented. At an in-the-field point of view, sport coaches and social workers are the professionals working with participants in the activities. Almost all of them had previous experiencing either working with vulnerable groups”

Each of the Spanish best practices has the support of one or more professionals – sport related or supporting figures - experienced with foreign-born people and disadvantaged communities. The presence of managerial and professional figures seems to be an important trait, possibly related to the challenges that such initiatives offer. For instance, in “SPA-1”:

“the project is composed of one project coordinator who is a social educator and psychologist, and coaches, 80% of them being volunteers. The project coordinator has a lot of experience in both working with vulnerable people in different contexts as well as managing sports activities”

A higher degree of complexity can be highlighted in “SPA-2” where a network of similar projects has been implemented:

“some managers guarantee the organizational aspects of the program, and coaches conduct the activities in the field. There is a technical manager responsible of all FutbolNet projects in Catalonia who coordinates a team of methodological coordinators responsible of specific projects which are divided by region and capacities or skills”

The presence of professionals is also, most likely, a prerequisite to the access to public funds since it guarantees that public resources are employed to offer high quality social programs. Moreover, what is found for Spain’s “No child without playing football”, support professionals coordinating at the methodological level a group of volunteering coaches, is also found in “SPA-3” and “SPA-5”, where:

“There are two professional coaches involved that get specific training from the Cruyff Foundation. On the other hand, there is also a group of volunteers called Heroes of the Cruyff Court who receive training from coaches and then are guided in the processes of designing, organizing, and executing the local tournament. Coaches are usually experienced in encouraging games and sports with children and teenagers. Volunteers, on the other hand, are usually involved in sports activities so their motivation is key to develop the volunteering activity”

A similar approach guarantees both a wide coverage in terms of areas and target groups while keeping in consideration important psychosocial and organizational knowledge, which is essential for a program to be successful. It is also worth noting that the promotion of volunteer work within these

projects contributes to their sustainability and replicability. As noted by the Spanish partner regarding the experience of “SPA-3”:

“the program also promotes voluntary work, though it is not the main source of workforce. However, volunteers help the projects’ coaches in the conduction of activities. Usually, the program tries to offer these voluntary positions to young participants that have been involved in some of the projects. We believe that this is a very powerful action, as not only do they know the procedures of the activities but also, they have become positive leaders for the children participating in the projects.”

A complex structure is also reported for Germany’s “Cabuwazi Beyond Borders”, which shows an impressive organization, probably a consequence of its longevity (it is running since 1992):

“There are 15 persons working in the administration of CABUWAZI and between two and six persons per permanent location, of which there are five across Berlin. In total 100 persons are working for CABUWAZI, this includes trainers and artists. In general, the facilitators are circus pedagogical educators and pedagogically experienced artists. So, they are used to work with children, not especially with refugee children”

Each training session has the support of “circus pedagogical educators and pedagogically experienced artists”, as well as a linguistic mediator. A similar complexity is found in “GER-2”, where the staff is made of sport professionals and supporting figures, employees and volunteers. A specific attention is put into coaches’ preparation: “all the program’s coaches are supposed to take part in the German Olympic Sports Confederations workshops, and therefore learn how to work with the specific group of refugees and migrants. Some had previous experiences of working with refugees”. Similarly, the “RheinFlanke Hope Program” employs 65 workers from different backgrounds and 30 coaches all over Germany. The same structure is found in the “Tentaja” program:

“Tentaja has their own employees. The majority are social workers or social assistants. The social assistants are all migrants or refugees. Many people working there are not employed by Tentaja. They are volunteers from sport associations and, often, sports coaches”

Thus, a most important element is that the best practices we are reviewing often are sustainable thanks to a great number of volunteers that, regardless of their professional background, facilitate the work of organizers and trainers. Sometimes, volunteers have a background as trainers or supporting professionals, sometimes they are former participants or common citizens. For Germany, “Integration durch sport” counted in 2019 192 volunteers in Berlin, while “Willkommen im Fußball” too is reported to be mostly based on voluntary work. While volunteers are often non-professionals or are at least trained of field to coordinate the activities, there are some cases where volunteer work is given by professionals who would add to the project an appropriate expertise. For instance, Italy’s “Tam Tam Basket” is supported by a volunteer psychologist and other non-paid professionals who contribute to fundraising and communication. Similar evidence has been provided for Spain too.

