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Manual

Curricular Innovation for Synergy between Community Sport and Activism



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Understanding the CISCA Project, Aims and Goals

Curricular Innovation for Synergy between Community Sport and Activism (CISCA) aims to enhance “inclusion and diversity” by fostering cooperation between grassroots sports and citizen activism. The project is funded by the European Union and implemented by partner organizations in Croatia, Austria, Poland, Germany, Greece, and Italy.

The specific objectives of CISCA include:

- Strengthening the interaction between sports and local communities by supporting grassroots sports organizations and events as tools for community building and social activism. This includes creating a curriculum, training local operators, and organizing community programs conducted by the partner organizations in their respective home countries.
- Exploring how sports can address the challenges of social exclusion in deprived urban neighborhoods based on the curriculum and training format, as well as an e-learning course within the “CISCA Web Platform, Digital Learning Tools, and Interactive Networking Architecture”.
- Identifying and disseminating innovative approaches that highlight the social and community aspects of sports through research.

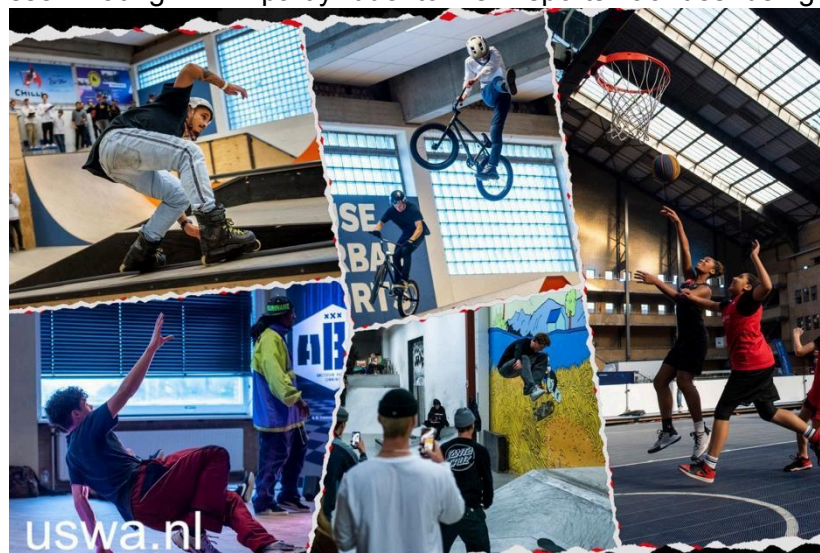
The urban population within European Union member nations has significantly increased over the past decades. While most urban residents live in small and medium-sized cities, an

increasing number inhabit the 20 largest functional urban areas (17.8% in 2015), which face issues of poverty, inequality, social exclusion, and health problems.

Social exclusion and vulnerability also impact mental and physical health, particularly in vulnerable neighborhoods, abandoned historical centers, and former industrial areas. The concept of making cities “healthier” is now prevalent in various European urban programs aimed at integrated urban development, and it is highlighted in the European Urban Agenda. However, the role of sports as a catalyst for health and social inclusion in this context remains underexplored, which presents an opportunity for CISCA.

The potential for sports as a community-based action for social inclusion has been overlooked in recent decades. The World Health Organization’s 2015 “Physical Activity Strategy for the WHO European Region 2016-2023” links the decline in sports activity in urban neighborhoods to urban design decisions that discourage physical activity, including increased vehicle traffic.

Eurobarometer findings (2014) indicate that participation in organized sports is decreasing in inner-city neighborhoods, partly due to new sports facilities being



built on city outskirts, making sports less accessible for residents in deprived areas. This raises concerns about equal access to urban spaces for all individuals, including those with disabilities and vulnerabilities. Addressing social and spatial conditions in these neighborhoods is recognized by the Urban Poverty Partnership of the European Urban Agenda (Urban Agenda for the EU, 2019, p. 30).

The United Nations' "New Urban Agenda" (2016) aims for cities where all individuals can enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and fundamental freedoms. Ensuring better access to infrastructure and healthcare is a key priority for the new Cohesion Policies beyond 2020.



Who is CISCA Designed for in an Urban Social and Community Environment?

This project is focused on engaging educators and activists in the fields of sports and civil society, including both formal and informal groups, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These stakeholders play a crucial role in strengthening communities, particularly those comprised of citizens living in neighborhoods that experience socio-economic marginalization and urban decay.

The project also targets policymakers, including municipalities, city councils, public agencies, and regional and national

governments with mandates in sports and urban policies. Furthermore, the media will be engaged to promote the project's objectives and raise awareness about the needs of marginalized communities. In addition, including experts, academics, and research institutions that focus on the nexus of sports and urban policies provides valuable insights and further support for the initiative.

