

Building on methodological approaches for successful grassroots interventions

2023

The FIRE+ pilot intervention report



Sport and Citizenship  **Sport et Citoyenneté**
Sport serving society Le Sport au service de la société



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DISCLAIMER

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1. Introduction

The FIRE+ project is a follow-up project and continuation of the Football Including Refugees (FIRE) project. In the initial FIRE project, a methodological approach was developed for the successful implementation and organization of events by grassroots organizations to include refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in their football activities. The methodological approach has been further developed in the Further Football Including Refugees Project (FIRE+), with the renewed goal of grassroots interventions supporting the integration and inclusion of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers.

As part of this methodological approach, seven pilot interventions were conducted in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and in the Republic of Ireland (Ireland).

This report presents the processes of recruitment, selection, and organization of the pilot interventions. The document provides information about the FIRE+ project, details about the pilot interventions, and concludes with recommendations.

The global Covid-19 pandemic impacted the FIRE+ project in several ways, which will be discussed in this review.



Credit: Pexels

2 The FIRE+ project

2.1 About FIRE+

WE BELIEVE THAT SPORT IS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE!

It is a perfect means to boost social inclusion and can contribute to bringing people together, regardless of nationality, citizenship, cultural background, legal status, or any other variable.

Through the FIRE+ project (Further Football Including Refugees Project), we intend to encourage new and complementary vocations within grassroots organizations to engage in the social inclusion of asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants.

Funded by the Erasmus+ programme, this two-and-a-half-year initiative continues the work of the FIRE project (Football Including Refugees), which aims to promote football as a means of inclusion, participation, socialization, and access to sports for asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants at a local level. Founded on a strong consortium of diverse project partners, FIRE+ reinforced the multimedia online courses known as the FIRE MOOC developed in the framework of the FIRE project. The FIRE MOOC was updated and completed with three new modules focusing on Refugee women and refugee girls; on Unaccompanied foreign minors; and on how to include refugees as volunteers in a football club. The objective is to provide users with a more holistic approach to social inclusion through football.

2.2 Objectives and Deliverables

The FIRE+ project is a continuation of the FIRE project, relying on networking and mutual enrichment of participants. Their engagement and knowledge in sport and football, from the local to international levels, provide broad expertise in sport for development and migrant-related issues.

The main objectives of the FIRE+ project are:

- **To assess** the experience and insights of active grassroots football clubs in creating and implementing a welcome program or initiative for refugees.
- **To foster** local activations at the grassroots level while testing the power of football as a tool for inclusion and development.
- **To develop**, inspire, and share good practices, which will be implemented and organized through a MOOC.
- **To raise** awareness and multiply experiences around sport, physical activity, and exercise as tools for social change.

To achieve these objectives, the FIRE+ project intended to:

- **Develop a survey** on grassroots clubs' refugee programs in Europe, gathering data, identifying trends, and analyzing challenges among football clubs dealing with refugees in Europe.
- **Develop a Methodological Approach** for successful grassroots interventions to support the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Further **develop the FIRE MOOC** to be used for delivering educational activities during and after the project's lifespan.
- **Publish a special edition of Sport and Citizenship's scientific journal.**

2.3 FIRE+ consortium

The FIRE+ consortium consists of the following organisations:

- Sport and Citizenship think tank (France) (lead partner)
- ESSCA School of Management (France)
- Stichting Fare network (the Netherlands)
- Liberi Nantes (Italy)
- Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (METU) (Turkey)
- Association des Clubs Francophones de Football (ACFF) (Belgium)
- Egidius Braun Stifting (EBS) (Germany)
- International Platform for Sport and Development (Switzerland)
- Football Association of Ireland (FAI) (Republic of Ireland)

Sport and Citizenship think tank

**Sport and
Citizenship**
Sport serving society



**Sport et
Citoyenneté**
Le Sport au service de la société

Sport and Citizenship is the leading European think tank in the field of sport. Created in 2007, its aim is to support the development of the European dimension of sport. Sport and Citizenship is dedicated to studying European public policies in the field of sport and promoting sport's societal impact. Ultimately, Sport and Citizenship promotes sport and physical activity as elements of European identity.

Therefore, Sport and Citizenship has been committed since its inception to launching a European civic dialogue in the field of sport through multidisciplinary and cross-cutting reflections that aim to connect European sport stakeholders: governments, the sport movement, civil society, academics, and the private sector. The reflections produced are then brought to the attention of policymakers with the objective of recognizing a certain specificity of sport at the European level based on its social, educational, and civic dimensions.

Sport and Citizenship manages to maintain discussions on various topics and introduce new ideas. It also takes part in EU-funded projects with various partners across Europe. Furthermore, initiatives created by the private sector play an important role in the field of sport. Sport and Citizenship's activities also include the publication of a quarterly scientific journal that focuses on a topic related to sport every three months.



ESSCA SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT (ESSCA)

The Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Commerciales d'Angers, commonly referred to as ESSCA School of Management, is a private, not-for-profit French business school founded in 1909. It operates on a total of eight campuses in France and abroad.

Since 2006, the school's EU-Asia Institute, a center of research in the social sciences and humanities, has developed peer-recognized expertise in interdisciplinary European Studies, including the role of sports in the European integration process and international relations in general. It has hosted several events in the field and coordinated international research projects. The school also hosts an Institute of Advanced Pedagogy, whose members have extensive experience in designing and delivering online learning courses and content. This educational design expertise will significantly contribute to updating the project's online learning deliverables.

[HTTPS://IPA.ESSCA.FR/](https://ipa.essca.fr/)



STICHTING FARE NETWORK

Founded in 1999 in Vienna, the Fare network (Fare) is a European NGO representing organizations that combat discrimination in football and use football as a vehicle to foster social inclusion and promote diversity. United by the commitment to bring about positive social change, Fare Network's strength lies in its diverse membership, which comprises over 125 NGOs, youth organizations, human rights organizations, ethnic minority groups, supporters' groups, amateur and professional football clubs, national football associations, etc., in more than 40 countries.

