



# More than a Game

## Football Including REfugees

Conference Minutes  
Thursday 26 September 2019,  
Glasgow.

These minutes reflect the discussions and exchanges that took place in the framework of the **More than a game- Football Including REFugees** conference, held on September 26, 2019 at Hampden Park, Glasgow. This document hereby offers a collective review of the event, which was co-organised by the Scottish FA and the FIRE project that is funded under the Sport Chapter of the **Erasmus+ Programme**.

## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The **FIRE project (Football Including REFugees)** was launched in January 2019 thanks to the support of the European Commission's *Erasmus+ Programme* and will unfold over 24 months. Thanks to a strong consortium of project partners from across the continent, including [ESSCA School of Management](#), [Fare Network](#), [LaLiga Foundation](#), [Fundacja Dla Wolnosci](#), and the [Royal Belgian](#), [Scottish](#) and [Romanian](#) Football Associations; [Sport & Citizenship Think tank](#) focuses on utilising football as a tool of local social inclusion for refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers. **FIRE's** main objective is to support grassroots football organisations and foster cross-sector partnerships between all involved sectors by creating a network that will mutually enrich participants. The project's main objectives are as follow:

- 1- SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL ORGANISATION, CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING RELATED TO PROMOTING INCLUSION THROUGH FOOTBALL AND SPORT

The first objective will essentially rely on **networking and the mutual enrichment of participants**. The project consortium is composed of very diverse partners that are united around the same motivation. Their engagement and knowledge in sport, and football, from the local to the international levels, provides broad expertise in 'sport for development' and 'migrant-related' issues. This translates into:

- **The publication of an *Inventory*** of current resources, strategies and stakeholders
- The preparation and delivery of **4 National Conferences** to discuss the publication and gather insight from participants- to be held in [Scotland](#), Belgium, Romania and Spain

- 2- FOSTERING GRASSROOTS 'LOCAL ACTIVATION' PILOTS, BASED ON EMPLOYING FOOTBALL AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENT

**'Piloting local interventions'** is the project's second objective and acts as a direct follow-up to the previous one. It is based on employing football as a tool for social inclusion and development at a grassroots level upon FARE network's 'Football People action weeks', 10-24 October 2019. This will translate into:

- A **call for proposals and consequent selection** of [4 'Local Pilot Interventions'](#)
- **The publication of a 'Methodological Approach Outline'** that will compile the results, lessons learnt and conclusions from the pilots

- 3- DEVELOPING, SHARING AND EXCHANGING GOOD PRACTICES OF FOOTBALL PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION

The third objective refers to creation of freely accessible training tool for local football clubs and organisations, **the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course)**. The MOOC aims to deliver educational benefits that will outlive the project's lifespan by providing support and guidance to its users. The tool will encompass suggestions, input of various kinds, success factors, risk mitigation and other useful

information for organisations willing to work with refugees and migrants but lacking the experience and that are hence uncertain as to “where to start”.

- 4- RAISING AWARENESS AROUND SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, VOLUNTEERING AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AS TOOLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The last objective concerns the project’s dissemination activities. In addition to all communication tasks throughout the project duration, the fourth objective will further communication of the project outcomes by:

- Publication of a **special edition of *Sport and Citizenship’s scientific journal***
- Delivering a **Final Conference in Brussels** for relevant stakeholders and decision-makers

**The FIRE project’s next event will be held on **December 12, 2019 in Bucharest (Romania)**- stay tuned for further information:**



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**[www.FootballWithRefugees.eu](http://www.FootballWithRefugees.eu)**

## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

### 9.30 Registration and networking

### 10.15 Welcome

*Ian Maxwell, Chief Executive- Scottish FA*

### 10.20 Introduction to the FIRE project

*Maxime Leblanc & Kiera Wason-Milne, Sport and Citizenship Think Tank*

### 10.30 FIRE Project: The Inventory

*Albrecht Sonntag, ESSCA University*

### 11.00 Coffee Break

### 11.10 Q&A Panel

*Abdul Bostani, Chairman- Glasgow Afghan United FC*

*David McArdle, Diversity and Inclusion Manager- Scottish FA*

*Lorna Gledhill, Policy Officer- Scottish Refugee Council*

*Moderator: Piara Power, Executive Director- Fare Network*

### 11.50 Icebreaker and Intro to Person-Club-Community Workshops

*Andrew Gould, Head of Football Development- Scottish FA*

### 12.00 Workshop Theme 1: Person

*Ahlam Soudi, Freedom From Torture.*

### 1.00 Lunch and Network

### 2.00 Workshop Theme 2: Club

*Paul McNeil & Danny Bisland - Scottish FA*

### 3.00 Workshop Theme 3: Community

*Naomi Westland, Amnesty International*

### 4.00 Coffee Break

### 4.15 Keynote

*Councillor Graham Campbell, Glasgow City Council*

### 4.30 Closing Words

*Joe FitzPatrick, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing*



## MINUTES

The interactive conference was attended by over 80 stakeholders, from the sport sector, civil society, different levels of government and government-related organisations, which successfully reflects the diversity of involved actors when it comes to the social inclusion of refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers. Participants were invited to endorse an active role at the event, notably through the 3 topical workshop sessions that each addressed a specific aspect of using football for social inclusion of the target group. The inputs gathered throughout the day are highly valued by the FIRE project since they enable for shared expertise and know-how, external constructive criticism, and for brainstorming ideas.