Achieving Project Objectives

Sports promote interactions that support inclusion and integration, combat discrimination and racism, develop social skills and competencies, and can strengthen social cohesion. However, scientific evidence suggests that these outcomes only occur when sports environments are based on a suitable framework that adheres to the principles of a supportive climate, sports values, and positive youth development. A range of projects have been implemented at the European level to recognize the crucial role of sports in the social empowerment of disadvantaged populations. In these projects, a wide variety of stakeholders developed and implemented sports programs aimed at empowering different disadvantaged groups.

While the immediate impacts of these projects provided valuable relief, the sustainability of the initiatives has been identified as a weakness. A survey conducted among citizens, members of NGOs and sports clubs, as well as local government officials, highlighted the significant issues faced by disadvantaged target groups (migrants and refugees, low-income individuals, unemployed persons, and people with disabilities) and revealed that the support provided appears inadequate to meaningfully address the challenges faced by these populations. Importantly, participation in sports has been recognized as a viable

platform for developing sustainable programs.

Additionally, interviews with members of disadvantaged groups provided further testimony to the positive effects of sports participation on the empowerment of marginalized populations. Furthermore, the surveyed members of disadvantaged groups, who are likely to participate in future project activities, as well as those working with such groups, offered useful insights for the design and implementation of future project activities. These findings are the foundation of CISCA's success concept!



The Training Format

The goal of this training format is to equip Sport Operators with essential competencies, giving them the knowledge and skills required to thrive in their respective areas. This all-encompassing program is carefully designed to address the specific needs and objectives of the participants, providing a customized learning experience. By combining interactive workshops, practical activities, and sessions led by experts, CISCA promotes both practical skills and a thorough comprehension of the topics at hand.

The training format is based on a comprehensive educational program, leveraging the strengths of both Non-Formal Education (NFE) and Education through Sport (ETS) methodologies. NFE represents an

educational activity that is unstructured and occurs outside the formal education system.

NFE encompasses two distinct approaches: on one hand, educational activities taking place outside traditional formal educational frameworks, and on the other, the experiences gained through undertaking responsibilities within a voluntary organization (Council of Europe, 1999).

ETS represents a meaningful integration of Sport and NFE methods, adapting both physical activities and specific sports exercises to foster lifelong learning outcomes tailored to societal needs and specific educational objectives. This educational approach focuses on developing key competencies in individuals and groups for personal growth and sustainable social transformation (ICSCA, 2013). The ETS methodology involves utilizing sport elements for educational purposes to address social issues, enhance social competencies, and facilitate lasting social change. The entire educational process is carefully planned, with clear, realistic, and measurable outcomes expected.

Divided into three parts, the CISCA training format teaches Interpersonal Skills in Section 1. This includes Intercultural Communication, Empathy Mapping, Motivational Perspectives on Empowering Coaching, and The Self System – Building Confidence.

Following this, the focus shifts to Operational Skills in Section 2, which encompass Mastering Time for Program Success, Strategic Planning for Impactful Programs, and Data-Driven Decision Making.

Section 3 concludes with the topics Conflict Resolution in Community Sports, Community Engagement, Adaptable

Inclusive Sports, Social Network Building & Advocacy, and Resilience against Adversity.

All three sections are taught over four 8-hour training days, each consisting of three workshops.

Two more days are then needed for the Educational Program, which focuses on delivering successful strategies in sports work with disadvantaged people, such as individuals with disabilities, migrants, or the unemployed. Topics include Inclusiveness, Community Engagement, Regeneration of Neglected Urban Areas, Social- and Environmental Sustainability.

More detailed explanations of each topic, procedures and objectives are listed in Appendix A, Training Format!

CISCA E-Learning Course

The CISCA partner organizations have collaboratively created an e-learning course that allows for the online, self-directed or group-based learning of the three sections of the training format. The online content is also particularly well-suited to complement offline workshops.

The e-learning course can be accessed via this link:



The course consists of 12 learning modules, arranged in the same order as they are taught offline. Each module follows a similar structure, including a summary of the respective topic, interactive learning tools, links to additional information, references, and a short quiz with questions about the material covered.

In addition, an online course discussion board is available. It includes a description of the CISCA project as well as the opportunity to discuss course topics or related content. Participants can also contact the administrators with questions or suggestions through this board.

To access a module, any potential pop-up blockers in your browser must be disabled for this website! Please adjust the window that opens after pressing the *Enter* button to your desired size and shape. Further interactive buttons allow for easy navigation within and between content (next page, table of content, last page).