The Fare network acts as a platform for its members to connect and address cross-border issues in the field of anti-discrimination, social inclusion, integration, diversity, LGBTQI+ inclusion, and gender equality across all levels of football.

[HTTPS://FARENET.ORG/](https://farenet.org/)



LIBERI NANTES

Liberi Nantes is an independent grassroots sports association founded in 2007. Its purpose is to foster, encourage, and enable sports and leisure activities for third-country nationals (especially refugees and asylum seekers).

Liberi Nantes runs special programs dedicated to women and unaccompanied minors and is an active member of several networks of sports and civil society organizations, both at local and international levels.

[HTTPS://WWW.LIBERINANTES.ORG/](https://www.liberinantes.org/)



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ), founded in 1956, is an international research university that seeks excellence in serving the country, region, and the world. This well-deserved reputation partly reflects its leading position in terms of international scientific publications and the share of research funds from national scientific research funding agencies, primarily The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), among the most prominent universities in Turkey.

ODTÜ is also an international research-intensive university that ranks among the leading universities in Turkey in terms of the depth and breadth of international research projects and the amount of funds generated from research activities.

[HTTPS://WWW.METU.EDU.TR/](https://www.metu.edu.tr/)



Association des Clubs Francophones de Football (ACFF)

ACFF is the association that manages the French-speaking wing of the R.B.F.A. (Royal Belgian Football Federation). The organization is responsible for promoting and organizing football throughout the French-speaking areas of Belgium.

ACFF is involved in several main missions, including the promotion of football, maintaining an “up-to-date” image and popularity among young people, and assisting clubs in their sporting activities. It supervises young affiliates, trains them under the ACFF vision of football, and optimizes the training of young people through technical and sports support. For the 2018-2019 season, 674 football clubs and 202,021 members are affiliated with the organization. These clubs play from the first national amateur division to the lowest district level.

[HTTPS://WWW.ACFF.BE/](https://www.acff.be/)



DFB-STIFTUNG
EGIDIUS BRAUN

EGIDIUS BRAUN STIFTUNG (EBS)

EBS is a foundation of the German Football Association and believes that football is supported by two pillars: professional football and amateur football. Over the last decades, “football – social integration and social policy” has developed as a third pillar alongside these two aspects.

DFB-Sportförderverein e.V. has added sustainable activations of DFB in this area. Charitable support beyond football and the development of social competences, mostly within football topics, define the tasks of this society. Several projects are conducted, especially to support kids. “Fußball-Ferien-Freizeiten” (Football Holiday Camps) are the central proprietary project of the Foundation. Youth work of smaller clubs, characterized by outstanding integration and quality, is acknowledged through participation in the holiday camps.

[HTTPS://WWW.DFB-STIFTUNGEN.DE/STIFTUNG/DFB-STIFTUNG-EGIDIUS-BRAUN](https://www.dfb-stiftungen.de/stiftung/dfb-stiftung-egidius-braun)



INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SPORT AND DEVELOPMENT (SPORTANDDEV)

Founded in 1991, the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) is a non-governmental organization based in Biel/Bienne, Switzerland. The organization envisions a world where children and youth are engaged, healthy, educated, and employed citizens. For over two decades, SAD has used sport and play to promote non-formal and formal education (e.g., Nepal, India), entrepreneurial spirit (e.g., Egypt, Myanmar), psychosocial rehabilitation in post-disaster contexts (e.g., Iran, Lebanon, South Sudan), peaceful coexistence and intercultural dialogue (e.g., Sri Lanka), and social integration (e.g., Switzerland, Hungary).

Through its project, the International Platform on Sport and Development, SAD connects the global sport and development community and provides them with the latest resources, policy guides, and best practices. The platform (sportanddev), founded in 2003, is the leading information source in the field of sport and development. Its global community includes practitioners, NGOs, universities, governments, sports federations, and others who use sport to address social, economic, and environmental challenges. It is the leading hub for the sport and development community to share knowledge, build good practice, coordinate with others, and create partnerships.

[HTTPS://WWW.SPORTANDDEV.ORG/](https://www.sportanddev.org/)



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND (FAI)

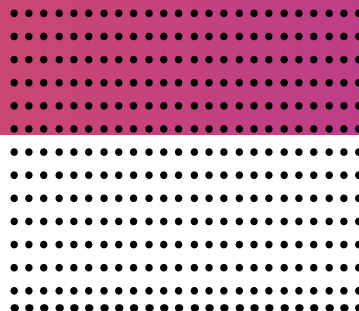
The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) is the governing body of Association Football in Ireland. It was formed in 1921 and tasked with the development and administration of the game. Today, the FAI develops football across the country through partnerships and collaborations, including with local authorities and national government. Fifty-four development officers work in designated areas across the counties to enhance the skills and capabilities of clubs, leagues, and affiliates.

Part of this work includes a focus on the social inclusion of various underserved or underrepresented groups. The FAI continually works toward its mission to promote, foster, and develop the game of Association Football in Ireland.

[HTTPS://WWW.FAI.IE/](https://www.fai.ie/)



Credit: Pexels



3 FIRE+'s Methodological Approach

3.1 Outline of the Methodological Approach

Fare network was the lead partner for the pilot interventions in the initial FIRE project, ensuring continuity by also leading the pilot interventions in the FIRE+ project.

The implementation of the four pilot interventions proved successful in the initial FIRE project. As a result of this success, the decision was made to increase the total number of pilot interventions to eight. Fare network took the lead in the entire process of implementing the pilot interventions, including steps such as developing application guidelines and criteria, leading the selection process for successful groups, and further refining the methodological approach.

This Methodological Approach aims to provide stakeholders and interested parties with a deeper understanding of the entire process, specifically offering insights into lessons learned and recommendations for the future.

The workflow of the pilot interventions consisted of nine specific tasks:

1. Drafting the call for projects and application template, including application criteria.
2. Disseminating the call for projects and identifying structures, networks, organizations, and individuals to further distribute the call.
3. Developing the selection procedure and criteria for pilot interventions.
4. Constituting the jury and selecting the pilot interventions.
5. Developing agreements with the selected pilot interventions.
6. Mentoring, advising, and supporting groups in pilot interventions.
7. Providing field support for pilot implementation.
8. Monitoring and evaluating pilot interventions.
9. Publishing, disseminating, and formatting the pilot report.