This argument, related to the alliance between employees and volunteers, professionals and non-professionals, is also highlighted in the Greek case. “GRE-1” adopted a scheme we have already

seen – “there were different trainers working with the team since the beginning. Nowadays, a Physical Education Qualified Teacher and UEFA B football coach, as well as trained volunteers, run ARSIS F.C. training sessions”. A detailed report of “GRE-2”’s organizational structure helps us see how sport for social inclusion programs also offer to migrants and refugees another kind of opportunity, to work for the wellbeing of people who now experience what they had to in the past:

“The staff is composed by a Greek female coach, UEFA B licensed, experienced with refugee and migrant children; an Afghan assistant coach/translator/cultural mediator, who has received the Greek asylum. His experience includes supporting football activities for children and adults as a volunteer as well as a hired position in a program for unaccompanied minors (in both cases as an assistant coach); lastly, the coaching team also includes a volunteer from Congo, refugee himself. He is an Arabic speaker, and he was a professional football player and football coach for children in his country. His professional experience also includes a collaboration with Barca Foundation in Lesbos island, where he was a coach for refugee children, teaching them the FutbolNet methodology”

On the other hand, we find what we already saw in Spain, the importance of experienced organizers who can coordinate the activities. “GRE-2” benefits from the fact that “the co-founder/manager of the team is IOTC’s Sport for Protection Program Manager and she has been designing and managing football programs for refugee and migrant children and adults for the last 5 years”. “GRE-4” has the support of the University of Thessaly:

“all the activities are organized by the Lab of Psychology of Sport & Exercise and include at their planning and designing several professors with high academic profile. The activities are coordinated by personnel of the university having mainly administrative responsibilities”

However, different approaches are also possible. “GRE-3” adopted a strategy diverging from what we have seen so far:

“The staff is mostly consisted by non-professional coaches, but all the members are certified FutbolNET coaches by Barca Foundation. They are either employees or volunteers from both the hosting and the hosted community, and their age range is between 16 and 55 years old. They are being role models for the participants, chosen for their good manners and their ability to influence the others on a positive way”

The Italian experience shows similar traits to what so far has emerged. The participation of sport professionals and supporting figures, as we saw, is an element of success in “ITA-1”, but in “ITA-2” too. In this case, two managers of Bologna Rugby 1928 voluntarily offer their expertise as coordinators, while two trainers and a sport physician are involved in the training sessions. The presence of these professional figures is essential considering the context the best practice takes place in, a penitentiary. The necessity to continuously adapt to the context indeed requires a complex decisional structure that is able to define and monitor the activities. On the other side, as we have seen for Greece, more informal and simple project’s structures

are also viable. “ITA-3” is entirely volunteer-based and mainly involves teachers and educators who are experienced with young migrants; thus, the element of professional competence in the field of sport training has a secondary importance in this case. The Slovenian partner reports for “SLO-1” of voluntary coaches experienced with ethnic minorities, while for “SLO-2” has a more detailed approach, since “in the academy there are four professional coaches with Rome background who are used to working with Rome children”.

Issues and obstacles

Another aspect we considered was about the potential issues and obstacles that the organizers of the activities might have run into during the projects’ development. This information allows for the identification of some common criticalities and a definition of potential threats to future initiatives. It is, indeed, not always possible to confront with external and internal obstacles and to successfully overcome them.

The first concern, to find adequate financial support to start the project or expand its reach, has not been reported by SIMCAS’ partners, with the exception of “No child without playing football” which, according to the Spanish partner, has had this kind of obstacle in an early phase. Thus, in the small sample of best practices that have been collected, there is no evidence of financial resources representing an obstacle to the program’s development. While this information does not mean that the projects have benefitted from financial stability, it tells about the organizers’ capacity to operate with limited resources without compromising the planned development of their projects.

The most common issues are of a different kind. In some cases, the first stages, when a first group of participants has to be reached to start the activities, can be difficult to manage. For instance, when searching for female participants, who might be discouraged by gender norms that consider their social role at odds with sport practice (“SPAIN-2”). However, the most common issue concerns language and cultural differences, which are a direct consequence of mixed ethnicity participants (“GER-2”, “GER-5”). This state of things calls either for innovative training sessions methodologies or the involvement of professional figures with a wide spectrum of competences – linguistic, pedagogical, sport-related. It is not uncommon, however, that coaches have experience working with migrant communities and thus are already acquainted with the more complex patterns of communication.

Another issue is instead related to obstacles to participants’ involvement with the activities. The drop out of participants or their irregular engagement is common and has many causes (“GER-3”, “GER-5”, “GRE-4”, “ITA-1”). Refugees can be relocated in different facilities, while migrants’ fragile socio-economic condition can have an impact on their, and their children, leisure time: sport can be considered secondary to other concerns, such as employment. In particular, the Italian and the Spanish partners reports a situation concerning programs targeted at young migrants: family-related complications (not being able to bring children to the place) and frictions to participation made for children non-constant engagement (“SPAIN-1”, “ITA-3”). There is also the issue of refugees’ trauma, which systematically makes it difficult for them to participate (“GER-5”). Lastly, in the two cases of practices targeted at prison inmates, the effects of social isolation would further add to the challenges above (“ITA-2”).