Project-specific Research as the Basis for the Training Format and Results

The foundation for the curricular innovation underlying this project was intensive research. From the very beginning, surveys and expert interviews were conducted with professionals who actually work with disadvantaged groups in marginalized urban areas. This included trainers, teachers, policymakers, and representatives from sports clubs.

Secondary sources utilized included state-of-the-art good practices, based on an analysis of academic publications, policy documents, reports, website publications, among others.

The result was comparative national findings, which were summarized and evaluated in a comprehensive joint report.

The following groups have been identified as particularly socially disadvantaged:

- Individuals with low income
- Unemployed persons
- Elderly individuals
- Ethnic minorities and migrants
- Refugees
- People with disabilities
- Members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Supporting disadvantaged people through sports facilitates interactions that can promote inclusion and integration, combat discrimination and racism, cultivate social skills and competencies, and strengthen social capital. However, our findings indicate that for these positive outcomes to materialize, the sporting environments must be structured around appropriate principles that encourage a supportive atmosphere, uphold core sports values, and focus on positive youth development.

Numerous projects have been launched at the European level in response to repeated initiatives from the European Commission, which recognizes the vital role of sports in socially empowering marginalized groups. These initiatives involve consortia made up of diverse stakeholders who design and execute sports programs tailored to empower various disadvantaged communities. While these projects yield immediate benefits, concerns have been raised about the sustainability of their activities and long-term impact, which is seen as a significant drawback.

Further information on the CISCA research findings is included in Appendix B.

Conclusion

The project Curricular Innovation for Synergy between Community Sport and Activism (CISCA) is designed to achieve lasting success beyond the funding period. It provides both online and offline resources, such as training formats and an e-learning platform, specifically aimed at individuals working with marginalized populations in urban areas or those planning to do so in the future. The project primarily targets young adults, as they are instrumental in creating a more inclusive, tolerant, open, and cohesive local community through sport. This contributes

to a more equitable future. At the level of sporting activities and from the perspective of local communities, the initiative supports everyone - both the disadvantaged and those who are not - since the curricular tools provided are applicable and beneficial for all.

Examples of such positive developments through sport include:

- Breaking down social barriers and promoting social integration
- Health promotion
- Development of social skills
- Strengthening a sense of community that connects different social groups
- Encouraging tolerance and respect
- Providing positive role models who inspire and motivate

Most importantly, these positive effects are well-suited to empower and uplift individuals far beyond the realm of sports. That is the work that CISCA accomplishes, with a vision for the future, especially extending beyond the actual duration of the project!





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Appendix A

Training Format



COMPARATIVE
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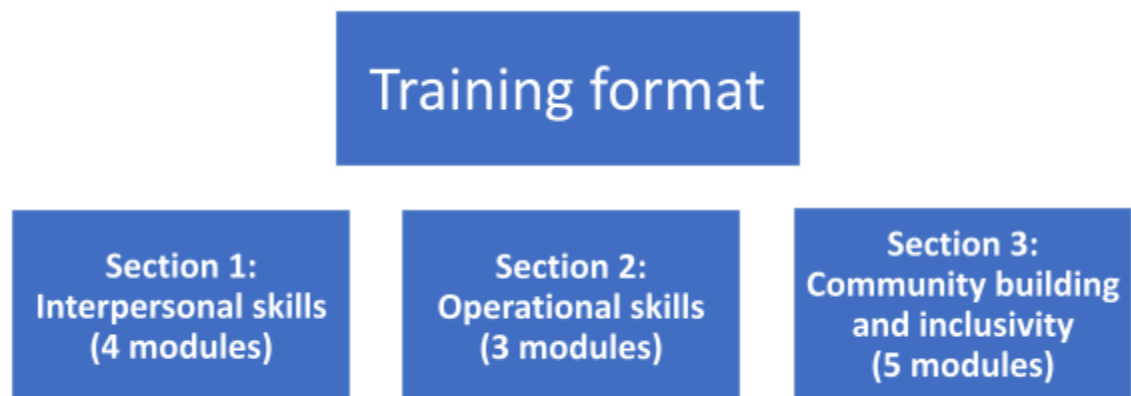
THE TRAINING FORMAT

The purpose of the Training Format is to empower sports operators, social operators and NGOs by providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their respective fields.

Through the Training Format they will acquire the skills and knowledge to strengthen the integration between the sports world and local communities; to make grassroots sports organizations become generators of social activism and engagement in socially disadvantaged urban areas; and to harness sports activities as tools to respond to social exclusion in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods in European cities.

