



# FIRE FINAL CONFERENCE

MINUTES OF THE 3<sup>rd</sup> OF  
JUNE MEETING

These minutes compile the discussions and exchanges that took place during the final conference of the **More than a game-Football Including Refugees**, held on June 3, 2021 (virtual format). The conference was organized by the project manager *Sport and Citizenship* in the framework of the Football Including Refugees (FIRE) project, funded under the Sport Chapter of the Erasmus+ Programme.

## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Football Including Refugees (FIRE) was launched in January 2018 thanks to the support of the European Commission's *Erasmus+ Programme* for a period of 24 months. However, due to the Covid pandemic situation, the FIRE project has been delayed 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 focuses on utilizing 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-sectorial partnerships to create a network that will mutually enrich participants. The project's specific 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

### 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 final FIRE conference was an opportunity to review on lessons learnt and achievements, especially the launch of a freely accessible training tool for local football clubs and organisations: the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course). Its aim is to deliver educational benefits that will outlive the project's lifespan by providing support and guidance to its users. The tool encompasses suggestions, input of various kinds, success factors, risk mitigation and other useful information for organizations willing to work with refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers but lacking the experience and that are hence uncertain as to "where to start".

But the FIRE project is not the end, since **the FIRE+ project already started**, also financed by the Erasmus+ programme, with new partners, new objectives but the same aim – promote football as a tool for inclusion of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in Europe.

[#Foot4All](#)

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

## AGENDA

9.30 Welcome and Introduction to the FIRE project and partners  
Rodolphe DOITE *FIRE Project Manager, Sport and Citizenship Think Tank*

10.10 Round table – “The FIRE project - achievements and lessons learnt” and Q&A

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

**Grace Veys** *Partnership coordinator, Fare Network*

**Krzysztof Jarymowicz** *Fundacja dla Wolności and Etnoliga*

**Hedeli Sassi** *Social Responsibility offer at the Royal Belgian Football Association*

**Florin Sari** *Manager at the Romanian Football Federation*

**Albrecht Sonntag** *Professor at ESSCA School of Management*

**Virginie Ménard** *Instructional designer at ESSCA School of Management*

**Laura Anderson**, *Community project coordinator at the Scottish Football Association*

**Adriana Orbea**, *international project manager at the Fundación La Liga*

10.50 Stretch the legs / #homebreak

11.10 Round table – “Sport and Inclusion” and Q&A

*Moderation: Laurent Thieule S&C President*

**Floor Van Houdt**, *Head of Unit, Sport Unit, European Commission*

**Nicolas Brass**, *Senior External Engagement Coordination for UNHCR*

**Marco Martiniello**, *Director of Research at the Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FRS-FNRS) and Director of CEDEM (Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations) at the University of Liege*

**Saska Benedicic Tomat**, *Head of Project and IRTS Platform representative, ISCA (International Sport and Culture Association)*

12.10 Testimony

**Benjamin Renauld** in charge of “We Welcome Young Refugees”, Kraainem Football Club

## CONFERENCE MINUTES

Around 50 stakeholders attended the Final conference, from the sport sector, civil society, different levels of government and government-related organizations, which successfully reflects the diversity of involved actors when it comes to the social inclusion of refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers.

## GOING BACK ON THE FIRE ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

The first step of the project was to create a desk research, a state of what have been done so far, to learn about different initiatives and projects implemented in Europe, regarding refugees' inclusion through sport. We wanted to understand the needs assessment of local football clubs and identify trends and targets to be showcased during national conferences.

Then, thanks to the FARE network, we used the **Football People Weeks to organize pilot interventions**. Four pilot interventions in four respective countries were selected after an open call for proposal. For us, it was a way to show that local initiatives are as important as European project. Indeed, inclusion is leading on the ground. The selected pilot interventions were submitted by the following:

- ARCA - Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants (Romania)
- Glasgow Afghan United (Scotland)
- CDE Dragones de Lavapiés (Spain)
- Voetbalclub Inter Hasselt (Belgium)

