



More than a Game

Football Including REfugees

Webinar Minutes
Thursday 18 February 2021

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 February 18, 2021 in an online format. This document hereby offers a collective review of the event, which was co-organised by LaLiga Foundation and Sport and Citizenship, and the FIRE project (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 until June 2021. 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, the project 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 essentially relies 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 delivery of **4 National Conferences** to discuss the publication and gather insight from participants - 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 translated into:

- A **call for proposals and consequent selection** of 4 'Local Pilot Interventions'
- The publication of a 'Methodological Approach Outline' compiling 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 the creation of a freely accessible training tool for local football clubs and organisations, **the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course)**. The MOOC aims at deliver educational benefits that will outlive the project's lifespan by providing support and guidance to its users. The tool encompasses suggestions, inputs 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 furthers 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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PROGRAMME

11.30 Welcome

Adriana ORBEA, *International Projects, LaLiga FOUNDATION*

11.45 Introduction to the FIRE project

Rodolphe DOITE, *FIRE Project Manager, Sport and Citizenship Think Tank*

12.00 Experience panels

LaLiga | Za'atari Social Project – LaLiga FOUNDATION refugee project

Izzat JANDALI, *Social Coach, LaLiga FOUNDATION*

Football & CEAR (Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid)

Paco JIMENEZ, *Reception Center Director, CEAR Valencia*

Diego MONTALBO, *Inclusion Technician, CEAR Alicante*

Sara FERRAGUD, *Social Technician, CEAR Valencia*

Football with Refugees Barça Foundation

Lucy MILLS, *Program Manager, Barça Foundation*

13.30 Wrap up with lessons of the day

Pr. Albrecht SONNTAG, *ESSCA School of Management*

MINUTES

By organising this event, [LaLiga Foundation](#), **FIRE**, and [Sport and Citizenship](#) sought to gather a variety of stakeholders to share best practices and testimonials of local social inclusion through football.

The FIRE conference gathered around 70 participants, from diverse sectors and backgrounds, including – but not limited to - sport federations, civil society organisations, public institutions, or private sector representatives. The conference was divided into 3 main parts. It started with some introductory words from partners, followed by the Panels brought forward some unique experience on how football can be a real added value in the inclusion of refugees in and outside Europe. Finally, after the Q&A session the “Lessons of the day” wrapped up and gave interesting insights on the role of sport and in particular football, as a vector for social inclusion of refugees in Europe.

Introductory words

Adriana Orbea introduced the webinar by describing LaLiga Foundation, co-organizer of the event and partner in the FIRE project. Created in 1993, as a private, non-profit cultural entity, LaLiga Foundation have developed numerous project and activities of very diverse nature. LaLiga Foundation mission is to channel LaLiga’s social action and promote the social responsibility strategies of clubs and foundations, fostering cooperation between them. It aims at multiplying the power of social transformation that football has, in order to achieve a more inclusive an equal society.

Several projects and programs are developed, in Spain but also at an international level:

- Futur fans – promote the positive values of football among children in Spain, so they can grow up to become respectful fans. So far, more than 10 000 children were involved.
- LaLiga Genuine Santander – first professional league of football for people with intellectual disabilities, with 36 clubs and more than 1 000 players, female and male.
- Anantapur's Football League - LaLiga Foundation and the Vicente Ferrer Foundation are working to improve the lives of boys and girls in rural regions of India.

Introduction to the FIRE project

Rodolphe Doité (FIRE project Manager, Sport and Citizenship) presented the FIRE project, its specificities, philosophy and how it can fill the societal gap of welcoming refugees into our societies through football. Based on the belief that sport, and football, can be a real game-changer enabling to foster inclusion of migrants and refugees, Kiera Wason-Milne reiterated the need to focus on the grassroots level as an essential playfield to enhance social inclusion. She then presented the main deliverables of the project developed together with the [FIRE consortium](#) (please see the FIRE presentation above).

Due to its role in FIRE, and the commitment to the cause of refugees in Europe, Sport and Citizenship has partnered with the IRTS ([Integration of Refugees through Sport](#)) platform, which strive to become the main European hub in the field of social inclusion of refugees through sport.