This comprehensive program is meticulously crafted to cater to the unique needs and goals of the participants, ensuring a tailored learning experience. Through a blend of interactive workshops, hands-on activities, and expert-led sessions, this training format fosters practical proficiency and fosters a deep understanding of the subject matter.

Structure and content



Each section includes a theoretical introduction and practical activities for learning through the methodologies of **Non Formal Education** and **Education Through Sport**

TRAINING FORMAT

SECTION 1 - Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills are vital in sports education. These skills foster inclusion, trust, and respect within diverse teams, enabling harmonious interactions and personal growth. Effective communication and empathy are key to resolving conflicts and creating positive environments, particularly when working with vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals

1 - Intercultural Communication	In diverse environments, effective communication, trust-building, and fostering inclusivity are essential. Intercultural communication is key for engaging with individuals from varied cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds, including refugees and migrants. It ensures clear communication, nurtures understanding, and addresses unique challenges, promoting a supportive and inclusive community.
2 - Empathy Mapping	Empathy mapping is a collaborative tool that helps teams understand customers' thoughts, feelings, actions, and experiences. By visualizing these aspects, it fosters empathy, identifies pain points and motivations, and supports user-centered solutions. This method promotes team alignment and a deeper understanding of customer needs.
3 - Motivational Perspectives on Empowering Coaching	Empowering coaching enhances athletes' intrinsic motivation by fostering competence, autonomy, and connection. It emphasizes positive reinforcement, goal setting, and constructive feedback to build confidence and resilience. By addressing athletes' psychological needs, this approach improves performance, satisfaction, and long-term development while encouraging a growth mindset.
4 - The self-system - Building Confidence	Building confidence relies on strengthening the self-system, which shapes self-perception and belief in one's abilities. This involves setting achievable goals, celebrating successes, and fostering self-efficacy through effort and perseverance. Encouraging reflection and resilience supports a growth mindset, enabling continuous learning and personal development, ultimately enhancing well-being and performance.

TRAINING FORMAT

Section 2: Operational Skills

Operational skills focus on effective planning, risk mitigation, time management, and organization to achieve program goals. Proper planning ensures clarity, motivates participants, and minimizes risks, while poor planning can lead to confusion and inefficiency. Time management prioritizes critical tasks for better execution, and organization enhances productivity by providing structure and understanding of group dynamics.

1 - Mastering Time for Program Success	Effective time management ensures smooth execution of sports programs by prioritizing tasks, managing diverse schedules, and meeting deadlines. Customizing activities for participants, including vulnerable groups, ensures inclusivity and successful outcomes.
2 - Strategic Planning for Impactful Programs	Strategic planning enables sports operators to create organized, resource-efficient initiatives. It focuses on logistics, participant needs, and adaptable strategies to cater to diverse groups, including those facing socio-economic challenges, ensuring impactful outcomes.
3 - Data-Driven Decision Making	Using data to evaluate program success helps operators tailor initiatives to diverse needs. This skill ensures evidence-based decisions, enhancing program relevance and effectiveness for different demographics and improving overall outcomes.

TRAINING FORMAT

Section 3: Community building and inclusivity

Community building and inclusivity are crucial for connecting diverse individuals through sports, fostering understanding, collaboration, and empathy. Inclusive practices promote a more resilient and supportive community. Recognizing diversity as an asset, operators can use feedback to adjust programs, share successes, and inspire broader societal impact.

1 - Conflict Resolution in Community Sports	Teaches strategies to manage and resolve disputes constructively. By promoting open communication, active listening, and shared goals, it fosters teamwork and creates a positive, inclusive environment for participants.
2 - Community Engagement	Encourages collaboration with stakeholders such as NGOs, parents, and authorities to address local needs. This skill builds strong partnerships, fosters trust, and ensures the success of community-based sports programs.
3 - Adaptable Inclusive Sports	Focuses on customizing sports activities for participants with diverse needs, including those with disabilities or socio-economic challenges. This ensures inclusivity, relevance, and access for all.
4 - Social Network Building & Advocacy	Develops connections within communities and promotes sports programs to attract participants. This skill emphasizes outreach, effective communication, and sustained community engagement for long-term success.
5 - Resilience & Adversity	Empowers participants to overcome challenges through sports. By fostering resilience, programs help individuals build confidence, navigate hardships, and thrive in personal and professional contexts.

