



# More than a Game, Football Including REfugees

Conference Minutes  
Thursday 12 December 2019, Bucharest.

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 December 12, 2019 at the Impact Hub, Bucharest. This document hereby offers a collective review of the event, which was co-organised by the Romanian Football Federation and the FIRE project, which 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 Report** that will compile the results, lessons learnt and conclusions from the pilots interventions

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 the 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

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## CONTACT

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

**The FIRE project's next event will be held in April 2020 in Brussels (Belgium)- stay tuned for more information!**

**#Foot4All**



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

## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

### 9.00 Registration and networking

### 9.30 Welcome

**Mihai Stoichita** *Technical Director, Romanian Football Federation*

### 9.50 Introduction to the FIRE project

**Kiera Wason-Milne**, *FIRE Project Manager, Sport and Citizenship Think Tank*

### 10.00 FIRE Project: The Inventory

**Pr. Albrecht Sonntag**, *ESSCA University*

### 10.30 Learning from good practices

**Jorge Bolaños** *President & Dolores Galindo* *Communications, Dragones de Lavapiés (Spain)*

### 11.00 Coffee break

### 11.15 Q&A Panel Discussion

**Răzvan Samoilă** *Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants (ARCA)*

**Kirsten Theuns** *Head of Eastern Europe delegation, Terre des Hommes*

**Thomas Farines** *Terre des Hommes Hellas*

**Diana Pirciu** *Project Manager, Romanian Football Federation*

Moderator: **Florin SARI** *Romanian Football Federation*

### 12.15 Questions from the audience

### 14.30 Wrap up and conclusion

**Kiera Wason-Milne**, *FIRE Project Manager, Sport and Citizenship Think Tank*

### 13.00 Lunch and Network

### 14.30 End of conference and departure of participants

## MINUTES

The conference was attended by 40 stakeholders, from the sport sector, civil society 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.

The event has been made so that stakeholders attending could learn from proven good practices.

Mihai Stoichita, technical director of the [Romanian Football Federation](#) (RFF), welcomed participants and renewed the Federation's commitment to foster social inclusion through football.

In 2016, the Romanian Football Federation became the first sport entity to implement an anti-discrimination strategy. Various programmes are partnered with NGOs and include football for people with disabilities, for the visually impaired, and for disadvantaged children.

Nonetheless, the FIRE project represents the first opportunity the Federation has had to work on the social inclusion of refugees and migrants through football. FIRE activities further enabled the Federation to collaborate with [ARCA](#) (Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants) and Fare during the [#FootballPeople](#) weeks, as one of the 4 selected pilot interventions across Europe. The event's success has inspired the Federation to reproduce this kind of collaboration in the future.

### 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. The FIRE consortium believes 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 event served to raise awareness about the topic and about what good and replicable measures exist elsewhere, while in parallel the event was also a valuable networking opportunity for present and future local stakeholders to network.

### 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).



## Learning from good practices

[Dragones de Lavapiés](#)' President Jorge Bolaños and its Head of Communication, Dolores Galindo, presented the social cohesion work they carry out in their neighbourhood in Madrid that includes refugees and migrants, among many others.

They offer regular football activities in one of the city's most diverse neighbourhoods where participants account for over 40 different nationalities. The organisation's philosophy approaches diversity as a wealth and further strives to foster a '**super diversity**' mindset throughout the community and make it an element of celebration. Dragones' equally strives to provide participants with a right to access sport, an unconditional aspect of their organisation.

Mr Bolaños and Ms Galindo further highlighted the importance of storytelling to gain external attention and interest, as it enabled Dragones to transform an abandoned area of their neighbourhood into a safe and attractive football pitch. Their narrative attracted the attention of journalists, who further captured political interest and support to refurbish the area. Dragones continued spreading its narrative through a Fare grant that allowed them to create a photo exhibition. When they received negative attention for their openly inclusive narrative and activities, Dragones shone a different light on their mission via the Sustainable Development Goals in order to steer away from the negativity.

