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Promoting Active Inclusion of Disadvantaged Persons Excluded from the regular participation into grassroots sports

E-Brochure

Partners:

CEIPES
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FOOTURA

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Content

1. Analysis of the Countries
2. Target groups
3. Accessible sport:examples, recommendations and good practices

What is the PAIS project about?

The project's overall objective is to increase the activation of disadvantaged persons and sport personnel and their inclusion by improving their skills, education, qualification and facilitating their integration into grassroots sports.This overarching objective is broken down into specific purposes involving concrete interventions on three fronts:

Purpose 1: Improve the efficiency of sport and social service workers especially those involved into grassroots sports as a way of promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups by assisting professionals from the organizations for the visually impaired and adapted education teachers.

Purpose 2: Empower vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and give them the besic skills and experience required to break down the hurdles they encounter on simple participating into grassroots sports through a training programmes developed by specialists with experience on the inclusion of disadvantaged persons.

Purpose 3: Foster improvements in service delivery by, raising public awareness, and developing effective partnerships among key stakeholders (families, social and youth workers, special education teachers, volunteers, sports clubs, non-governmental organizations involved in service delivery, social partners, education and training providers) to produce results on the ground.

Project expected results:

The competences and skills of professionals working closely with the target group will be greatly strengthened through the training programmes, developed with the specialists on the subject, thereby promoting efficiency.

The participation into grassroots sports of disadvantaged people will be enhanced by promoting the idea that sport is for everyone. By developing new training programmes developed with the target group taken into account established facilities and specialists will be able to offer their services to a broader public.

Cooperation among local NGOs will be strengthened through targeted networking and partnership-building activities that will clearly aim at leading the target groups to active participation into grassroots sports.

Key stakeholders will benefit as the project will provide recommendations and help improve knowhow and service frameworks that are needed for the replication of best practices.

Stakeholder and public awareness will be raised through volunteer promotion to advocate the need of inclusion of the the disadvantaged persons and awareness-raising events will be held with the aim to dismantle prejudice and attitudinal barriers preventing the Action’s target groups from participation into any grassroots sport.

1. Analyses of the country
Italy:

Just to give some numbers, in 2018 it is estimated that over **1.8 million** families lived in a condition of absolute poverty (it means that there is the need of essential resources such as food, water, home, clothes, medicines.) for a total of **5 million** of individuals (8.4% of the population), while over **3 million** families lived in a condition of relative poverty (it is the impossibility of using goods or services in relation to the average per capita income of a given country; those in relative poverty, therefore, could still have the minimum necessary for survival but not take advantage of all the possibilities and services available in a country), for a total of **9 million** people (15% of the population). The incidence of poverty on Italian territory is mainly concentrated in the southern part.

As regards disability, around 13 million and 177 thousand people with any type of disability have been estimated.
It is an estimate made up of people aged 15 and over who appear to have a very wide range of disabilities, defined as functional limitations, disability or

This definition includes different types of disabilities, ranging from the maximum degree of difficulty in the essential functions of daily life, to milder limitations, such as chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, senile dementia, or behavior disorders.

Regarding disadvantaged people due to their socio-relational conditions, in Italy the number of people socially excluded for crime and drugs reasons continues to rise, homeless people are more than 50.000 (mainly in the north of the country) and there are about 200.000 refugees who have serious difficulties to be socially included. About this last topic, it will be explored later on.

One of the main causes of exclusion is precisely the inability to actively participate in social life (for reasons of poverty, disability, and all those reasons mentioned above).

The goal of our society should be to create the conditions to promote the development of all the potentialities of the person, to foster the realization of his/her rights as well as the awareness of his/her social duties as citizen and to ensure the functioning of all his/her abilities.

There is an annual report that measures the rate of inclusion in the world that is called WeWorld Index. The final ranking is the result of the evaluation of the progress of a country obtained by observing the living conditions of the subjects most at risk of exclusion, through the analysis of different economic and social indicators. The report uses 34 indicators, not only economic but also social, 14 of which concern the context in which children live: environment, access to water, presence or absence of conflicts, democracy ... There are also about 20 indicators that concern the areas of minors and women's social needs. Inclusion is intended in an innovative sense, in the

[1] ISTITUTO NAZIONALE DI STATISTICA, Le statistiche dell'Istat sulla povertà 2018, available at https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/06/La-povert%C3%A0-in-Italia-2018.pdf
[2] ISTITUTO NAZIONALE DI STATISTICA, Inclusione sociale delle persone con limitazioni funzionali, invalidità o cronicità gravi, 2015, available at https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/165366

1. Analyses of the country
Italy:

perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals. It concerns not only the economic sphere, but all dimensions of the social: educational, economic, health, cultural, political, environmental and so on.