However, the most common issues are related to conflicts arising among participants or between coaches and participants (“SPAIN-2”, “SPAIN-3”, “SPAIN-4”, “GRE-1”). This is related to cultural misunderstandings and an initial social distance that can, and will be, eventually filled as communication develops into mutual trust and bonds become stronger. Indeed, physical activity, and group sports in particular, often promote a form of conflict and opposition within a set of rules of behaviour; it is thus perfectly normal to observe disputes, what is important is to have adequate means and knowledge to swiftly settle them. Moreover, these events are particularly evident in the case of programs including tournaments and competitive matches against other teams. In this case, the risk is to incur in racist behaviours or similar events is concrete (“ITA-3”, “GRE-1”).

In other cases, to find the necessary facilities for sport to be practiced has been identified as an issue (“SPAIN-3”). The coordination with sport clubs, schools, and other relevant private and public spaces is not always easy. Shortage of equipment is also likely to be found, even though there are no cases in our sample. Moreover, since most programs are volunteer-based or largely implemented thanks to volunteers, there can also be a shortage of volunteers; but a further aspect of this matter is about the presence of both motivated and responsible volunteers, which are even more relevant than their professional expertise, eventually acquirable on the field or with training (“SPAIN-5”, “GER-2”).

The evaluation of outcomes and the observed social change

A relevant element clearly emerging from our data is how, in many cases, these practices are supported by impact evaluation processes and, in general, adopt an evidence-based attitude for the assessment of the project’s outcomes. This, of course, concerns only those programs where change can be observed, such as regular sport training. This approach is in place in the case of “SPAIN-1” where:

“Periodic evaluations are performed by the club. [...] Satisfaction questionnaires are given to families; participants’ progression is assessed with individual indicators, improvements at the family level are assessed using indicators. This evaluation is done in collaboration between the club’s coaches and the social services technicians who are responsible of the families participating in the project.”

While “SPAIN-2” implements an online system to collect coaches’ observational information at the end of each session, a tool that “provides items that are used to evaluate the progress participants make for every value that is being worked on now of the evaluation.” In a similar fashion, the organizers “SPAIN-4” implemented a methodology to systematically observe participants’ engagement and consequently adapt the training activities to their needs. A field diary is filled in after each session, recording the objectives of each session, and also “improvement, opinions, and feedback from the participants to keep a daily track of all the experiences and, thus, be able to make an overall assessment.” Such an activity is essential to evaluate change in individuals’ attitude toward others and themselves, an important indicator of sociability and inclusion in a group of peers. The best practices identified by the Spanish partner thus all seem to refer to an evidence-based framework of evaluation. Also, in a third case, that of “SPAIN-3”:

“We evaluate the achievement of these goals with both quantitative and qualitative data. [...] Also, each coach has a list of participants so he/she can track assistance during the sessions. Likert scales are provided to the coaches at the end of each trimester to qualitatively evaluate their educational/training processes.”

Regular assessments are also in place in “GRE-2” where: “monitoring ensures that the program activities meet stated objectives and helps us understand how the participants protection, psychological well-being, empowerment and feeling of social inclusion has been affected”.

A focus on quantitative indicators is also quite common in the German’s best practices. For instance, the case of “RheinFlanke” which:

“Obtained an effective impact seal from Phineo, a famous organization in Germany. They are an analysis and consulting company for effective engagement from non-profit Organisations. They make a scientific impact analysis of organizations and when they successfully fulfil the criteria, they obtain the seal. According to their website, the organization overall (not only the program) achieved last year: completed 89 participant integrations into the labor market; delivered 41 workshops about integration into the labor market; provided 320 individual job coaching”

Similarly, the availability of statistics regarding the project’s reach are indicative of another German project, “GER-5”:

“Two thirds of all German professional football clubs are now involved in the program. Almost 100 organizations across Germany are involved in 24 alliances. A total of 65 training units every week are implemented and reach around 800 young refugees every week. Around 100 refugees are now actively involved in the alliances as volunteers (as trainer, assistant trainer, and language mediator)”

However, there is another German case where the evaluation of the activities has been supported by an even more structured approach. The impact of “GER-2”, beside the monitoring of how many participants and volunteers are involved each year, has been subject to external scientific evaluations by the German Olympic Sports Confederation aimed at assessing the social impact of the program⁵.