As a pilot intervention of the FIRE project, Dragones de Lavapiés delivered a multi-day event in their neighbourhood called the MNA Festival which included games and workshops for the younger participants to discover team spirit and cultural diversity, a visit to the National Museum of Anthropology where the trophy was produced by the 3D printer following the children's choice, a football tournament gathering over 180 participants from a variety of different groups, an [Urban Festival](#) with inclusive sport, graffiti and a concert by Afrojuice, and finally a closing event with special visitors from war-torn regions who symbolically planted an Olive tree. [More information.](#)

## Q&A Panel

Moderated by Florin Sari (CSR and Good Governance Manager, RFF) the panel included Răzvan Samoilă (President, [ARCA](#)), Kirsten Theuns, (Head of Eastern Europe delegation, [Terre des Hommes](#)), Thomas Farines ([Terre des Hommes Hellas](#)) and Diana Pirciu (Project manager, RFF). Together, the panel shared their experiences on sport and football's ability to foster the social integration of migrants and refugees, the methodologies utilised on the ground and how they can be rendered more efficient.

Some words from Răzvan Samoilă offered an overview and some feedback about the pilot interventions they organised recently through FIRE:

- As pilot intervention of the FIRE project, ARCA organised the 'IncludingAll Championship' in Bucharest where teams of both locals and migrants participated and were awarded prizes and goodies at the end.
- While the event was a success, its organisation was more challenging than initially envisaged
- ARCA needed the RFF's organisational support to make it work on the sport side of the event
- This positive collaboration has fostered a mutual interest to continue in the future.
- The championship's video is [available here](#).

Diana Pirciu, who shoulders Florin Sari in the implementation of the [RFF's](#) CSR policies, offered insight into the Federation's fast growing commitment to encourage integration through football. From her experience of working with grassroots initiatives, like in the case of ARCA's pilot intervention or through the initiatives for blind people, Ms Pirciu reminded participants of the importance of asking for help or admitting one does not have the required know-how when collaborating over such initiatives in order to keep a healthy and fruitful collaboration.

Kirsten Theuns, Head of Eastern Europe delegation at Terre des Hommes (TdH), shed light on her organisation's role in this field and the principles they follow:

- In partnership with the [International Olympic Committee](#) and [UNHCR](#), TdH developed a detailed [methodology 'Sport for Protection Toolkit'](#) which focuses on sport activities for young people in forced displacement settings
- TdH has a consequent track record of training people, which in turn has proven to help foster friendships and integration at large
- Romania remains a special case where more departures from the country are registered than arrivals each year
- When asked whether such initiatives should preferably be started in a bottom-up or top-down fashion, Ms Theuns explained TdH does not seek to replace local organisations or their work- TdH offers them support and methodology. In exchange, grassroots organisations assist TdH by acting as contact mediators that enable them to reach out to the target groups.

Thomas Farines, Terre des Hommes Hellas, shared information about the project he is currently leading in Thessaloniki:

- [Greece's migration situation](#) is very different to Romania's with over 100 000 refugees in the country and approximately 20 000 people currently in Thessaloniki
- They spent the first year building a reliable [methodology](#) with the UNHCR and the IOC to train the population. It has two main levels :
  - **Level 1: Protection and safeguarding of young displaced people**
  - **Level 2: Learning how to design one's own project**

An essential aspect is including the local population in such projects, in order to build resilience in the community by transmitting them valuable skills
- Between Level 1 and 2 of training, they faced some drop outs given that each level involves a full week of training and not everyone can afford to miss 2 weeks of work. TdH is currently tailoring the training to counter this phenomenon, offering longer periods of time between the two training levels while also providing continuous practice to participants
- Mr Farines insisted on the importance of reaching out and asking questions so as to create links with and between different social groups
- For Mr Farines, two lessons learnt through his work with refugees in Thessaloniki:
  - Asking questions is essential in order to get acquainted with the different groups, assess their needs and ways of functioning, which all contribute to making a project successful;
  - And failure is part of the process and should be understood and accepted as lessons learnt.



# FIRE

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Co-funded by the  
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