### The FIRE project

The FIRE project, objectives and its partners were presented (see above) along with the context and motivations behind it.

Since 2015 the political and media coverage of increased migratory influxes across Europe has been extensive- to say the least. The welcome and inclusion of such newcomers, together with the concurring challenges that may arise, has in comparison been rather neglected. We believe sport, and football in particular, can be a gamechanger in response to such inclusion challenges.

FIRE seeks to contribute to fostering intercultural openness in local football clubs and bodies, across Europe, and further seeks to empower, enable and support local football organisations to work with refugees and asylum-seekers through sport, and football.

This interactive event was presented as an open platform for participants to share their experiences, know-how, setbacks and achievements on the topic, in such a way that the gathered information will help steer the creation of the FIRE MOOC.

### FIRE: The Inventory

Professor Albrecht Sonntag (ESSCA School of Management) presented *The Inventory*, a document produced for the project which acts as a 'State-of-the-Art' in assessing what has been done since 2015 in Europe when it comes to football and refugees, but also what remains to be addressed. By mapping quality reports, brochures, toolkits and research, *The Inventory* has identified the main challenges, best practices and major needs in the field today. This work has provided a foundation for the FIRE conferences to lean on and to further offer a roadmap when designing the MOOC.

*The Inventory* thus offers a short yet concise overview of definitions and terminology, of typologies of practices, and a top-ten list of needs assessment expressed by grassroots volunteers. The Inventory is available for consultation on our website: [www.footballwithrefugees.eu](http://www.footballwithrefugees.eu) and in PDF version, attached to this email.

### Q&A Panel

Moderated by Piara Powar (Executive Director, Fare network), the panel included Abdul Bostani (Chairman of [Glasgow Afghan United FC](#)), David McArdle ([Diversity and Inclusion Manager of the Scottish FA](#)), and Lorna Gledhill (Policy Officer at the [Scottish Refugee Council](#)). Together, the panel offered diverse points of view on how much football can do to help to socially include refugees and migrants, while also raising the different barriers faced by each organisation.

Some words from David McArdle, expert on football and inclusion, particularly in regard to disabilities:

- The Scottish FA works towards making Scottish football representative of all social groups in the population, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- The SFA seeks to empower grassroots clubs and communities to realise what they can accomplish. It has adopted an integrated approach with its 450 quality clubs across the regions.
- The SFA helps them acquire the tools and knowledge to create their own local networks. Since the SFA doesn't have its own feet on the ground for welcoming initiatives, they make sure those that are equipped and ready to do so.

- For example, the FA gives their grassroots coaches/trainers the confidence and training to allow them be confident and see how easy it can be to open the club doors to the target group (language barriers; places of worship; empathy and compassion towards newcomers).
- SFA works with other organisations (Jimmy Johnstone Academy, Freedom from Torture) to stay in tune with local needs and adapt if necessary what they can offer in different contexts.
- While it is always difficult to measure the impact of welcoming initiatives, SFA keeps track of numbers (marginalised individuals into teams and clubs), and continues to be loud about an open and welcoming game to all.

Some words from Lorna Gledhill from the Scottish Refugee Council, who also plays for [United Glasgow FC](#), one of best known local clubs for refugee inclusion

- Essential to think of the kind of lifestyle asylum-seekers are leading against a difficult system (no possibility to work, dependance on asylum support, imposed accomodation location) which offers a general sense of hostility and isolation.
- [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#) has set a more welcoming environment that attempts to cater to newcomers and provide them with a feeling of belonging to Scotland. This also happens through everyday acts of kindness and generosity and all levels.
- Approximately 5 000 asylum-seekers in temporary accomodation in Scotland, mostly in Glasgow, which is the highest number of the entire UK.
- Scottish Grassroots clubs are very active in terms of programmes and activities, although there is some scope for improvement for reaching out to girls and women. Also room for the 'New Scots Strategy' to improve its burreaucracy.