Another common approach is to record “successful stories” of participants who have found job or educational opportunities thanks to the projects’ capability to foster social connections and individuals’ agency and self-confidence. It is the case of “SPAIN-1” where some players later became football referees. In some cases, sport programs are a way to further develop one’s skills in a sport and later become a professional player (“SLO-2” and “GRE-1”). In the case of “DEN-5”: “through the “Fodboldforpiger” project many girls started playing football and made football as their pathway.” In Italy, thanks to “ITA-2” two ex-inmates had the opportunity to find a job at “Bologna Rugby 1928” sport club, a concrete step into a re-inclusion into society. The Danish partner reports further examples. For instance, regarding the project “DEN-2”, where “a young man who started in the center as a refugee and after getting his education he started his own company”. But there are also

⁵ https://cdn.dosb.de/user_upload/www.integration-durch-sport.de/Service/Info-Material/Evaluation_des_Programms_Integration_durch_Sport_2013.pdf

other important stories about new friendships and a deepening of one's inclusion with the community s/he lives in ("DEN-3" and "GRE-1"). Successful stories often refer to young girls' and boys' decision to continue studying ("DEN-4" and "ITA-3" and "GRE-1"), which is a considerable achievement in light of common school dropouts. Participants' self-reports are also found in "GRE-3", which implemented a methodology that allowed children to express themselves regarding the activity. On top of that, informal reports from participants' parents or from participants themselves have been a common occurrence in the program and an important indicator for the evaluation of its outcomes.

As an example of this kind of evaluation practice, it is worth reporting the story of one of "GRE-1"'s participants as it has been recorded by the Greek partner:

"My name is M. M, I am 20 years old, I am from Afghanistan and I grew up in Iran. 4 years ago, I came to Greece, stayed for three days in Lesvos, from where I went to Athens and then to the Diavata camp in Thessaloniki. I learned about the football team through the kids we hung out with at the camp, football is my life and when I learned that a football team would be established for refugees and immigrants, I was very happy to be able to play the sport I love. I was one of the first kids to join the team when it was created with my two brothers. Through the team I made many friends from different countries, it helped me improve my Greek and I met people from Greece that helped me find a job and become independent. I continue to this day being an active member of the Arsis football team, it is like a family to me and I thank them very much for everything. My experience all these years in Greece and in the team of Arsis helped me to improve my social skills and to help the new kids."

"Success stories" are, to some extent, an example of impact evaluation implemented with qualitative methodologies (biographical interviews or focus groups), however, in most cases, without an a priori definition of the process of assessment. This kind of informal approach to qualitative assessment can be more easily implemented in comparison to quantitative and standardized means of evaluation.

Social impact is sometimes evident by observing the degree to which media and public opinion attention has grown around the program. The impact of "GER-1", engaging with 10.000 children and young people every year and having around 100 staff members, is self-evident and has reached national media attention⁶. A similar dynamic has been in place for Italy's "ITA-1", where another type of outcome was reached, that of legislative innovation. Following up the media resonance achieved by the project, in 2017 the Parliament approved a law allowing foreign-born minors, if enrolled at school for at least a year, to benefit of the same rights that their Italian peers have regarding sport and participation to sport leagues. The same project "ITA-1" has been the focus of a documentary and a couple of photographic reportages.

However, despite the diffusion, at different degrees, of processes for the assessment of the program's social impact, to observe and measure social change remains a too difficult endeavour. Nevertheless, some information in this regard has been collected by partners. A first category of best

⁶ https://www.berliner-woche.de/tempelhof/c-kultur/gefluechtete-kinder-trainieren-bei-CABUWAZI-beyond-borders_a162371.

practices includes all those activities that introduced a new, not available before, opportunity for people living in the context it took place. The Greek partner reports that, regarding “GRE-1”:

“Before the ARSIS FC there were no opportunities to participate in such sport organisations. The majority of the participants do not have the opportunity to attend soccer/football academies as they cannot pay the relevant fees and, most important, because of the national legal gap to participate in national-level sports teams. Still there is absence of the infrastructure, but there are also opportunities that are increasing every day creating more effective solutions”

A similar case can be made for most of Denmark’s best practices and also “GRE-3” where no such activities were available to the population at that time:

“It was the only sport activity offered for free to their community. Most of the families of Moria village cannot afford external activities and no activity was provided in their village, which means they had to drive some kilometres away. Further no other activity had been targeting integration between the hosted and hosting community”

In Athens, where migrants and locals share a difficult socio-economic situation, the project “GRE-2” has contributed to refugees’ acquaintance with the foreign language. In Trikala, “GRE-4” has provided an opportunity of contact between migrants and locals, most likely resulting in the following positive impact:

“Instead of making ghettos, as in the most cases of refugee’s camps or in the cases of migrants’ overpopulating, the city has welcomed a specific number of refugees who are treated as equal part of the community. Recent research in the area has demonstrated the aforementioned, refugees perceive themselves as welcomed and most parts of the community has a positive opinion for them”