The key activity of this process has been the organization and support of the pilot interventions that took place throughout the project. In 2019, during the FIRE project, the pilot interventions were aligned to coincide with the Fare Football People weeks. The Football People weeks, organized annually by Fare over two weeks in October, is the largest campaign for social change and diversity in global football. Despite its success in 2019, the pilot interventions in the FIRE+ project were organized separately from the Football People weeks.

Covid-19 Impact and Challenges

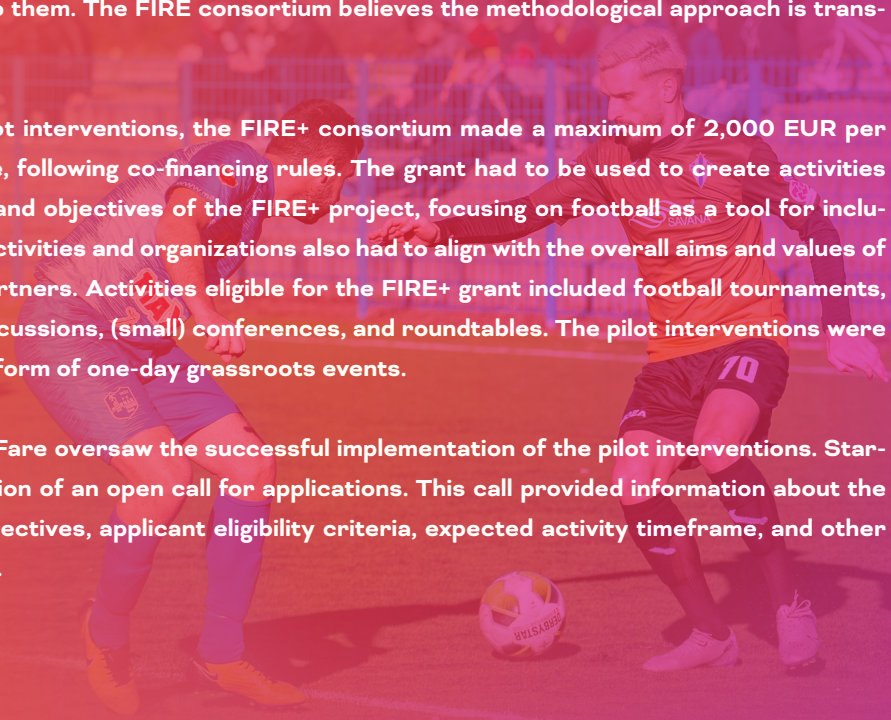
Before delving into the methodology and outcomes of the pilot interventions, it is important to note that the global Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted the pilot interventions. Firstly, the pandemic affected the work of the organizations in the project and the project timeline. The timeline for implementing the pilot interventions had to be adjusted, and the Fare Football People weeks were greatly reduced, with many events taking the form of online activities. Grassroots organizations faced challenges due to the pandemic, including a complete halt of club activities, financial insecurity/loss, and the inability to transition playing activities to the online sphere. **The FIRE+ consortium adopted a flexible approach by altering the timeline for organizing the pilot interventions, including flexible deadlines.** As a result of moving all pilot interventions to 2022 and the successful selection of eight groups, only seven pilot interventions were successfully implemented. More details about the pilot interventions can be found in chapter 4.

3.2 The Methodology

The key milestones of the methodology were to select eight pilot interventions proposed by grassroots organizations to be implemented in 2022 in four partner countries: Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Ireland. The choice of these partner countries was based on several factors. All four selected countries have refugee and migrant populations, although the exact context varies per country. The idea was also to facilitate cooperation between football associations, networks, foundations, and grassroots organizations. However, the partner organizations responsible for cooperating with grassroots organizations are not exactly the same in each country. Similarly, the structures of grassroots organizations and grassroots football differ in each country. Therefore, investigating the transferability of methods developed in a European, multi-national consortium is intriguing. The selection of these four partner countries does not imply that this methodological approach is limited to them. The FIRE consortium believes the methodological approach is transferable.

To implement the pilot interventions, the FIRE+ consortium made a maximum of 2,000 EUR per intervention available, following co-financing rules. The grant had to be used to create activities in line with the aims and objectives of the FIRE+ project, focusing on football as a tool for inclusion. The proposed activities and organizations also had to align with the overall aims and values of the FIRE+ project partners. Activities eligible for the FIRE+ grant included football tournaments, workshops, panel discussions, (small) conferences, and roundtables. The pilot interventions were designed to take the form of one-day grassroots events.

As the lead partner, Fare oversaw the successful implementation of the pilot interventions. Starting with the publication of an open call for applications. This call provided information about the FIRE+ project, its objectives, applicant eligibility criteria, expected activity timeframe, and other rules and regulations.



The call was published on the project's websites and was widely disseminated among each partner network. The call served to identify which grassroots organizations should be selected, and which should be mentored and supported in the implementation of their interventions. After a thorough selection process, eight grassroots organizations were chosen. **These selected organizations received practical support to develop, implement, assess, and self-evaluate their pilot interventions.**

3.3 Role of the Partners

Partners in the four selected partner countries played a crucial role in implementing the pilot interventions. FAI, ACCF, and Egidius Braun Stiftung assisted Fare in disseminating the call for applications, actively distributing it among their grassroots members. These partners also provided

input on the assessment of received applications from their respective countries. Moreover, the partners supported the grassroots organizations in implementing their activities, ranging from organizational tips to joint activity planning and reporting support. Building on feedback and lessons learned from the previous FIRE project, the involvement of partners in the application process ensures stronger cooperation with grassroots organizations. The FIRE+ consortium believes that the cooperation between national football associations and grassroots organizations is of great importance. While grassroots organizations work daily towards social inclusion and equality in football, they also regularly face barriers. **Collaborating with grassroots organizations allows national associations and foundations to understand the situation on the ground, and their national policies, working methods, and action plans can benefit from this knowledge.** The cooperation with grassroots organizations throughout the FIRE+ project is reflected in the presence of many grassroots organizations at the national conferences organized in Belgium, Germany, and Ireland.