The ultimate and most ambitious goal of the FIRE project was to **create a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**. This training tool is freely accessible [here](#) and has been specifically created and designed for grassroots football volunteers (trainers, administrators, volunteers, and clubs). The MOOC will equip users with knowledge and understanding about creating their own refugees' inclusion programme and will answer the most common questions and challenges. Moreover, it is composed of four modules with various contents (quiz, activities, videos, forum, bonus tools and final quiz):

- Module n°1 – How to get prepared for launching an initiative
- Module n°2 – How to reach out to and communicate with the target group
- Module n°3 – How to carry out and evaluate your initiative
- Module n°4 – How to find additional resources for my project

At last, a dedicated issue of Sport and Citizenship Journal was issued at the end of the project, giving the opportunity to each partners and various stakeholders to take a stand for refugees' inclusion through sport.



## ROUND TABLE 1 – “THE FIRE PROJECT - ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNT”

Moderated by **Rodolphe Doité** (Head of European Affairs at *Sport and Citizenship Think tank* and FIRE Project Manager), this round table aimed at giving every partner the chance to explain what they learnt in this project. Together, the panel offered a diverse point of view on how much football can do to help to socially include refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers, while also raising the different barriers faced by each organization.

Some words from **Virginie Ménard**, instructional designer at ESSCA School of Management, and **Albrecht Sonntag**, professor at ESSCA School of Management:

*“The biggest challenge encountered with the health crisis to make the MOOC happens was to produce all the necessary materials for this course in the context of the pandemic, which prevented us from meeting the different partners during conferences. However, we managed to do it and we are glad for that.”*

*“Of course, if the construction of the MOOC was a challenge, it was also a great opportunity. It is an enriching and fantastic human experience, and we are very happy of what have been achieve so far. We are curious to see what comes next.”*

Some words from **Grace Veys**, partnership coordinator at Fare Network, on the future open call for proposal in the FIRE+ project:

*“If we can give some tips for submitting a strong application for the pilot intervention, the first one will be to make sure that your proposal goes in line with the topic. Secondly, it is important to give as much as details as possible to first understand where the funds are going to, and to give insights into the impact that your activities are going to have. At least, you have to be realistic and honest in your proposal and find the right relevant partners.”*

One of the key objectives of the project was to involve more and more grassroots clubs in projects, initiatives, and programmes for the inclusion of refugees. Having national football federations, as the Royal Belgian Football Association, the Romanian Football Federation and the Scottish Football Association, was paramount to all activities implemented within the framework of the FIRE project.

Some words from **Hedeli Sassi**, Social Responsibility Officer at the Royal Belgian Football Association:

*“The most important thing for grassroot clubs is to be near of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers: they have to know that they can count on the support of the football association if they have any questions, problems or good practices that they want to share. To convince this amateurs clubs to include this target group, it is very important to visit all of them and to invite the nearest asylum center services or other important social partners in the local community to talk about the target audience. There are the best one to know what the main challenge are. Then we try to adapt the project to each club.”*

Some words from **Florin Sari**, manager at the Romanian Football Federation:

*“Thanks to the FIRE project, the Romanian Football Federation are able to do more than we could initially do. With the support of UEFA and the public authorities, we are trying to replicate the concept of the Kraainem Football Club in Romania. We want to continue this project of inclusion.”*

Some words from **Laura Anderson**, community project coordinator at the Scottish Football Association:

*“We spent a lot of time listening, especially through national conferences, and really looking out on how we can create for this target opportunities. There is a need for us to recognize the talents and the skills of this community. We are looking for to be engaging some of those organizations that were around the table in 2019.”*

Some words from **Adriana Orbea**, international project manager at the Fundación La Liga:

*“Within the framework of the FIRE project, we have been able to contribute to develop materials and methodological resources. At least, it allows our sport entities, clubs and social civic organizations that work with refugees to create project that aims to include them through football. This project provides a great opportunity to broaden our focus to a reality that help us in our daily professional development. It allows us to become better prepare to respond of the need of the situation of refugees. We valued the importance of cooperation and collaboration in transnational project promoted by the European Union.”*

Some words from **Krzysztof Jarymowicz**, project manager at Fundacja dla Wolnosci and Etnoliga:

*“We are looking forward for the MOOC to be spread here in Poland. We have quite different situation in Eastern Europe: there is not so many projects that include refugees through sport. The main challenge is to spread this know-how, sport integration in Eastern Europe. We need to go to the clubs and show them the way, inspire them...”*

## ROUND TABLE 2 – “SPORT AND INCLUSION”

Moderated by **Laurent Thieule** (President of the *Think tank Sport and Citizenship*), this second round table aimed at addressing the issue of refugees, inclusion, and on the role of sport with four esteemed experts and European stakeholders. The discussion was steered onto their role in the promotion of sport, and their involvement in certain programs. Panelists included **Floor Van Houdt**, **Marco Martiniello**, **Nicolas Brass**, and **Saska Benedicic Tomat**.

**Floor Van Houdt**, Head of Unit, Sport Unit, European Commission

As part of new Pact for Migration and Asylum and the Action Plan on integration and inclusion for 2021-2027, released by the European Commission, sport is mentioned several times. It is recognized as a tool to increase opportunities for encounters and exchanges between migrants and local communities through sport. And the Sport Unit plays a role in promoting the role of sport in this plan, as mentioned by **Floor Van Houdt**.

Indeed, the Sport Unit can promote European dimension in sport, keeping in mind its social and economic role. This is translated in practically everything they do, both in policy cooperation with Member States as well in the budget dedicated to European cooperation in sport. As inclusion and diversity have become one of the three core priorities of the new program, the Sport Unit expects a wider number of projects in the future will be about inclusion. The Sport Unit also hopes those projects will be driven by an aim to effectively reach out to their target groups. According to **Floor Van Houdt**, there is a very strong regarding the use of sport as a tool for inclusion and integration of refugees.

The Sport Unit also implements other actions. **Floor Van Houdt** mentioned the spotlight that the Sport Unit gives to stories where inclusiveness has been relevant and interesting, by giving every year an award and a prize of 15 000 euros. The last activity mentioned is the promotional campaign about healthy lifestyle that will be launched in September. One of the main priorities is to play sports and healthy lifestyle accessible to disadvantage groups, by removing obstacles they face.

**Nicolas Brass**, Senior External Engagement Coordination for UNHCR

The role of the UNHCR is at the core of the institutional response given to the question of refugees, with a lot of different programs, initiatives and campaigns. As **Nicolas Brass** stated, UNHCR has been mandated by the UN General Assembly to protect, assist and find solutions for refugees worldwide. Their main task is to support Member States in fulfilling their international obligations when it comes to refugees. However, the way they deliver their assistance has evolved because most refugees live outside camps, in urban settings. Despite some harsh realities, those settings are a way for refugees to strengthen their access to rights and same services as host communities. As an example, UNHCR helps to support the local economy, try to communicate more effectively about refugees, fighting toxic narratives and anti-refugees' sentiment. To us, this is very important to have what they call a “*Call of society approach*”.



In 2018 has been adopted an important milestone, the Global Compact on Refugees. It underlines the much-needed collaboration to find solutions, with States, NGOs, the private sector, think tank, and of course sport entities. In this document, the role of sport is mentioned, as an enabler for social development, inclusion, cohesion and well-being. Moreover, it helps take down misperceptions, to realize that refugees and host community do have things in common and share the same values. As mentioned by **Nicolas Brass**, it is an innovation because this is the first time that sport is mentioned in UNHCR normative framework in relation with refugees.

UNHCR also advocates for a bottom-up approach for a successful implementation of inclusion initiatives: grassroots organizations, communities, and local authorities are the key actors. Being able to engage local authorities is essential to make concrete changes and improve the well-being and the lives of refugees and of host community.

**Marco Martiniello**, Director of Research at the Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FRS-FNRS) and Director of CEDEM (Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations) at the University of Liege

According to **Marco Martiniello**, promoting inclusion is also about fighting racism. In this context, sport can be a very important tool, thanks to values it represents. There are four dimensions in racism, that should be consider in professional and amateur sport and which concern refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers:

- Racist ideologies
- Stereotypes
- Racists acts and speeches
- The structural dimension of racism

Thanks to sport, we can have means to fight against these four dimensions of racism. For instance, a strong club policy could maybe help us to kick racism out of such important institutions. For **Marco Martiniello**, we must promote diversity on the pitch and see that more trainers, educators, leader of clubs and federations are coming from minorities. It is an important way to fight against institutional and structural racism, and therefore encourage inclusion in our society. Thus, sport is a very important tool, but we must use it well. In this context, professional sport should also help spreading those values.