In Italy, inclusion is classified as only "sufficient" compared to the "good inclusion" of most major European countries.

The inclusion of women, adolescents and children for example, more at risk of social exclusion and poverty than adult males, in Italy does not improve; in fact there are no substantial positive changes in the context of gender and child violence and women's inclusion remains limited at the economic and social level. **Italy, 27th** with 57 points, is worse than the main European democracies **France 12th**, **Germany 14th**, **Great Britain 16th**, but also **Bulgaria 24th**, **Czech Republic 19th** and **Portugal 20th.**
If, for health and human and economic capital, Italy continues to benefit from a moderate position income, the same cannot be said for the economic inclusion of women and the inclusion of young people in the world of work. In 5 years, the indicators on environmental safety worsen and the indicators relating to gender and child violence do not improve.

Only by focusing on the promotion of social policies aimed at promoting the economic and political inclusion of everyone, the maintenance of young students in education, lowering the unemployment rate and greater attention to environmental sustainability, especially in peripheral areas and disadvantaged, Italy can hope to return to the levels of the main European democracies .

As things stand, it is clear that in Italy it is necessary to implement as many activities aimed at inclusion as possible. One means can be sport.
If on one hand the concept of sport has always evoked the idea of corporeality, today it can also be considered a central element of social policies, of the welfare system, as a vector of psycho-physical and more general wellness. The latter concept, which embraces multiple dimensions of our life, punctually identifies the potential of sport.
Well-being, in fact, understood in a holistic way, and in line with the definition of the World Health Organization, involves physical, mental and spiritual health, but also the realization of individual potentials in terms of relationships and social expectations, understood as fulfillment of the human role in the context of life.

[3] WE WORLD ONLUS, We world index 2019, 2019, available at https://www.weworld.it/index2019/

1. Analyses of the country

Bulgaria:

The situation in Bulgaria regarding the opportunities for active inclusion of disadvantaged social groups in regular sports activities is determined by several aspects:

1. Availability of sports infrastructure for practicing mass sport

2. Existence of sports and social professionals, open sports clubs and organizations to inform, promote, organize and conduct such activities

3. Existence of economic, geographical, social and other obstacles.

1. With regard to sports infrastructure for practicing mass sports, the situation is extremely unsatisfactory in terms of accessibility, social orientation and the idea of mass, and in cities outside Sofia, mainly small settlements - in terms of the availability of such infrastructure. The lack of an adequate policy for the development of mass sport affects not only ordinary citizens, but even more so citizens with disabilities, of minority origin, in a difficult economic and social situation, youth people, etc.

2. With regard to sports and social professionals, open sports clubs and organizations to inform, promote, organize and conduct such activities - for example the sports clubs in Bulgaria work for better vision of their product (field results, financial results) in general and they don't work so much for the sport itself and for the good social examples that people – and mostly young people – can achieve and some of them do achieve through sport. Sport could be inclusion tool in the beginning but then it could be a career opportunity or golden lifetime positive habit.

Most important factors for successful development of the idea for more and more mass (including various unjustified social groups) are: infrastructure and qualified sport coaches (specialists) - good pedagogues. There are many examples that talent/potential of children/youths expresses differently in different conditions - much better in good conditions (as infrastructure, coaches, moral support, etc.). Unfortunately there are many examples when talented youths don't develop their sport potential / or don't involve in the society only because lack of good conditions for that. That's why for us the basic and most important conditions for succesful working of a sport club (organization) regarding its development program, are sport infrastructure and qualified coaches.

There are many factors behind this economic, geographical, social and other obstacles. For example, the economic and financial conditions to exercise regularly or even once are one of the major restrictive measures (provided that the right infrastructure and sports facilities are available). The second restrictive measure, which also covers a large proportion of ordinary citizens, the youths and those at risk of social exclusion (due to various vulnerabilities), is geographical - and in particular the disproportionate sporting opportunities in the big city and small populated places.