Credit: Pexels

3.4 Guidelines and Criteria

Fare network developed application guidelines and provided tips to assist groups in the application process. Therefore, who could apply?

The application procedure was open only to grassroots organizations based in Wallonia (Belgium), Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands. A successful application met the following criteria:

Criteria for a successful application:

- Is a (small) NGO, community group, or grassroots football club.
- Has experience in organizing activities with/for refugees, asylum-seekers.
- Incorporates football into their existing activities.

The application must focus on:

- Including refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers in the pilot interventions.

Additional criteria for a successful application:

- Applications are open to amateur/grassroots football clubs, (small) NGOs, informal groups, (grassroots) football clubs, community groups, etc. (Applications from individuals were not accepted.)
- Groups must have a website/social media presence.
- Pilot interventions are one-day grassroots events.
- The pilot intervention must be linked to football.
- Groups must involve refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in the pilot intervention.
- Focusing on female refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers adds value.
- The pilot intervention must align with the principles, aims, and objectives of the FIRE+ project.
- The pilot intervention must align with the principles, aims, and objectives of FIRE+ partner organizations.
- Pilot interventions emphasize football as a tool for inclusion.
- Applicants must submit a detailed budget as part of their application.
- Partnerships/cooperation with other groups are encouraged.
- Engaging new refugee/migrant/asylum-seeker participants in the pilot intervention adds value.

The following activities can be funded:

- Football tournament (including workshops)
- Workshops
- Panel discussions
- Small conference
- Round table/Q&A

When organizing a football tournament, it is advised to include extra activities such as workshops or presentations to stand out from other applications.

All applicants had to complete an online application form, including a detailed description of their proposed activity, a description of their organization, and an estimated number of participants (including those with a refugee background). Each application had to include a clear description of deliverables, outcomes, and the expected impact of the proposed activity, a list of partners involved in the event's organization, and a detailed event budget, including other sources of income.



Guidelines for Applicants

Alongside the call for projects, guidelines for applicants were published (See Annex 1). These guidelines were available in English, French and German. The said guidelines were meant to help the applicants in writing a good proposal to be selected. Furthermore, applicants received help from the FAI (in Ireland), the ACCF (in Belgium), of Egidius Braun Stiftung (in Germany) and from Fare (in the Netherlands) to draft their application.



Communication and Visibility

Prior to and during the event, applicants were encouraged to share their event materials and pictures on their social media channels and with the FIRE+ consortium.

Within two weeks after the conclusion of the pilot intervention, each grant recipient had to submit an online narrative and financial report. The online report included a description of the organized activity, the number of participants (including refugees), an overview of (social) media links, and a financial budget (including proof of expenditure).

As mentioned earlier in this review, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted and influenced the timeline. Hence, the guidelines specifically included a Covid-19 section. The complete guidelines for grant recipients can be found in Annex 2.



Credit: Pexels

3.5 Applications

The call for FIRE+ pilot intervention applications was launched in January 2022.

The call was shared on the FIRE+ website and by partners. [Link to the call](#)

In total, we received 26 applications, which is slightly fewer than expected and hoped for. The main reasons were the altered timeline due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the remaining uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, which made planning ahead difficult for grassroots organizations.

Applications received:

- Belgium (9)
- The Netherlands (1)
- Germany (11)
- Ireland (5)
- Total: 26

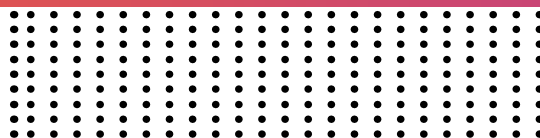
The following types of groups submitted applications:

- Educational group (1)
- Charity (1)
- NGO (3)
- Grassroots/amateur club/community organization (21)

Out of the 26 received applications, 16 groups have a specific focus on working with refugees and the inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in and through football.

3.6 Application Assessment Procedure

The Fare network pre-assessed the received applications based on eligibility and whether they matched the basic criteria, such as working with refugees and operating in the respective partner countries. FAI, ACOFF, and Egidius Braun Stiftung followed up with a detailed assessment of the applications in their respective partner countries. Fare combined all input and also assessed all applications in detail. The detailed assessment of the received applications looked at various aspects, including the nature of the proposed activities, the applicant's background, and the expected impact of the proposed activity.



3.7 The Jury

Fare invited and selected an external jury of experts on the topic of football and the inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. The jury was established to add an extra layer to the assessment and selection procedure. **The external jury members' input provided an unbiased view and ensured objectivity throughout the selection process.** The jury consisted of the following members:

- **Claudia Krobitzsch**, Senior Manager of Diversity and Inclusion at DFB (German Football Association) (Germany)
- **Kyriaki Retzeka**, Head of Programmes at Organization Earth (Greece)
- **Gerald Mballe**, Special Olympics Advisor for Unified with Refugees (Italy)
- **Krzysztof Jarymowicz**, CEO and Co-founder of Fundacja dla Wolności (Poland)



Credit: Pexels

Each jury member assessed several randomly pre-selected pilot interventions. The jury received an information pack including details about the applicants and the full submitted applications. The information pack also included assessment criteria and guidelines.

The jury considered the following aspects and questions:

- **Description of the activity:** Is the description of the event clear? Does it mention the planned activities and the target group?
- **Impact:** What impact does the event have on participating refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers?
- **Participants:** Is the primary target group refugees and asylum seekers?
- **Link with FIRE+:** Does the overall activity align with the objectives of the FIRE+ project?

4 Pilot Interventions

The key activities of the FIRE+ methodology were the implementation of eight pilot interventions, organized by grassroots clubs with support from the FIRE+ partners in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Ireland. The FIRE+ consortium made a maximum of 2,000 EUR available per intervention, following co-financing rules, and the grant had to be used to create activities in line with the aims and objectives of the FIRE+ project, namely the use of football as a tool for the inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants.

