



**CROSSSPORT**

Crossing the Boundaries through Sport

newsletter **01**



## INCLUSION OF REFUGEES THROUGH SPORT

The EU is currently facing the biggest immigration and refugee crisis in its history - the flow of refugees to European countries has surged dramatically after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Amidst this crisis, a number of barriers for the integration of refugees in hosting communities have emerged in parallel with the need to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion of refugees within their new environments. Within this context, it is widely recognized that sport is a powerful and effective instrument for uniting people, crossing boundaries and developing tolerance, respect and mutual understanding, all foundational values for the inclusion and integration of refugees in host communities.



*To unleash the full potential of sport, the development of innovative mechanisms and tools are essential to enabling key stakeholders - sport-related organisations and social organisations engaged in inclusion and integration of refugees - to join forces to support the integration process, while raising the awareness about the vulnerability of refugees along their integration process into the hosting communities.*

To help tackle this issue, Crossing the Boundaries through Sport (CrosSport) was set up as a EU preparatory action, trans-European partnership project formed as a consortium of partners: International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) Europe (Portugal), International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC) (Greece), Fundación Sevilla FC (Spain), and Fondazione Lazio 1900 (Italy).

CrosSport contributes to foster inclusion and integration of youth refugees through sport. This is possible through a set of interrelated measures: establishing a national and European collaborative mechanism and network of key "like-minded" players in the sport-for-inclusion ecosystem; gathering good practices, producing a methodology handbook and new educational tools aimed at empowering such committed stakeholders; and increasing the awareness of all parties attributing refugees a central stage in project activities.



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

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

# PROJECT STATUS AND MILESTONES

Recognising the need to strengthen collaboration within key stakeholders groups, CrosSport partners have played a central role in establishing a virtuous cooperative mechanism in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece.

The identification and association of organizations was the first step for the establishment of National Focus Groups. The partners adopted a methodology based on two pillars:

01

**Give refugees a voice** to allow the participation and involvement of refugees and their representative organisations in project activities.

02

**Engage “like-minded” organisations** through a gradual process leading to partnerships.

National Focus Groups of experts were set up and achieved the objective to collect a set of good practices and experiences about successful initiatives, projects or strategies at local and national level (but also European and international level, when relevant) in the integration and inclusion of refugees through sport in reception communities, with a focus on youth.

## Collection of Good Practices

### National Focus Groups of Experts



#### Portugal

- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
- Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ – National Plan on Sport Ethics)
- High Commission for Migration (ACM)
- Sport Confederation of Portugal (CDP)
- Social Innovation in Sport
- National Olympic Committee of Portugal (COP)
- University of Porto's Observatory Sport, Education and Communities
- Forum Refugio
- Athletes representative of the refugee community.



#### Spain

- CEPAIM
- CEAR
- Fundación Sevilla Fc
- Club de Remo Sevilla
- Cd Dragones De Lavapiés
- Fundación LaLiga
- Federación Navarra de Beisbol
- Special Olympics
- ACNUR España
- CD Montevil
- Asociación Alacrán 1997
- Comité Olímpico Español (COE)
- Comité Olímpico Internacional (COI)
- Cruz Roja
- Futbol Mas España
- Proemaid
- Mundialito Inmigración (Sfc)



#### Italy

- Every child is my child
- Roma calcio amputati
- Donne for peace
- Lazio Basket
- Lazio Calcio a 8
- Lazio American Football
- Riding for Rainbow (Afrilanthropy association)



#### Greece

- ARSIS NGO
- Girl Power Academy Greece
- Athens Comic Library
- AEK FC
- Organisation Earth
- ActionAid Hellas
- (IOTC) HESTIA FC as it has been identified as best practice from UEFA and UNHCR

# HIGHLIGHTS ON PARTNERS' ACTIVITIES

CrosSport aims at creating a collaborative network of local authorities, sport and social development organisations to increase community participation of youth refugees through the attractiveness of sport activities. Since its outset, the project intended to give refugees a voice and the launch event, which was hosted by the National Olympic Committee of Portugal during the **European Week of Sport** (23rd to 30th September 2022), presented an opportunity to move a first step in this direction as it consisted in a refugees-led sharing talk with the refugee's communities, identified beforehand by the national partners, taking the central stage.



**Farid Walizadeh (Portugal)**

*I was inspired by a refugee athlete. I thought I I didn't have that talent...but talent is created by passion, and I got this passion thanks to this inspiring person who was an athlete and a refugee himself. He had gone through similar experiences and trauma, and this was very important for me.*



**Diya Talal Al Bdeivi (Italy)**

*To arrive to the football pitch, one of the greatest obstacles for me was to take a public transport: organisations working with people with disabilities should carefully look at these circumstances when designing their interventions.*



**Diana Razniuk (Spain)**

*I can't imagine my life without sport. Sport allowed me to integrate, to have a place where people, especially woman, can connect with other women, to make friends, and finally to develop ourselves.*



**Zeinad Shadabshoar (Greece)**

*There are many women who are coming with their families; many of them don't receive any child care support, and this is a great contribution that any sport organization could make to assist us.*

This participatory approach allowed refugees to co-produce knowledge and take an active stance vis a vis their status, problems and aspirations in sport as an instrument for social inclusion. Also, it promoted a positive image of inclusion and counter negative narratives concerning refugees.

The following stories from the CrosSport partners in Greece and Spain are illustrative of the second methodological pillar related to the **engagement of "like-minded" organizations** in the project.

➔ In **Greece**, a **National Focus Group of Expert** was carried out to better understand the role of sport in integrating refugees into host communities, as well as to identify some good practices that have proven results and impact. The Greek focus group was successful with the participation of various organisations, such as ActionAid Hellas, Arsis, Organisation Earth, Athens Comics Library, Girl Power Academy Greece, all stakeholders



who work directly on the field with refugees that arrive in Greece. The Focus Group's work focused on the perceived benefits and challenges of using sport as a valuable tool for integration, as well as on the good practices for facilitating successful integration in and through sport, particularly on their impact and the most important lessons learned through the initiatives. Additionally, the participation of two refugees that had previously been integrated through sport was of great significance. Shaadi and Askhan, as direct beneficiaries of such social inclusion initiatives, were able to share their stories of different backgrounds and discuss with the other participants the importance of sport in their lives and the sense of belonging it brought during the difficult times they both faced when they initially arrived in Greece.

➔ In **Spain**, Sevilla FC Centennial Foundation played a key role in the process of integration of refugees in the local community: firstly, it created a male and a female team of young refugees to play in the Mundialito de la Inmigración in 2023 tournament; Sevilla Foundation took a step further to give visibility and raise awareness of this group in our community and generated a regular space on the club's radio, where invited social entities that work with refugees in Seville were able to discuss and better understand the needs and situations of the refugees.

In addition to this, Sevilla Foundation was able to detect refugees interested in physical activity and sport, and put them in contact with local sports clubs open to receive them: in doing so, it facilitated the processes by helping overcome the barriers to the initiation of sports practice, such as the payment of a monthly fee or federal license, or the acquisition of specific material for their practice. This was the case of Idrissa Simbone, a 21-year-old young man from Burkina Faso, resident in Seville, who trains 5 days a week at the San Pablo Weightlifting Club, together with an Olympic athlete of the discipline.

On the other hand, given our main activity, we have invited these groups to enjoy the first division matches in which the club participates, to bring the values of sport to everyone, and to promote the importance of belonging to the city.