The German partner argues for a direct link between the broad social change brought to Germany by the “Refugee crisis” of 2015 and the emergence of many nationwide social programs related to sport and social inclusion:

“The best practices emerged in this period. They observed that sport clubs did not reflect this diversity. Especially girls, women and older people with a migration background and refugees have been under-represented in the sports associations. They also wanted to respond to the special situation of young refugees, many of whom have not attended schools for long periods, and which present a major challenge for the German education and training systems”

In a sense, it would be more correct to ask about the social context we would have had if these programs would not have been implemented. While it is difficult to assess whether a positive social change has taken place because of sport for social inclusion programs, it is easy to imagine what could have happened without such opportunities to practice sport and meet others. It is likely that the issues that today still concern foreign-born communities in Europe would have been in a more dire state than it is today; and this is also thanks to these best practices.

However difficult is to assess social impact, the partners have been able to report their impression regarding the effects of the best practices on the communities involved in them. “SPA-1” “achieved some significant social and individual changes, such as: school performance improvements, family behavior improvements, improvements in children’s concentration capacity, social integration due to the involvement of the whole family”. Also, in Spain, relevant changes are observed at the organizational and political level since many of the best practices are actively engaged in advocacy and communication activities. It is the case of “SPA-2”, where the potential of FutbolNet’s methodology as a socio-educational tool is shared with professionals and institutions. There is also the case for enhanced collaboration between the organizations taking part in the project and between organizations and public institutions (“SPA-3”, “SPA-6”). The promotion of a community’s organizations’ capacity to address local issues is particularly relevant in the medium term since it has the effect of promoting volunteering culture and of supporting youth’s initiative and self-organization.

Moreover, social impact must be assessed by considering the interplay of different social programs in the same area. Banyoles in Spain is a clear example of synergy between different organizations’ projects. “SPA-1” in Banyoles is complemented by a similar project run by the Swimming Club Banyoles (Club Natació Banyoles). The city is also the place for “Barris 10” activities, which is included in this collection of best practices, and “Match Inclusion”:

“an Erasmus+ Sport project promoting social inclusion in Banyoles that, besides doing a sports tournament for vulnerable children, it also renovated a public space (open access court) by cleaning and painting up the court, and replacing old materials such as basketball rings”

In Italy too, the organizers of “ITA-1” managed to crowdfund the improvement of a sport arena that had been abandoned for years. These sorts of events were not included in the original intentions and are some of the unexpected turns of events that can happen when the community is particularly receptive and willing to participate. Again, in Spain, the partner reports for the project “SPA-5” a series of unexpected events that are related to social projects taking place in the area:

“There are many initiatives taking place in this area, both related to sport and other cultural activities. For instance, there is a group of women who are primarily from Moroccan origin that meet every Monday morning to stitch. This is an activity coordinated by the welfare department. It has a great impact in the area as it is a space where women feel safe to talk about everything and some community initiatives arise due to these informal chats between participants. A good example of this is a woman who explained that she felt embarrassed to invite people over her place as the walls in her apartment were not in good conditions. The rest of the participants decided to help her out by volunteering in painting her walls. From that small initiative a bigger one was born in which volunteers were painting people’s houses on demand.

Moreover, a similar case can be made for Greece’s “GRE-3”, where sport activities have been supported by other types of activities to participants’ benefit:

“During the last years, more activities have been offered to the residents of the camp, like computer and English classes, recreational activities, schools, music classes and other sports activities. Some are/were continuing activities while others were provided as short-term projects”

Similarly, it has been happening for Greece’s Hestia FC sport for social inclusion program that during the years has been supported by various other activities: “yoga and several not athletic ones (employability workshops, language courses, sewing workshops, photography etc)”. Likewise, “GRE-1”, implemented as a football training program, has now become part of a wider offer of sport activities: “Basketball, parkour, and dance clubs, taking place weekly. Cricket is one of the sports organized sometimes with the participation of the minors and young beneficiaries from Pakistan.” Lastly, regarding two Italian best practices, sport activities have been a way to further develop personalized paths to an inclusion into society, like the case of “ITA-3” where children’s parents have been supported in finding a job. On a similar way, some of the participants to “ITA-2”’s rugby training are also enrolled at Bologna’s University thanks to an agreement between the detention centre and the University; moreover, many other cultural and sportive activities are taking place at the centre.

Thus, these best practices are in some cases the forerunners of a further involvement of the civil society with migrants’ communities, while in other cases they are part of a wider offer of cultural and welfare initiatives.

CONCLUSIONS

Several results emerged from the analysis conducted in previous pages. This is not the place to summarize them, we will try rather to focus on some factors of these best practices which, with the appropriate adaptations, could be replicated in other organizational settings, increasing the inclusiveness and sustainability of sports programs addressed to marginal groups, such as migrants and refugees.