After careful assessment of the received applications, the successful grant recipients were announced on Monday, June 20, 2022, which is also World Refugee Day. The United Nations Refugee Agency has established World Refugee Day on June 20 to advocate for the rights of refugees and emphasize their right to safety. The day honours refugees worldwide and recognizes the courage of those forced to flee persecution and violence in their countries.

Within the FIRE+ project, pilot interventions play a pivotal role. For instance, the various football clubs selected for the project have already organized tournaments to foster a connection between the local population and the refugee population, promoting a spirit of sharing.

The consortium members of the FIRE+ project announced the following successful grant recipients:

- Younited Belgium (Belgium)
- Twilight Community Group CLG (Ireland)
- vv PCP (the Netherlands)
- JUNA Foot asbl (Belgium)
- FC Ente Bagdad/Vitesse Mayence (Germany)
- New Ross Celtic (Ireland)
- Champions Ohne Grenzen (Germany)
- TSV Seedorf-Sterley (Germany)



Guidelines for selected organizations

These successful grassroots organizations received detailed Guidelines for Grant Recipients. These guidelines included information about signing and accepting the grant agreement. It covered details on Publicity and Visibility, including a social media handbook (see Annex 2). The guidelines also explained communication with FIRE+ partners and Fare, the role of partners, and the reporting process.



4.1 Younited Belgium (Belgium)

Younited Belgium is an NGO with a strong focus on sports. The Younited teams train weekly, with recruitment and coaching conducted by social organizations. They train in preparation for Younited Belgium tournaments organized throughout the year. These tournaments are highlights in the players' and supporters' calendars, providing an opportunity for participation that boosts motivation for attending weekly training sessions and integrating into the team.

Apart from organizing events, Younited Belgium also:

- Establishes and supports Younited teams.
- Trains and supports coaches in Younited teams.
- Runs communication campaigns.

Event Description

Younited Belgium closely collaborated with ACFF, and both organizations decided to merge their events. Younited Belgium combined their pilot intervention activities with the FIRE+ national conference organized by ACFF.

Younited Belgium, in partnership with ACFF, organized a one-day tournament at the Proximus Base Camp in Tubize on October 12, 2022. The tournament involved seven teams representing clubs from the ACFF network: RFC Tournai, RFC Tournai Women, Jespo Comines, USC Jemappes, Mouscron Refugees, Worldteam Mouscron, and Younited Harre-Manhay. There were two women's teams and five men's teams. Some of the FIRE+ consortium members also joined the Younited teams.



Credit: Sport and Citizenship

The FIRE+ pilot intervention report:

After the tournament, participants were invited to lunch in the lobby of the RBFA building. Following lunch, the Younited teams visited the RBFA facilities, including changing rooms and the sports hall used by the Red Devils and Red Flames. The day concluded with the Younited teams, ACFF, ACFF clubs, and FIRE+ members attending the “More than a Game” conference.

Players from the Younited teams participated as panelists in a round table discussion on the theme of “inclusion of young refugees and unaccompanied foreign minors in and through football.” Other Younited players delivered powerful personal testimonies about the challenges they faced in life and how Younited Belgium and football serve as positive factors that help them overcome these challenges.

The “More than a Game” conference was organized as part of the FIRE+ project funded by the Erasmus+ program. Combining the pilot intervention with the conference and involving players as panelists, speakers, and participants added significant value.

A total of 130 participants took part in the Younited Belgium football tournament, including 36 refugees. The “More than a Game” conference saw another 80 participants in attendance.

Website: <https://younited.be/>

Country: Belgium

Type of organisation: NGO/Not-for-profit organisation

Focus of the organisation: Refugee inclusion and offering playing activities.



Credit: Sport and Citizenship



Credit: Sport and Citizenship



4.2 Twilight Community Group CLG (Ireland)

The Twilight Community Group, through its activities, endeavors to promote social inclusion, integration, and the advancement of all members of our communities.

Event Description

Twilight Community Group organizes an Integration Through Football Tournament that provides the opportunity for “New Communities” and existing Irish communities to come together, greet, play, and discuss football. With a network of charity partners and active Twilight Community Group Leaders in local communities, the organization is deeply embedded in its surroundings. During their pilot intervention in June 2022, they orchestrated a series of activities for both adults and children. They particularly emphasized the inclusion of women by forming mixed teams, each consisting of a minimum of two women. Participants from African Communities, Bengali, Syria, and a significant number of children from Ukraine engaged in these activities.



Credit: Sport and Citizenship

The event’s organization proved successful, benefitting from the organization’s strong foundation and network, which allowed them to incorporate additional activities into their existing training sessions. They surpassed their anticipated number of participants, directly reaching a total of 400 individuals in their activities. Among these participants, 150 were refugees.

Website: <https://www.twilight.ie/>

Country: Ireland

Type of organisation: Not for profit community group

Focus of the organisation: Refugee inclusion and offering playing activities.



4.3 vv. PCP (the Netherlands)

vv. PCP is a Dutch amateur football club located in Breda in the South of the Netherlands. The club boasts multiple senior and junior teams and actively engages with the community, organizing events that extend beyond football.

Event Description

The club organized a football tournament that brought together its own teams, refugee players from the local asylum-seeker centre, and teams from other clubs in Breda. This one-day football tournament featured 7-a-side teams and included not only matches but also speakers who shared their stories. In total, around 100 participants took part, including approximately 20 refugees. To facilitate the participation of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants, the club partnered with a local NGO that operates the local asylum-seeker centre, resulting in a positive outcome.

However, the organization of the event seemed to rely on a small number of individuals, which unfortunately hindered the event's promotion. Additionally, the club decided not to publish pictures of the participants due to privacy requests. The club's reporting was, regrettably, basic. While the FIRE+ consortium aimed to keep reporting for grant recipients as accessible as possible, the limited involvement from the club impacted both the implementation of and reporting on the pilot intervention.

Website: <https://www.pcpbreda.nl/>

Country: Netherlands

Type of organisation: Amateur or grassroots team/club

Focus of the organisation: Playing/ offering football activities



Credit: Pexels



4.4 JUNA Foot asbl (Belgium)

JUNA Foot asbl is a grassroots/amateur club located in Belgium.