Experience Panels

LaLiga | Za'atari Social Project – LaLiga FOUNDATION refugee project

Izzat Jandali opened the floor of the central part of the conference: the Experiences Panel. This section aimed to give a concrete touch on how football can play a crucial role in the inclusion and the wellbeing of refugees in and outside Europe.

As a Social Coach for LaLiga Foundation in the Za'atari Social Project, he brought forward his personal experience as coach in a refugee camp in Jordan (established in 2012), where most of the population is under 18. The Za'atari Social Project aims at improving the well-being of refugees in Za'atari by using football as an educational tool for the transmission of values. It is the first project carried out by LaLiga Foundation in a refugee camp and , as underlined by Izzat Jandali, it has been possible thanks to the cooperation with more than 10 NGOs in the camp, which helped and cooperated in the sustain and development of the activities.

The two main program components of the project include:

- *Capacity-building*: Training refugee coaches & referees to improve their technical knowledge and capacity to transmit core sports values to children.
- *Values through sports*: conducting football activities with refugees (girls & boys) to impact core values, as well as promote inclusion and girl empowerment. Girls are not well represented and present in the different game, therefore it is important to emphasize gender balance through concrete actions.

Furthermore, to fulfil the general objective of improving the well-being of refugees through football, he pointed out other specific goals that correspond to the priorities and reflect the purpose of the project:

- To create a safe environment for children
- To promote greater participation of girls in sport and support gender equality:
- To increase the knowledge & skills of coaches & referees to impact values through sport
- To work with external NGOs and UN agencies

Different initiatives are carried out within the project, including LaLiga Za'atari competition – 36 teams and more than 750 children participating in the programme. With the support of 33 professional Spanish teams (Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Sevilla and so on), LaLiga Foundation launched in 2019 the first football tournament inside the camp. Each district of the camp was associated to a specific team: this helped to conduct socio-educational interventions through games and recreational activities and educate children on values such as equality, respect, teamwork, fair play, and solidarity through football.

Izzat JANDALI closed his speech by explaining LaLiga Methodology as Values to Win. Little games are useful to show children what respect means. In this relation peer interaction as well the role of coaches as mentors and role model are essential.

Football & CEAR (Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid)

The second intervention of the Experiences Panel gathered 3 experts from CEAR (Commission Espanola de Ayuda al Refugiado) Alicante and Valencia to put forward their contribution in the welcoming of refugees through sport in Spain.

Paco Jimenez, from CEAR Valencia, opened the floor explaining the nature of CEAR as a multifunctional organisation that aims at facilitating social inclusion of refugees on a broader matter. Indeed, CEAR carries out several services such as training and job searching, language courses, and organisation of events, namely football tournaments between different centres.

Sara Ferragud then described more into details the relation and the use of football within this context. She went further in the discussion and explained the role and action CEAR Valencia was putting in place to facilitate the welcoming of refugees through sport. The idea was to create a team of football (mixed team) together with other NGOs from Valencia to compete in a tournament organised every year in June. She identified :

- *Objective and values:* as, the creation of bonds between people living in the same environment. Refugees can therefore meet and share experiences with locals: the two-way process helps the latter to understand specific situations refugees are forced to live when they decide to land in Europe. On the other hand, refugees become more familiar with their new lives ahead in Europe, and they are helped by a first-touch inclusion through sport.
- *Challenge:* the main challenge is the possibility to find volunteers who want to cooperate in the project. Furthermore, this was an occasion to work on personal and interpersonal skills for refugees within the goal of social inclusion.
- *Difficulties:* They faced some difficulties during the process, namely the possibility to reserve some municipal spaces for the tournament, the condition of the fields and mostly, the fact that it is harsh to guarantee a continuity in the project. Refugees do not spend a lot of time in the same place and tend to move towards other countries very soon. Thus, support by local stakeholders is essential to keep the project alive throughout the years.