A first element to bear in mind is that although the activities promoted by grassroots sport organizations are usually characterized by informality and a participatory style, it is necessary that in the medium-long term they acquire a certain degree of structuration in order to consolidate, becoming stable and recognized experiences in the social context in which they are developed. It is no coincidence that in the different types of NBP examined in the research (training activities, both for players and coaches, professional and non-professional tournaments/competitions, other practices related to sport), there is common tendency to plan diverse activities in order to give continuity to teamwork and ensure that participants can increase their psychophysical wellbeing and feel more integrated in local communities. At the same time, this effort must be supported by a working group where professionals (coaches, trainers, educators, social workers, etc.) and volunteers can coexist. Even if in most cases these are horizontal (non-hierarchical) groups, the presence of coordinators and managers it is crucial to facilitate cooperation and make sports programs more efficient.

There are two further aspects that cannot be underestimated: fundraising and networking, being interrelated dimensions in organizational life in order to pursue sustainability in the long run. An obvious starting point is that there are no universal models that can guarantee a continuous flow of money to support activities and services developed by grassroots associations. The research shows that NBPs have been often implemented with two different forms of support: through the effort (and resources) provided by private bodies, such as foundations or associations; and by specific funds and calls for programs introduced by public institutions to enlarge marginal groups access to sport; we must add that grassroots investments are more evident in the starting phases, while public and private funding intervene later. In any case financial frailty is a diffused problem in NBPs: discontinuity of human and material resources are a serious issue which arises during the evolution of projects that are in themselves innovative, inclusive and effective. To avoid interruptions in ongoing programs which are vital to recipients, grassroots organizations adopt various tactics to diversify supporters, basing on the assumption that a greater number of partners is a protection to sudden withdrawals of funds. In this perspective, one effect of these precautionary strategies is that the networking capacity of sport grassroots organizations is not infrequently strengthened. Their ability to communicate and interact with public authorities, private actors and social partners within local communities becomes a sort of shield to safeguard activities and services of capital importance, which could abruptly end due to the lack of economic resources. It should be noted that networking is different depending on whether it is deployed in a large city (where partners' heterogeneity can be a potential advantage, and the fragmentation/weakness of relationships a pitfall) or in a small town (where cohesion may be an opportunity while close-knit networks a strong limitation).

Last but not least there it is the question of assessing the impact of what is achieved in these sports programs. Organizations try to monitor the changes that are generated in the lives of the recipients

of their interventions. While not being able to adopt sophisticated systems of self-control (counterfactual surveys, systematic collection of indicators, users' satisfaction surveys, etc.) in the NBPs one can often glimpse the will to critically review projects' results. From this point of view, an interesting option is the collection of success stories of refugees and migrants, not only as a means to document successes obtained and communicate them to external subjects, but as a tool to increase internal awareness of the factors that can promote social inclusion through sport. It is also through these positive case narratives that best practices make progress

A- Synoptic table for project's contents, location, and duration. By country

	Practices by country	Description	Where	When
	Spain			
1	No child without playing football	Regular football training for children with matches during the weekends	Banyoles, Catalonia	Started in 2016, ongoing. Weekly training sessions and matches
2	Barça's Foundation social inclusion programs in Catalonia	Social-sport sessions with the application of the FutbolNet methodology	Many Barcelona's neighbourhoods	Started in 2011, ongoing. Weekly sessions
3	Barris 10 (Neighbours 10)	Umbrella program that includes educational training for coaches and means to access sport for vulnerable children	Banyoles, Catalonia	Started in 2018, ongoing. Weekly sessions
4	Oneteam	Regular multi-sport sessions for young inmates	Juvenile penitentiary centre of Catalonia	Started in 2018, ongoing. Weekly sessions
5	Cruyff Court 6vs6 Banyoles	National football championship for children	Banyoles, Catalonia	Yearly, one-day, tournament that gives access to upper championships
6	Sport for all begins S4ALL	Training of sport coaches and trainers to enhance their ability to address vulnerable groups' specific needs	Badalona and Barcelona (Spain), Toulouse (France) and Bucharest (Romania)	Started in 2018, ended 2019
	Denmark			
7	Playmaker program	Regular football training and once a year tournament	Copenhagen, Esbjerg, Aalborg, Aarhus	Started in 2016, ongoing. Weekly sessions
8	Helsingør – Frivilligcenter	Social gatherings that revolve around informal sport activities and games	Helsingør city, Copenhagen Capital Region	Started in 2015, ongoing. Yearly festivals
9	Street to Football	Social gathering, music and sport activities and annual tournament	Esbjerg	Started in 2003, ended. Weekly sessions with annual tournament
10	SSP	Social gathering, music and sport activities and annual tournament	Fursø municipality, Copenhagen Capital Region	Started in 2018, ongoing. Weekly events
11	AGF – Aarhus – Girls Project	Regular football training, football events, social gathering	Aarhus municipality	Started in 2017, ongoing
12	FC Nordsjælland- Giveback	Regular football training, football events, social gathering	Fursø municipality, Copenhagen Capital Region	Started in 2019, ongoing
	Germany			
13	CABUWAZI Beyond Borders	Free circus training for refugees	Facilities in five Berlin's neighbourhoods: Kreuzberg, Tempelhof, Treptow, Altglienicke and Marzahn	Started in 1992, ongoing. Weekly training sessions