Credit: Juna Foot asbl



Event description:

The club organized various events in the first half of 2022, including an exhibition and an inclusive football tournament under the name #footonsnousdespréjugés (let's get rid of prejudice). The aim of the tournament was to bring together people with diverse backgrounds. On the day, women, youth, refugees, and existing players all participated in the tournament. The teams were formed on the spot, mixing different profiles. Apart from the matches, JUNA Foot organized several other activities in which participants could share stories, get to know each other's cultures and backgrounds. These activities included exhibitions, games for children, and a variety of world cuisines.

A total of 54 participants took part in the events, including 20 asylum seekers/refugees. JUNA Foot aimed to reach 150 participants but unfortunately did not achieve this number.

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/JUNAFoot>

Country: Belgium

Type of organisation: Amateur/ grassroots team/club

Focus of the organisation: offering playing activities, inclusion of refugees



4.5 FC Ente Bagdad/Vitesse Mayence (Germany)

Since 2002, Ente Bagdad has played as a special team under the organizational umbrella of Vitesse Mayence. Vitesse Mayence places particular importance on their welcoming culture. Players from more than 20 nations have already laced up their football boots for the club. Since its foundation in 1973, the amateur football club has stood for integration, cosmopolitanism, and diversity and has received numerous awards for these efforts.

Event Description:

On September 4, 2022, FC Ente Bagdad organized their Encounter Festival. Young people and adults, both with and without a refugee background, gathered for a diverse festival featuring sports, music, and social activities. The primary focus was on fostering mutual understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Simultaneously, the festival, along with families and players, promoted intercultural exchange and strengthened team spirit. In addition to football activities, the club arranged a music festival and offered a variety of world cuisines, with participants from Afghanistan, Syria, Nepal, India, and Ukraine sharing their respective cultures. A total of 50 people participated in both activities, of whom 30 were refugees or asylum-seekers.

Website: <https://www.ente-bagdad.de/>

Country: Germany

Type of organisation: Amateur/ grassroots team/club

Focus of the organisation: offering playing activities, inclusion of refugees



Credit: FC Ente Bagdad/Vitesse Mayence



4.6 New Ross Celtic (Ireland)

New Ross Celtic is an amateur football club located in New Ross, Ireland. The club's core values centre around integrity, equality, and fair play. Given that the club primarily focuses on youth teams and engages with children, their ethos statement underscores these values. The approach of New Ross Celtic AFC is built upon principles that guide the football development within the club. Their philosophy revolves around ensuring that children and young people's football experiences are shaped by what is best for them. The child's developmental stages and abilities should determine the nature of the activities provided by the club.

Event Description



New Ross Celtic collaborated with local schools and the Football Association of Ireland to organize various activities. One such event was an Open Day that welcomed families to their facility, creating an inviting environment for all family members. Additionally, New Ross Celtic initiated a Schools Programme,

wherein coaches visited local schools to provide integrated coaching sessions for children. As part of the FIRE+ program, they also partnered with the FAI Summer Soccer Schools camps, fostering the integration of Syrian children into the local community through fun-filled interactions. Furthermore, New Ross Celtic established a pathway for the Syrian Community, aimed at making football participation more accessible by removing financial barriers and actively engaging with the community in a warm and welcoming manner. In total, New Ross Celtic saw 184 participants taking part in their three activities, including 15 refugees/ asylum-seekers.

Website: <https://www.newrossceltic.com/>

Country: Ireland

Type of organisation: Amateur/ grassroots team/club

Focus of the organisation: offering playing activities, inclusion of refugees



4.7 Champions ohne Grenzen (Germany)

CHAMPIONS ohne GRENZEN e.V. (CHoG) has been advocating for a sustainable culture of welcoming refugees in Germany since 2014. To achieve this, they primarily utilize easily accessible football and sports activities. Part of their work involves comprehensive pedagogical support during training sessions, as well as on-site social counselling and regular consultation hours for personalized assistance. Their social counselling services cover a range of needs, including education, employability, and qualifications.

Event Description

From November 25 to 27, 2022, Champions Ohne Grenzen organized a training camp for refugee women and girls. All participants were refugees, actively engaging in the organization and content of the training camp. This initiative served as an opportunity for refugee women and girls to come together.

These participants often face disadvantages and are frequently excluded from engaging in social activities. This weekend provided them with a chance to actively participate in society. They experienced a sense of belonging and took part in the excursion without any costs.

The weekend activities were held at a training facility, where participants had the opportunity to discover their strengths and potential. The sports sessions focused on fair play, social interaction, belonging, and diversity. These exercises aimed to develop life and social skills such as team spirit, empathy, a sense of responsibility, and leadership. As part of the training camp, Champions ohne Grenzen organized technical training sessions on football rules, a small football tournament on the field, and a workshop discussing women's leadership in sports. Participants who had developed their own sports projects shared their experiences, and there was also an information session about the latest legislative developments for refugees in Germany. In total, 31 female refugees participated in the Champions ohne Grenze weekend training camp.

Website: <https://www.championsohnegrenzen.com/>

Country: Germany

Type of organisation: NGO

Focus of the organisation: offering playing activities, inclusion of refugees



Credit: Champions ohne Grenzen



4.8 TSV Seedorf-Sterley (Germany)

TSV Seedorf-Sterley is a sports club that offers various sports, including football. The club was the eighth successful grant recipient. Their initial plan was to cooperate with their city to set up mini-playing fields and a sports station in a public area within the city. Their motto is “Integration, Inclusion, and Fun for Children, Youths, and Adults.”

Unfortunately, during the preparations for the pilot intervention, the organizers encountered setbacks that led to their withdrawal from the project. The main reason was a lack of volunteers following the Covid-19 pandemic, which increased the workload for the remaining volunteers at the club. The FIRE+ consortium provided as much support as possible, including a flexible timeline, but the organizers did not experience an improvement in their situation within the project timeframe. Despite efforts, the FIRE+ consortium was unable to find a replacement for this organization, resulting in the implementation of seven pilot interventions instead of the intended eight.