Some words from Abdul Bostani, chairman of Afghan United, a trained accountant, and currently completing a Masters in management- perfect example of working with refugees not for them

- From personal experience, Abdul knows what an incredible tool of social inclusion and integration football can be and consequently helps fights hate crime and discrimination.
  - Started playing in 2004 with a very small group, which has continuously grown in level and numbers, which enabled the group to interact both on the football pitch and outside of it.
  - Afghan United today counts over 50 nationalities making for very mixed teams, with most participants coming from ethnic minorities.
  - Afghan United strives to always give the chance to play and prove themselves to young people and groups that have been cast aside.
- To make the most of the situation 'Newcomers should be given the opportunity to reach their full potentiel and to flourish'. The more the group grew and connected, the better the club became and started to bring in other activities (celebrate Burns Night, women's group, cultural events, language classes)
- To further develop such work, the most important question to ask ourselves is 'Why are people not showing up to try and participate?'. Putting oneself in the shoes of the target group is the best way to make it appealing, accesible and welcoming to them.

## Group reports and findings

Workshop Theme 1: Person. Facilitated by Ahlam Souidi (Freedom from Torture)

**Freedom from Torture** works to protect and heal torture survivors in the UK, and notably includes the ‘Healing Neighbourhoods Project’ that focuses on helping torture survivors get rehabilitated and integrated into their new communities. The organisation’s development work relies on 4 founding pillars: active and democratic participation, Human Rights-based approach, trauma-focused clinical services and psychological support. Throughout their inclusion activities sport and physical activity have proven to be just as beneficial as arts and culture, education and training, democratic engagement and participation and offsite recreational and therapeutic activities.

Freedom from Torture has listed some of the most recurring barriers for torture survivors including: destitution, language, mental health, childcare, education, skills management, discrimination and lack of opportunity on the job market, and racism.

Participants were invited to reflect on ‘**How can we do more to engage with refugees and asylum-seekers into sport?**’ Group feedback organised per table:

- Get refugees to start attending games as fans > example of former project at Dundee United
  - Emotional campaigning: beginning of a policy from SFA to actively encourage clubs to support fans attending games
  - How to engage ‘invisible’ people in society, that are not part of any groups or services?
  - Affordability is a paramount issue- Asylum-seekers tend to live on very little money, football can be very expensive. This includes location of programmes, need to host initiatives close/ or affordable by transport for the group to travel to.
  - How attractive is the opportunity? Regardless of one’s asylum status, nobody likes to play football in bad/ rundown facilities. Needs to be something beyond ‘inclusion’, make it appealing by including something more to the opportunity.
  - Who reaches out to marginalised communities? Also important, people should feel valued; ‘host society’ has a big role to play, to support, to integrate!
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- Finance = barrier!
  - Engaging:
    - Connecting contacts
    - More involved with decision-making
    - Raise awareness
    - Mentors from past refugees
- 
- Knowledge of asylum-seekers locations
  - Knowledge of other organisation/ stakeholders involved with the target group
  - Build better partnerships and networks
  - Provide a wider range of services with football
  - Better use of language to engage
  - Think of the various ways in which one can be part of football, aside from playing
  - Better informed of social values/ norms
  -
-

- Work with partners > NHS / Education etc; refugee centres > create opportunities within the community (social events))
  - Offer free access (facilities / equipment)
  - Try & influence policy to allow for more participation at competitive levels
  - Work with ambassadors who have similar experiences to support professionals and clubs
  - Education needed to build confidence of both professionals & clubs
    - Link MOOC & actify (sharing best practices)
  - Interest in sports other than football > offer more options
  - UEFA Refugee Grant Scheme > knowledge of available resources
  - Work with youth forums for engagement
  - Form a refugee forum to inform policy/ projects/ engagement > integration into decision making
- 
- Events / sign posting
  - Communication & networking
  - New sports coordination
  - Not just football
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- Clubs need to know who is living in their communities
  - Better promotion of opportunities on/off pitch- outreach directly to communities via organisation that deliver services/ work with them
  - Language is NOT a barrier- add isolated/ key words in varieties of languages spoken in diverse communities
  - Financial or in kind contribution
  - Existing community connections- organisations working in local areas
    - Third sector partners need to communicate intra-sector and externally
  - Larger organisations/ clubs need to have dedicated outreach role
  - More resources into diversity and inclusion within clubs and national FAs
    - This line of work can be intensive, although with a big impact > human resources
  - Sustainable models of funding for this work > working from grant to grant isn't sustainable
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- Partnerships / Presence in community / Share knowledge
  - Linking clubs & communities
  - Support to make first steps
  - Asking community what they want
  - Funding
  - Profiling good practices, inspiring others to connect
  - Communication to:
    - Right people
    - Right organisations
  - Shared practice > don't work in isolation!
- 
- Use education to foster acceptance
  - Casual opportunities that are free
  - Understand the needs of the groups:
    - Language barriers
    - Cultural barriers



- Financial barriers
- ‘Starter/ welcome pack’ for new arrivals with opportunities to get involved in sport/ football
- Knowledge of specific areas where there is a large number of refugees/ asylum-seekers – engaging with local councils
- Hope for youth through inclusion!