14		“Integration durch Sport” (Integration through Sport)	Offering services to sport associations: advice, financial support for integration measures, training, networking	Federal program in Germany	Started in 2015, ongoing. Weekly and yearly activities
15		RheinFlanke Hope Program	Sport training program with the broader aim of supporting them in their educational/work paths	Various cities in Germany. Main location is Cologne and nearby cities (Bonn, Düsseldorf, Bedburg, Grevenbroich, Meckenheim). Since 2015 they are also present in Berlin	Started in 2006, ongoing
16		Tentaja	Sport facility with free of charges spaces and equipment, and regular training programs in many sports	Berlin	Started in 2017, ongoing. Weekly sessions and events
17		Willkommen im Fußball	Regular and open football and other sports training. Promotion of other social inclusion initiatives. Organization of a national tournament every year	All over Germany, in cities with Bundesliga or Bundesliga football clubs	Started in 2015, ongoing until 2021. Weekly training sessions
		Greece			
18		"Arsis football club" (ARSIS FC)	Professional football training	Thessaloniki	Started in 2018, ongoing. Weekly training sessions and competitions
19		Hestia FC	Professional football training, friendly matches, promotion initiatives, participation in local and national tournaments	Athens’ urban areas	Started in 2019, ongoing
20		MOTG FutbolNET Program	Daily sport program with mixed-gender sessions in various sports	Lesvos island, at Northeast Aegean of Greece. RIC Moria (in the past), Kara Tepe camp, RIC Lesvos and Moria Village	Started in 2016, ongoing
21		Equality in the Society	Regular and open football training	Trikala, a small city in the middle of Greek mainland	Started in 2016, ongoing. Weekly sessions
		Italy			
22		Tam Tam Basket	Regular and open basketball training with participation to national professional league	Castel Volturno, Campania	Started in 2016, ongoing. Weekly training sessions and yearlong league
23		Project “Tornare in campo”, and the team “Giallo Dozza”	Regular rugby training for inmates with participation to national professional league	Bologna, Emilia-Romagna	Weekly training sessions and yearlong league
24		“GIOCA CHI STUDIA” – by the non-professional	Social sport activities with Roma children	Rome, roma communities by the neighbourhoods of Tor di Quinto,	Weekly sessions

		sport association "Ercolini di don Orione"		Prima Porta, Tiburtino, Via Nomentana	
25		Calciosociale	An alternative way of playing football it is proposed, in order to develop not only sports skills of disadvantaged children and adults. A tournament it is organized between participants	Corviale, a suburb of Rome where residents (many of them migrants) live in severe conditions of social exclusion	The tournament started in 2009 and is played every year
26		Fuori Classe Insieme a te	Multidisciplinary sports and entertainment project as a means of social inclusion and a tool for linguistic and cultural integration. The target is made up of young people between 14 and 19, first and second generation foreigners	17 Training Centers in various locations in Veneto (North-Eastern region)	The Project started in 2010 has continued on an annual basis until 2019. After an interruption due to the recent pandemic, it should resume from September 2021
		Slovenia			
27		Cross-generation centre Gorenjska	Social sport activities and games	Municipality of Radovljica, Kranj and Jesenice	Started in 2013, ongoing. Weekly events
28		Roma Football Academy	Professional football training for Roma people	Murska Sobota	Weekly training sessions and yearlong leagues

B- NBPs semi-structured questionnaire

Introduction

The following document will help guide the collection of best practices that have contributed, in your country, to the social inclusion, by means of sport, of migrants and ethnic minorities located in critical areas. The intention behind the effort is twofold. First, it is an opportunity to enhance the impact of these practices at the European level by sharing them among partners. Second, it will be valuable for the upcoming stages of the current project for it provides data for the design of the methodological approach. In order to meaningfully pursue these goals, it is necessary to collect as many details as possible while also allowing for a comparison of different experiences.