Website: <https://tsv-seedorf-sterley.de/>

Country: Germany

Type of organisation:

Focus of the organisation: offering playing activities, inclusion of refugees



Credit: TSV Seedorf-Sterley

5. Outcomes

The pilot interventions of the FIRE project established several goals. The overall objective of the FIRE+ pilot interventions was to assess the experience and insights of active grassroots football clubs in creating and implementing welcome programs or initiatives. The aim of “piloting local interventions” was to adapt international good practices and recommendations by tailoring them to each context, thereby giving them local resonance. Therefore, FIRE+ aimed to stimulate grassroots organizations to initiate initiatives, interventions, and programs aimed at including refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. The goal of organizing football activities and opening clubs to engage with refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants was combined with the opportunity to establish cooperation between national football governing authorities and grassroots organizations. Last but not least, the pilot interventions organized by grassroots organizations provided the FIRE+ consortium with valuable insights into the needs of grassroots organizations regarding the implementation and organization of football activities involving refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. This experience builds upon the outcomes and lessons learned from the first FIRE project and will assist other grassroots organizations by providing guidelines, tools, and tips to implement their own activities.

Types of Organizations and Activities

The variety of organizations receiving a FIRE+ grant demonstrates that using football to work with refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants is not solely a task for traditional grassroots football clubs. The FIRE+ project witnessed pilot interventions organized by community groups, NGOs, grassroots football clubs, and amateur football clubs. This diversity of organizations was also reflected in the range of activities organized, participants reached, and the ways in which the pilot interventions were executed. For instance, Champions ohne Grenzen included female refugees in the organizational process and placed a specific focus on female refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. Champions ohne Grenzen set themselves apart by emphasizing non-football activities to empower participants. Similarly, Younited of Belgium adopted a similar approach, where participants engaged in an international conference organized by FIRE+ partner ACFF. This provided participants with an opportunity to share their experiences, approaches, motivations, and stories with an international audience of football stakeholders through presentations and panel discussions. Other organizations primarily centered their pilot interventions around football activities, aiming to bring together local participants and refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants on the field and subsequently through activities focused on cultural exchange.

Overview

The seven pilot interventions organized a total of 21 activities, in which nearly 1000 individuals (949) participated. It's important to note that this number does not strictly indicate unique participants, as the same individual could have taken part in different activities. Out of these 949 participants, 302 individuals (32% of the total) were from refugee, migrant, and asylum-seeker communities.



All pilot interventions

Total number of participants = **949**
Total number of refugee participants = **302**



Younited Belgium

Total number of participants = **130**
Total number of refugee participants = **36**



Juna Foot

Total number of participants = **54**
Total number of refugee participants = **20**



Champions ohne Grenzen

Total number of participants = **31**
Total number of refugee participants = **31**



FC Ente Bagdad/Vitesse Mayence

Total number of participants = **50**
Total number of refugee participants = **30**



vv PCP

Total number of participants = **100**
Total number of refugee participants = **20**



New Ross Celtic

Total number of participants = **184**
Total number of refugee participants = **15**



Twilight Community Group

Total number of participants = **400**
Total number of refugee participants = **150**



Testimonials

“It was very nice to get out of Berlin. We had a lot of fun. We did a lot of sports. We had a house among us, which was great. In training we don’t spend so much time together. Doing something together was great. I like football and it was great to be active all weekend.” – Participant, Champions ohne Grenzen (Germany)

“We all love soccer and events like this allow all of our group to play with other communities and nations. It is a way for some of us to go play more regular league football” – Participant, Twilight Community Group (Ireland).

“I don’t even see my work as being a coach, I see it more as a moment of privilege with my lads and sharing. So, it’s a very pleasant moment, which fits in well with my duties and my work. It’s all about people, and each time I work with a very different audience” - Fedasil Mouscron social coach, Younited Belgium (Belgium).

“As an organiser, it was really fun to accompany the participants through the weekend. Women do less sport than men, the motivation they showed was proof that women are just as interested in sport as men. During the weekend, the participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas, network and meet new people.” – Organiser, Champions ohne Grenzen (Germany).

“Why not football, given the values it can bring in terms of inclusion, also in terms of anchoring in a group, in a society, for people who unfortunately have none or none left. I’m particularly pleased with what I’ve heard today in terms of the people involved. The positive angle, the human angle, the heart angle and what we’ve heard should, I think, give courage and spirit.” - Administrator ACFF, Younited Belgium (Belgium).

6. Lessons Learned

The FIRE+ project's pilot interventions faced a significant challenge in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic. **The pandemic impacted the timeline of the implementation of the pilot interventions. Side effects of the pandemic resulted in the fact that not all eight pilot interventions were organized.** The seven pilot interventions also reached almost the same total number of participants as the first FIRE project. The pilot interventions in the initial FIRE project were implemented in 2019. The FIRE+ project organized 3 pilot interventions more but did not manage to reach more participants. It is not exactly clear why, but the side effects of Covid-19 can play a role.

The implemented pilot interventions were carried out successfully. All seven pilot interventions managed to work with and/or include refugees, asylum-seekers, and/or migrants. Another goal reached was the cooperation with national football authorities and grassroots organizations, especially in Belgium and Ireland; this was a success.

However, in some instances, the timeframe of implementation had to be adjusted. Both the FIRE+ consortium and the grant recipients showed to be flexible and adjusted to the new timeframe. In general, **working with volunteer-operated grassroots organizations means the time frame in which activities are to take place must be clearly defined.** A structured cooperation between the consortium and the grassroots organizations, between the closing of the call and the actual organization of the event, is essential to make sure realistic time frames are set out and respected. **A positive result of the pilot interventions was the cooperation between FIRE+ project partners, the grassroots organizations, and in some instances, external partners.**

Visibility

Supporting grassroots organizations through financial support, such as in the case of the FIRE+ consortium, provides some great opportunities. One of these opportunities is to create a platform and more visibility for grassroots organizations and their work. The involvement of national football governing authorities, such as the ACFF and the Football Association of Ireland, provides an opportunity to reach an even broader and bigger audience. The challenge lies, however, in the cooperation and communication between grassroots organization and FIRE+ project partners and in managing expectations. As a result of changes in the timeline and the aftereffects of Covid-19, the pilot interventions were held throughout the year. This made it difficult to create a social media momentum for the pilot interventions. **One piece of advice would be to organize the events in the same month** to have a **coordinated online campaign** to promote and highlight the activities, events, and work of the grassroots organizations and project partners.