1. Analyses of the country

Macedonia:

Sport is a powerful tool for the inclusion of everyone. This is one of the fields where everyone can genuinely find themselves. The right mix of sports and practice of various skills related to sport, can be extremely important and beneficial for the development of oneself. As is the case everywhere in the world, it is the same in Macedonia, that sport is and can be used as a way toward social inclusion. Sport is truly for everyone. For children and youth, for adults and the elderly, for people with physical and intellectual disabilities. With good organization, logistics and resources, space can be created for the involvement of everyone in sports. In Macedonia, the institutions that develop sports and are responsible for the inclusion of all through various programs and strategies are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Agency for Youth and Sports, municipalities, as well as various sports clubs and associations. Through various programs, they aim to increase the involvement of all groups equally.

According to the Law on Sports, it is of public interest in the field of sports to encourage sports activities of children and youth within the national sports federations; organizing and conducting sports training and competitions to train athletes to achieve top sports results; encouraging the realization of the programs of the sports federations; encouraging and assisting in organizing sports events and manifestations; maintenance and operation of existing and planning and construction of sports facilities of public interest; health care, pension and disability insurance, accident insurance compensation and risks.

Through the **Agency for Youth and Sports** as a competent institution for this area, infrastructure projects have been realized that aim to improve the possibility for practicing sports skills.

In the past years, the following facilities were built, **artificial rock** (built in 2012), **35 sports halls, 50 auxiliary football fields, 100 multipurpose playgrounds and 100 tennis courts.**

The goal is to provide free use of sports facilities, so that everyone can build a healthy lifestyle. Through other legal solutions and strategies, the Agency supports the development of sports among young people. Investments in infrastructure, scholarships and other types of support are aimed at improving participation in sport for all.

When it comes to the involvement of marginalized and vulnerable groups, in addition to the Agency, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, as well as national federations and associations are involved with their projects. Although in recent years, international funds have opened opportunities for the practice of sports for these groups, additional efforts are needed to enable full inclusion of these people through sport. Additional infrastructure, resources and trained people are needed to help these groups fully realize their rights.

Additionally, there is a need for a National Strategy that would solve the inclusion of these groups not only in sports but in all other spheres of social life.

2. Target groups

Basically project's target groups are different vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, broken down by different characteristics - people with socio-economic obstacles, people with disabilities and people with migrant background. Although there is not a constitutional definition of 'disadvantaged persons', the people who falls into this category are:

People who are in financial difficulty (indigents, lacking the means to survive)

People who, due to physical or mental conditions, suffer of a situation of fragility and weakness (such as disabled people or not self-sufficient old people)

People who are disadvantaged due to socio-relational factors (examples can be detainees, abandoned minors, refugees)

The disadvantage conditions may be to some extent provisional, relating to a subject only for a certain period of time (think about prisoners or those without subsistence) or can be permanent such as the condition of disability resulting from untreatable physical or mental factors. In general thus, in Italy **four** disadvantaged groups are legally identified. They result from **mental factors, physical factors, economic factors and socio-relational factors.**

3. Accessible sport: examples, recomendations and good practices

The truth is that sport is not always accessible to everyone, and this is especially true for disadvantaged persons or for people who are socially excluded for different kinds of reasons.

Sport is a vehicle for inclusion, participation and social aggregation as well as a tool for psychophysical well-being and prevention. Furthermore, it plays a fundamental social role as an education and training tool that allows the development of skills and abilities essential for the balanced growth of each individual.

ITALIAN EXAMPLES, RECOMENDATIONS AND GOODPRACTICES IN PAIS PROJECT

Breaking down social, cultural and economic barriers between Italian and foreign citizens and promoting the social inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and holders of international protection is one of the great issues that is being worked on in Italy, and which needs new initiatives to come to positive solutions.

There are at least three factors that come into play by configuring themselves as barriers to accessing positive sport:

1. certain social groups may prove particularly difficulty to the assumption of the positive values of integration due to the influence of their ascribed social category and cultural background

2. specific social groups may therefore be precluded from accessing quality sports due to the still subsidiary importance socially attributed to physical education at school level, and also due to the high costs of extracurricular sport

3. a substantial element is precisely the didactics of sport, which will have to overcome the exclusive logic of specialisms and become a driving force for social well-being .

Concerning the last point, it explains why there is the need to improve skills, education and qualification of trainers and sport personnel through formal and non-formal education.