Diego Montalbo (Inclusion Technician, CEAR Alicante) brought forward his own experience from another point of view. *“The aim was not a team of refugees, but refugees as part of team”*. This represents the true nature of the work conducted by CEAR: through the work of volunteers, they managed to start the CEAR Football Club project, create a team and participate in an official competition in September 2020. He underlined some difficulties such as the lack of resources and the fact that players changed very often. To promote leisure and free time activities together with the creation of a social network between locals and refugees. The new goal for the future will be the creation of a mixed team to permit women as well to participate in official tournaments.

Football with Refugees Barça Foundation

In the last part of the Experiences Panel, Lucy Mills (Program Manager, Barça Foundation) introduced programme and initiative of the Barça Foundation. For 25 years, Barça Foundation upholds programmes for refugees to fulfil its mission: support vulnerable children through sport and life skills.

Having said that, she underlined three strategic areas where the actions are focussed:

- Promoting education
- Social inclusion
- Prevention of violence

Barça Foundation brings its expertise in different contexts and countries : Lebanon, Greece (Athens and Lesbos), in Sicily and in Catalonia. Lucy Mills then put forward the methodology and the rationale behind the programme. The FootballNet “philosophy” combines sport games, learning activities, space of discussion and so on, with the participation of coaches, teachers, children, parents. All the programmes designed for children are based on fundamental values such as respect, non-discrimination, inclusiveness and are seeking to teach children those values through sport. Indeed, games are specifically designed to be funny, but also to respect abilities and disabilities of other participants. While playing, therefore, coaches become a guide for children. As gender balance was one of the main problems at the beginning of the programme in 2017, they decided to invest more energy in finding possible solutions. Three years later, the percentage of female coaches is the following: 40% in Catalonia; 41% in Greece and 50% in Italy and Lebanon.

Throughout the years the programme has changed to reflect the migration situation. Thus, the Foundation carried of actions to adapt itself and the programme to the new situation:

- Parents workshops and guardian workshops
- Interaction with local children and youth
- Participants with disabilities
- Coach development
- New methodology- youth and employability focused - adapted version

Lucy Mills concluded with some future challenges for the Barça Foundation.

- COVID-19
- Gender equality and inclusion,
- Children path: refugees campus may not be the final destination for the most of children therefore it would be useful to find short term solutions and applications.

The final question to close the section was either a question either a request or an invocation: *How to change the narrative?*

Lessons of the day

Albrecht Sonntag (ESSCA School of Management), as a partner of our FIRE project, was in charge of delivering the closing part of the conference – the “Lesson of the Day”. Professor Albrecht Sonntag highlighted how FIRE can be a good example of how research, education and civil society can meet and how football can play a central role when it comes to the inclusion of refugees. He firstly underlined the relation between football and sharing :

- sharing a passion as all the people working in this project believe sport and in particular football is a powerful tool not only economically speaking but also as a social matter.
- sharing a commitment, as in this case football is at the service of inclusion and diversity.
- sharing a need to be efficient, to “reach out our bubble” and spread the power of sport beyond our comfort zone.

The first lesson of the day was, indeed “getting out of our natural bubble”. As Professor Albrecht Sonntag said, in the FIRE project, there was a real cooperation in pursue common objectives: the pragmatic lessons can be summarised as sharing the know-how among partners and outside our personal bubble. It firstly passes through the MOOC as a nice illustration of it in line with the Erasmus+ philosophy.

This brought us to the second lesson of the day, a more human lesson: sport and football are contagious; therefore, it is a Share of Joy. Does football make enough people happy? Professor Sonntag said that football is not enough. When COVID-19 started, football and especially football federations should have taken a step back to rethink its way of playing and especially regarding grassroots football. Indeed, the gap between professional and grassroots football is still large and there is a concrete need to share more with development countries and with grassroots organisations in order help them facing the crisis without further complication.

To conclude the conference, Professor Albrecht Sonntag shared the third and last lesson, namely the humility lesson: Share the World. It is difficult to change the world, football, of course would not be enough, however through some specific interpretation of football, like the FIRE project, we can show and teach how to improve it a little.

The FIRE project’s final event will be held on **June 2020 - stay tuned for further information!**

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