In the first FIRE project, grassroots organizations struggled with creating visibility and collecting great audio-visual materials from the organized activities. **To support the grassroots organizations, the FIRE+ consortium developed a social media handbook and guidelines.** Some groups also struggled to disseminate their activities and work on social media. Most of the grassroots organizations

struggled to submit high-quality photos/videos and testimonials. One solution is, if funding allows, **to reserve budget for a professional photographer**. Another piece of advice is **to support grassroots organizations even more around the day itself to promote their activities**. This also means that project partners involved should create their own social media posts.

Working with refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants requires utmost care around privacy, and we therefore advise against taking or using pictures of minors without the written consent of their guardians or parents. We also advise against taking pictures of asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants. There should be **clear guidelines** in place to **advise groups on the safeguarding of participants** and to produce audio-visual reporting taking into account the privacy requirements.

Reporting

Whether a funding or participating entity, the importance of monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the produced work cannot be overstated. It enables assessing the relevance and effectiveness of followed methodologies and implemented activities.

As part of the reporting, the FIRE+ consortium focused on both qualitative and quantitative reporting. The grant recipients submitted **an online narrative report** including a description of their organized activities and testimonies of participants, combined with data on the number of direct and indirect participants, the number of asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants, and the duration of activities. The online reporting forms were available in the **local language** of each participating organization. Having the online report in the local language removed any possible language barrier. In most countries, English is not the first language of use, thus creating difficulties for grassroots representatives to follow the given guidelines and complete the report. The local partners played a significant role in offering an assistance service in translating guidelines or reporting forms, translating the reporting forms, and translating the received reports.

The challenge is to find a balance between the detailed reporting required from grassroots organizations and the accessibility for groups to provide the information. For monitoring and evaluation purposes, a more detailed insight about the participants could be useful, for example, a distinction between male and female participants, existing and new members of the club, and maybe even a distinction between refugees and other migrant groups. The FIRE+ project, however, decided not to ask for these detailed pieces of information as it would increase the workload of the grassroots organizations significantly, requiring a more personal check with participants or a more detailed registration process, which could be unmanageable for mostly voluntarily run organizations.

The implementation of the pilot interventions and working with the grassroots organizations posed challenges, but also had many positive outcomes. The variety of organizations involved showed that there is a demand to use football as a tool to work on the inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. The received reporting delivered the proof that there is an interest from participants, both locals and refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants, to join in this kind of activities and events. It also showed that the demand is transnational and that it offers the opportunity to organize more than solely playing activities.

7. Recommendations

The implementation of four pilot interventions in the first FIRE project led to a set of recommendations. The FIRE+ project has implemented almost all of its own recommendations. For example, the FIRE+ project transferred 80% of the grant amount in advance to the grassroots organizations to support the organization of the activities. The FIRE+ project further allowed for a longer time-frame to organize their activities, kept guidelines and reporting mechanisms as accessible as possible, including translating reporting forms into local languages, and the FIRE+ consortium established clear communication procedures with the grant recipients. However, there is always room for improvement, and based on the implementation, experiences, and feedback from the seven grant recipients, the FIRE+ project has the following recommendations:

- **Organize (online) meetings with the grant recipients and the relevant project stakeholders before, during, and after the implementation of the activities.** Communication with grant recipients in many cases was via email.

- **Focus on supporting grassroots** organizations with visibility in presenting their activities, results, and impact.

- **Build structural partnerships between grassroots organizations and external groups** such as regional/national football governing bodies and/or refugee/asylum-seeker centers.

- **Include refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in your organization/the organization of activities**, not only as participants in your activities.

The FIRE+ consortium wants to reiterate:

- Aim to organize follow-up events or regular playing activities for applying grassroots organizations.
- Provide grassroots organizations with partial funding prior to the event.
- Keep reporting mechanisms accessible and understandable for grassroots organizations.

8. Conclusion



Credit: Juna Foot asbl

In 2022 and 2023, stories about migration dominate the headlines on a daily basis. These developments underscore the ongoing need to engage with refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. Football has proven to be a successful tool for bringing people together in such circumstances. There is a growing demand for grassroots and professional clubs to collaborate and include refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. Equally, refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants themselves express a desire to participate and play.

In various European countries, migration policies have taken a stricter approach. Some governments in Europe actively discourage migration and are hesitant in welcoming asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants. Public debates and policies tend to emphasize the perceived negative impacts of migration. In this context, supporting and organizing one-day grassroots events stands as a powerful means to unite members of local communities with newcomers. It can contribute to shaping a positive narrative, and potentially alter the negative perceptions surrounding refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. Fortunately, many national football associations and grassroots organizations recognize the potential of football to foster social inclusion and the positive contributions that asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants can make to society. This recognition has led to a welcoming attitude, with a willingness for asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants to join clubs and engage in football.

While one-day events serve as a promising starting point, it is crucial for organizations to extend their efforts beyond these events. Following up and continuing to actively involve the local refugee community in year-round activities and organizational structures is key. To maximize the impact of funded activities, providing clear support, guidelines, and instructions to grassroots organizations remains essential. It's not just about working for refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants, but rather working with them, acknowledging their contributions and involvement.



Credit: Sport and Citizenship

Appendix 1

Guidelines for applications to participate in the FIRE+ pilot interventions project

<https://footballwithrefugees.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/annex-1-guidelines-for-applications-to-participate.pdf>

Appendix 2

Guidelines for the FIRE+ project pilot intervention Grant Recipients 2022

https://footballwithrefugees.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/annex-2-fire-guidelines_successful-applications.pdf



The FIRE+ pilot intervention report



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