BULGARIAN EXAMPLES, RECOMENDATIONS AND GOODPRACTICESIN PAIS PROJECT

In terms of healthy lifestyles and regular exercise of people with socio-economic obstacles, Bulgaria is among the countries with not good enough conditions. Socio-economic difficulties accompany a large part of the population, especially in smaller settlements. Of course, there are more and better conditions for practicing mass sport and leading a healthy lifestyle in Sofia, but in other cities there are many obstacles to this - lack of infrastructure and events for mass sport, financial obstacles, lack of qualified trainers and coaches, etc. In order to get to the heart of the problem and to reach as many people, young people and organizations as possible (and to have a more meaningful effect in places that need it), we decided to organize our events as a priority outside Sofia.

In order to contribute to the more active involvement of people with socio-economic obstacles and young people from different parts of Bulgaria in regular practice

3. Accessible sport: examples, recomendations and good practices

of sports and health activities, we have created a number of sports initiatives combining theoretical and practical impact. The initiatives were to do a number of sports-health seminars and outdoor sports training in different regions of the country - the villages of Kiten and Varben (small village in poor developed region where people have no conditions for sports), as well as the cities of Vratsa (part of the poorest region in the EU - the northwest part of Bulgaria, mainly disadvantaged by geographical and social (economical) indication) and Sofia.

The main objectives of the activities were:
1. Counteract and act preventively with regard to the risk of social exclusion due to various factors: geographical, economic, social or ethnic vulnerability

2. Develop youth entrepreneurship and EU opportunities awareness (through program modules)

3. Promote an active and healthy lifestyle

4. Create an opportunity for additional social community and new friendships.

The two-day workshops on the PAIS project - which aims to promote the active inclusion of people unequally engaged in recreational and sport activities - was distinguished by several important things:

- great interest in the topics and applications from young people from different parts of Bulgaria, mainly disadvantaged by geographical and social (economical) indication

- participation of over 50 (in total) selected young people who spent the weekends together and had the opportunity to get to know each other, learn more about the topics involved and play many different sports

- active participation of all participants during seminars, discussions, sports activities, cultural evening, etc.

- through the participation of representatives of organizations and sports clubs involved in the subjects and representing various sports, youths had the chance to learn more and practice new sports, to discuss opportunities and concrete ideas as well as suggestions for future action in this direction.

- at the end of the activities, all young people declared their satisfaction with the seminar, as well as appreciated the program and its implementation, as well as the overall project framework.

During the activities we formed important partnerships with Bulgarian Youth Association, Vratsa Youth Center, Vratsa Cycling Club, Herbalkan healthy society, representatives of various youth and sports organizations, informal youth groups, etc.

Program of sports activities included demonstrations and sports games on:

1. Basic phyisical exercises
2. Street Fitness
3. Frisbee
4. Football
5. Table tennis
6. Cycling
7. Hiking tours
8. Swimming
9. Discussion and (self) evaluation

3. Accessible sport: examples, recomendations and good practices

MACEDONIAN EXAMPLES, RECOMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES IN PAIS PROJECT

When we discuss about equal opportunities in practicing grassroot sport in Macedonia we must take several key points into consideration.

First - Macedonia is one of the countries in Europe with the lowest living standard.

Second – Macedonia is currently on the 43 position of 50 countries in Europe regarding Nominal GDP.

Third - according to Human Development Report 2019 Inequalities in Human Development[1] , Macedonia has substantial inequality of 10.5% in education and 20.3% in income.

Gender inequality is also one of the most important issues for our target in the PAIS project. GNI per capita for males is double of that for females. Labor force participation rate is 42.7 for females and 67.5 for males. We also must take into account the fact that to do any more serious research on any topic we are missing data about the population in the population is a mystery. The most recent census figure that is widely used in from 2002.

According our research when we observe marginalized groups we can conclude and divide them into several categories. Those that originate from socio-economic obstacles, gender related obstacles regarding income, education and career opportunities and of course ethnicity as Macedonia is multiethnic society.

Must be noted as important that we are not discussing the part of population that is living with some physical or mental disability. We will cite a research paper published in 2017 by the Helsinki committee for human rights of the Republic of Macedonia.[3]

“Despite the solid legal framework, a large number of public and private facilities do not provide physical accessibility and fail to offer information and services in an accessible way in accordance with the CRPD. Such a trend leads to the further exclusion of these fellow citizens in their realization of social, economic and cultural rights.