Please consider that this form can also be adapted into an interview guide. It is indeed suggested to contact those who have been directly involved in the activity in order to have an easier access to more detailed information. Ideally, this task can be carried out in three ways (and any combination of them):

- ◆ desk data collection (by browsing websites, social media, press releases, and so on)
- ◆ face-to-face or online interview (in this case, there is no need for a transcription of the interviewee's answer, it is sufficient to write in the form the relevant information)
- ◆ by sending the document to the interviewee for him/her to fill it autonomously

As for the selection of cases, it is necessary for the initiative to be about: ethnic minorities' integration into society; sport or physical activities; critical or disadvantaged areas. It is instead optimal but not required to select initiatives in different types of critical areas, engaging different types of beneficiaries, supported by different funding strategies; and with different degrees of stability-institutionalization. It can be a concluded or an ongoing activity. It can be an activity of your organization (max. two), but other organizations' best practices are to be preferred.

Any additional material – photos and videos (the file or the relative link), press releases, documents such as fliers, reports, etc. – is equally valuable and can be sent together with the filled form. Lastly, for most questions, we suggest what the ideal length of the relative answer would be. It is a crude measure of how much information we will need to make meaningful comparisons and to provide a more detailed overview.

Thank you for your collaboration. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at: gianfranco.zucca@acli.it – cristiano.caltabiano@acli.it

General information

What is the name of the good practice?

Who has been involved, either directly or indirectly, in the organization of the activity? Please specify name, type of organization, role (e.g. sponsor, organizer), and any kind of information you consider relevant. Consider the following types of organizations:

Public (local government's agencies, international institutions, and the like):

Private (NGOs, associations, and for-profit organizations):

Where has it taken place and in what kind of areas of the country?

~ six-eight lines; you can describe the recent history of the place, its relations with confining areas or with the rest of the country, or the reasons why it is a 'critical' area

When did it happen and how much did it last? Or, if it is an ongoing activity, when has it begun? Please, also specify whether it is a recurring activity (e.g. a yearly tournament).

~ five lines; you can also add information about its future prospects or past activities in continuity with this best practice

In terms of financial support, how is/was it funded? For instance, we can distinguish between public, private, international, and self or peer financed practices. You can also consider here sponsorships and non-monetary support (sport gear or professional support, and so on). In other terms, how the practice was made possible in material terms.

~ six-seven lines

The best practice in detail

What kind of activity is/was it? A training program, a recurrent event, a series of informal meetings... Please, describe its main characteristics and provide a short description.

~ eight-nine lines

How is/was it articulated? Please describe in detail the most relevant phases of the initiative and what, in practical terms, was done.

~ eight-nine lines

What kind of structure did/does the activity have? Did/does it have a schedule and a plan or was it more informal and spontaneous? Also describe the frequency of its activities (how many hours per month, for example).

~ five lines

Who was/is involved in the activity? Please consider the beneficiaries and briefly describe their characteristics. In general – for example, 'the participants were mainly 20-30 years old, of recent migration and of mixed ethnicity' – and specific terms, by adding for instance their origin, language, socio-economic condition – 'there was a small group of migrants from x, fluent in x European language, mostly with a job...'

~ nine-ten lines

Now consider the staff of the organizations and briefly describe their characteristics, skills, and experience. As above, in general and specific terms - 'the staff was composed by voluntary professionals such as sport coaches, inter-cultural mediators'; 'many coaches had already worked with refugees'; and so on.

~ nine-ten lines

What were/are the main objectives? Please consider both the ideal and general outcomes (e.g. to provide an opportunity for integration) and the practical and specific ones (e.g. to contribute to the development of healthy individual habits).

~ six-seven lines

Is it possible to evaluate whether these goals have been achieved? For instance, are there any stories of participants' improvement of wellbeing and living conditions, or events and other initiatives directly linked to the good practice?

~ eight-nine lines; if it is still ongoing, are there any hints at that?

Were there any relevant issues prior, during, or after the activities were implemented? For instance, conflicts between participants, or tensions between participants and professionals, or disagreements between professionals; external disturbances from non-participants; and so on.

~ six-seven lines; if so, you can also add how they were solved

The context of the best practice

Consider the socio-economic context of the area where the activity has taken place. If it is possible to determine, what were the conditions before the beginning of the activity? Please, provide an overview (consider the critical aspects, such as the absence of infrastructures, overpopulation...)

~ five-six lines

Have initiatives similar to the good practice taken place in the same area(s)? If so, please describe them. You can also include activities not related to sport; it will be sufficient that they ethnic minorities and migrants in critical areas have been involved (they can be cultural, work-related, etc... activities).

~ five-six lines

Consider now the social context during and after the activity took place. Were there some significant changes in relation to what was before? If so, please describe them.

~ six-seven lines; if it is still ongoing, are there any hints to these changes?

~~~~~

*Here you can add any information that has not been addressed in a specific question and that you consider relevant.*