**Saska Benedicic Tomat**, Head of Project and IRTS Platform representative, ISCA (International Sport and Culture Association)

Thanks to support from the European Commission, the International Sport and Culture Association is gathering solutions and uniting stakeholders in the field of Integration of Refugees Through Sport, through the new network IRTS. More than 80 partners and stakeholders across Europe are involved in creating solutions, projects, events, activities in the field of inclusion.

As mentioned by **Saska Benedicic Tomat**, IRTS have been developing mentoring programs, which brings together 24 organizations, grassroots organizations and experts in the field, to help those actors learn and develop their own activities in different countries. IRTS recognizes successful initiatives from partners, organizations, countries from local to international levels and promote them. Another element of the platform is to develop or sharing the good practices, experiences, inspiration, motivation to collect them. The IRTS Awards are made to promote those projects, to bring those projects to light at the European level.

With all those different activities, including the organization of the MOVE Congress, ISCA and IRTS are participating to the promotion of sport as a mean of inclusion.

To close this roundtable, and event, **Laurent Thieule** emphasized the FIRE project's objective to each speaker: promote football as means of inclusion at a local level. And asked a single question: *according to their experience and expertise, how can local initiatives, such as the FIRE project, inspire larger-scale policy initiatives?*

According to **Marco Martiniello**, the importance of projects like the FIRE project is to help us to realize that we should change our paradigm and thinking in a bottom-up perspective. It means that the project diffused, replicated, and try to have positive pressure on political institutions to change our perspective on inclusion. However, we must be realistic: sport can do a lot but cannot do anything. The issue of rights and access to rights are difficult to solve with bottom-up actions in the field of sport.

According to **Floor Van Houdt**, it is important to understand that the European Union do not have legislative power regarding sport. Indeed, sport policies at the European level is about coordinating, organizing a concrete dialogue between stakeholders and collaborating to come up with better solutions. It is very important to have a connection between the grassroots and the European Union, be closed to the citizens. And Erasmus + program is the most important and powerful policy tool that the European Union has: it can support and promote change, and learn from what is happening on the ground.

According to **Nicolas Braas**, the main challenge is the lack of evidence on what works on the ground. The FIRE project is essential to provide better structured initiatives that can be monitored and potentially evaluated, especially on an advocacy perspective. The FIRE project and its MOOC are seen as an opportunity to provide evidence on what works and allow stakeholders to understand what can be achieved. Nicolas Braas argued that we can start collecting solid project data to help to inform and improve decision and influence larger scale policy initiative.

**Saska Benedicic Tomat** explained that they do believe that one of the most important principle is partnership. "Communities belonging" is built by cooperation with different stakeholders. And the sport sector can do a lot to improve, fill in the lack of knowledge when it comes to inclusion of refugees.

## TESTIMONY

**Benjamin Renauld**, in charge of “We Welcome Young Refugees” at Kraainem Football Club, was invited to discuss its experience at Kraainem Football Club and give us information on how football can be a mean of inclusion at a local level for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers.

In 2015, Kraainem Football Club launched a project to welcome refugees and asylum seekers in the club, in partnership with Fedasil (Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers). Since, more than 2 500 refugees and asylum seekers have participated to this project: they have benefited from conversation sessions and football training, with young Belgian players from the community. Moreover, Kraainem Football Club support refugees and asylum seekers that are part of the club by helping them to find a new place of residence, accompanying them on their career path to achieve successful inclusion.

Inspiring stories about the Kraainem

Inspiring stories about the Kraainem FC initiative can be found [here](#), as a virtual exhibition of players and volunteers involved in the initiative.



# FIRE

FOOTBALL INCLUDING  
REFUGEES IN EUROPE

[www.footballwithrefugees.eu](http://www.footballwithrefugees.eu)



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