### Workshop Theme 2: Club. Facilitated by Paul McNeill & Danny Bisland (Scottish FA)

Paul McNeill shared his own life story to emphasise the importance of local football clubs and his passion to continue to help develop them. Local football clubs can act as safe spaces for members, players and volunteers, they are the heartbeat of the community, and this is why the Scottish FA is committed to helping clubs be as inclusive as possible. With over 2,500 clubs, the Scottish FA strives to help develop across the country:

- Clubs for communities,
- Club membership,
- Club educate,
- And Club insight.

Paul Kinnaird was invited to share the exceptional work done in his club, [St Peters Football Club](#), who managed to integrate young refugees in their daily activities and trainings without prior experience or know-how. Participants learned about the barriers encountered along the way, and how they were overcome- such as language and communication, transport, financial fees, preparing the individuals for the next stages of football, and separating groups in order to ensure better integration.

Finally, Danny Bisland presented how the Scottish FA is determining the value of football in Scotland when it is so popular. The FA recently became one of the first to participate in UEFA’s landmark study aiming to measure the benefits of football participation nationwide. UEFA provided the FA with [the Strategic Return on Investment \(SROI\) Model](#) that enables national FAs to assess tangibly how football improves lives, and how it can create an even bigger impact.

### Workshop Theme 3: Community. Facilitated by Naomi Westland & Pauline Kelly (Amnesty International)

Amnesty International UK started [the ‘Football Welcomes’ project](#) in 2017 with 30 clubs participating, growing to 60 the following year and 170 this year. Naomi Westland explained how the initiative includes a weekend of activities in participating football clubs every April, and that celebrates the contribution of refugees to local clubs while also broadcasts a warm welcome message to new refugees and asylum-seekers.

Paul Kelly showed how the project has been expanded into Scotland for the first time in 2019, where they over 30 clubs participating with extremely diverse profiles.

Their work has emphasised the importance of creating strong and broad community alliances, further fostering good community relationships. While compromise is key, community alliances allow for a more efficient, informed and performant welcome of newcomers.

Overall, challenges and lessons learnt from their experiences include:

- Engaging women and girls from a refugee background
- Engaging women’s teams
- Rise of the far right, and increase in xenophobia and racism in football
- Meeting the needs of people with disabilities
- Funding.

Participants were invited to reflect on **‘What role can you do to help create more welcoming communities? How do you go about setting up a ‘community alliance’? How can use you make sure your programme is inclusive?’**

- Northern Ireland Hubs > forum (lead by IFA)
  - Belgium > Pro Clubs working with grassroots
  - Scotland > WLYF example // Foundation > Northern Ireland
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- National & local authorities acting as a connector between grassroots clubs & community alliance
  - National map of organisations that can wok in partnership with working with refugees
  - Be open to all proposals
  - Remove as many barriers as possible- financial!
- 
- 1<sup>st</sup> step > Consult with club
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> step > engage community partner as relevant
- 
- 1<sup>st</sup> step > National call for clubs and community partners
    - Set up initial meetings and agree on joint actions, roles, timeline > clear focus and expectations

Barriers	Solutions
- Language	- Lingua franca & home lgge
- Funding	- Dedicated funds
- Mobility	- Mini bus?
- Culture	- Intercultural competence
- Racism	- Sanctions
- Xenophobia	- Education
- Sustainability	- Strategy
- Segretation boys/girls	- Gender balance policy
- Child protection	- Legislation
- Lack of girl participation:	- Facilities (changing rooms/ toilets)
	- Female coaches/ trainers
	- Kits
	- Marketing
	- Dedicated sponsorship
- Clubs not welcoming:	- Need for change!

### 3/Creating community alliances:

- Civil society groups
- Trade unions
- NGOs
- Schools!
- Clubs

## Keynote and Closing words

We would like to thank Graham Campbell (Glasgow City Council) who offered a wonderful keynote speech, before MSP Joe FitzPatrick, Minister for Public Health Sport and Wellbeing, who we also warmly welcome for his presence, shared his pride for Scotland and its FA to be part networks like the FIRE project.

As first ever African-Caribbean person to be elected in Glasgow, Councillor Campbell shared how and why he integrated 'Back History Month' in Scotland in 2001, his involvement in the '[Flag up Scotland and Jamaica](#)' project, and in the [It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow and Slavery](#) book. Finally, Councillor Campbell brought participants to reflect about how little is commonly known about Scotland's football history given the narrative has written out that the game has always been integrated, with the likes of Andrew Watson who was the first Black footballer in the English and Scottish leagues, FAs and the first Black international player.

## CONTACTS

FIRE project: [Kiera WASON-MILNE](#), Sport & Citizenship Think tank

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