Due to the traditional matrix in our society, primary care providers for the specific needs of their children are, most commonly, women, i.e. mothers who are the main carriers of the care system. Hence, women with disabilities, who are also mothers, often do not want to be perceived as a “burden”, so they might renounce the right to practical help and support that is offered in the system in order to ensure the opportunity to be accepted as care providers.

Existing policies often focus on disability as a unitary concept, where a gender neutral approach to the issue is traditionally used. What they fail to consider is the discrimination on multiple grounds that women face due to their gender, as persons with disabilities, as mem- bers of different ethnic, age or educational groups, and are often more impoverished and less active than men with disabilities in similar circumstances.”

All the cited conclusions are viable when we put

[1]UNDP Human Development Report 2019 Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report Macedonia
[2]https://balkaninsight.com/2020/05/14/wildly-wrong-north-macedonias-population-mystery/
[3]https://mhc.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Analysis-of-the-situation-of-people-with-physical-disabilities-in-the-Republic-of-Macedonia.pdf

3. Accessible sport: examples, recommendations and good practices

practicing sport as an activity.

Additionally, the project researched the opportunities for practicing sport of children and young adults that are living in a single parent household. No matter the socio-economic background of the single parent household. According to a publication from 2018 from the GEOBALCANICA conference[4]. Divorce rate raised by 4 times during the period from 1991 to 2016. Or out of every 1000 marriages, we had 32 divorces in 1991 and 150 in 2016. Updated reliable data cannot be found, but unofficially the divorce rate in 2019 was even higher.

We can conclude that very large percent of the population in Macedonia is living in a divided non equal condition.

Having in mind all the data and research cited above a large portion of the population can be classified as marginalized. These two categories in particular:

- People with physical or mental disability,
- Women - single mothers and divorced

For the purpose of the PAIS project team Django focused on those two marginalized groups that weren't present in the other partners targets.

The first marginalized group part of the population that was the target of the PAIS project. The visually impaired adults, children and young adults. They have mostly physical but often both physical and mental disability. The biggest obstacle for participation in sport is general accessibility to indoor facilities or outdoor recreational spots. There is in most cases none at all.

Through the first workshop this obstacle was confirmed by the national association for sport of the visually impaired.
Although some specific sport activities were possible to attend such as football for the visually impaired the main obstacle for the activity was simply the transport to and back from that facility that had the necessary equipment for the activity.
The same was confirmed for the hiking trails on the popular mountain near the capital Skopje.

This group of young and adults just wanted to be able to go on their own to their preferred facility for sport. This is in most cases impossible, because of the infrastructure in place (we are talking about the capital city of the country), or the transport options are often limited only to be physically active in the vicinity of their home.

The main objectives of the sport events were:

- To show that there are groups that are marginalized and put in the shade of "normal" exercise programs, facilities and outdoor activities.
- To offer an activity for the marginalized group that is available but not visible to them.
- To have fun and enjoy with other likeminded people.

The PAIS project did an event with young adults that are visually impaired. They were riding stationary bikes. Before the class instructions were given to the participants but they were exercising with the regular group at the gym. Other events were done during an open expo for health, fitness and wellness where the

4 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327855472_DIVORCED_MARRIAGES_IN_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_MACEDONIA_REGIONAL_ANALYSES_OF_THE_FREQUENCY

3. Accessible sport: examples, recommendations and good practices

groups could see and participate in the activities. The theme for the events was "Let's get physical". Various options to participate into sport activities were presented to the participants of the selected disadvantaged group, in this case both single parents and visually impaired groups were present.

The last event was organized post the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic that is/was still dominating all aspects of life and available sport activities.

A group of disadvantaged young adults that are lining in a single parent household had the chance to play tennis with an adult or senior in a mixed couple's format. Both, the young adults and the seniors were playing and sharing experience.

To summarize, the population in general in Macedonia can be treated as a disadvantaged one. As a result of this we have many groups that are excluded from regular participation into the, education, workforce, health services and almost all day-to-day activities.

Sport as a place to develop and distract from hard reality should not have an additional barrier to be practiced. Sport has the power to help, the youth, the children, the adults and the seniors only if they all have the same basic, elementary access to practice it.