TRAINING FORMAT

Program

8 hours training for a total of 32 hours (4 days)

Day 1	Three workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Intercultural communication for educators and trainers in sport;● Empathy mapping interviews;● Setting goals
Day 2	Three workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Developing self-efficacy;● Time management in sport;● Strategic planning for impactful programs
Day 3	Three workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Risk mitigation and decision making in sport;● Harmony on the field;● Understanding diverse dynamics of the community
Day 4	Three workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Inclusive sports in action;● Social network campaign simulation;● Resilience against adversity

TRAINING FORMAT

Methodology: Non Formal Education

Non-Formal Education (NFE) is an “Educational activity which is not structured and takes place outside the formal system. Nonformal education covers two rather different realities: on the one hand education activities taking part outside the formal education system (for example a lecture on social rights organised by a trade union) and on the other the experience acquired while exerting responsibilities in a voluntary organisation (for example being a member of the board of an environment protection NGO)” (Council of Europe, 1999).

Methodology: Education Through Sport

Education Through Sport (ETS) is a meaningful combination between Sport and Non-Formal Education (NFE) methods extrapolating and adapting both physical and specific Sport exercises in order to provide a strong lifelong learning outcome, tailored to the needs of society and to the specific educational objectives pursued. ETS is a non-formal educational approach that works with sport and physical activities and which refers to the development of key competencies of individuals and groups in order to contribute to personal development and sustainable social transformation (ICSCA, 2013).

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

The second part of the Curriculum and Training Format contains the Educational program, which includes 2 days of activities dedicated to target disadvantaged people, e.g. coming from urban areas to be regenerated or people with disabilities, people with migrant background through Non Formal Education methodology, and specifically Education Through Sport methodology.

The goal of this Educational Programme is to convey the values of inclusiveness and sustainability through sports activities. The activities are divided in five topics. In the style of this guide, each topic is addressed with a theoretical part and practical activities.

Inclusiveness	Inclusiveness ensures equal opportunities and participation for all, embracing diversity and removing barriers. It fosters acceptance, collaboration, and shared responsibility, enriching communities and enabling individuals to thrive by valuing differences as strengths.
Community Engagement	Community engagement empowers individuals to shape their communities through participation and collaboration. It strengthens relationships, builds trust, and ensures inclusive decision-making, fostering social cohesion and shared progress.
Regeneration of Urban Areas	Urban regeneration revitalizes neglected areas, improving infrastructure, sustainability, and inclusivity. It promotes community involvement, prevents displacement, and creates vibrant, equitable neighborhoods that enhance quality of life.
Sustainability Social Issues	Addressing sustainability social issues involves reducing inequalities and ensuring access to resources. Inclusive policies and collaboration foster equity, empowering communities to achieve holistic, sustainable development.
Sustainability Environmental Issues	Environmental issues like pollution, deforestation, and climate change demand sustainable solutions. Global efforts to reduce emissions, protect ecosystems, and use renewable resources are vital for a healthy, sustainable planet.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Skills, knowledge and values

Teamwork and
empathy

Sense of community

Mutual support

Cooperation

Respectful
communication

Fairness, honesty,
integrity, and respect
through sports.

Environmental
sustainability

Collaboration and
idea-sharing

Social inclusion
in and through
Sport

Participation
and civic
engagement

Access to
urban services

Community thinking
and civic engagement

Fair play in daily life

Non violent conflict
resolution

Human right
knowledge

Active listening and
collaboration

Community dialogue

Social skills in team
spirit

Inclusion and
participation



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Appendix B

Research Summary



COMPARATIVE
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Introduction

Based on the proposal and the objectives of the CISCA, the aims of WP2 “Research” have been finalized following intensive brainstorming and discussions among the partners. The two deliverables that had been proposed were refined and the tasks to be taken towards the development of the deliverables were respecified. The first deliverable (D2.1), involved desk research aiming to identify disadvantaged groups and the pressing issues on the social agenda of the communities, which will help select the groups of focus that will be targeted through the CISCA project. The second deliverable (D2.2), included a review of scientific literature and implemented projects focusing on the exploitation of sport as an agent for addressing social issues, and empirical research through surveys in the community and interviews with the members of the disadvantaged groups to identify the issues that need to be addressed through the sport activities that will be developed and implemented with the target groups.

D2.1

Disadvantaged populations

Several disadvantaged populations were identified through partners’ investigation regarding their countries and local communities. Below, the most prevalent disadvantaged populations are briefly described.

- Low income and unemployed. People/families living in poverty or with low incomes and unemployed people may often have limited access to education and health care, poor housing conditions, and of course financial limitations to participate in social or leisure activities, which may lead to social isolation.
- People with disabilities. People with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities often face various obstacles and prejudices. Limited accessibility infrastructure in public spaces, buildings, transportation, stores, and public services are commonplace. Discrimination based on disability also occurs at employment. Education is also often inaccessible for individuals with disabilities, due to lack of resources and specialized staff, place of residence and location; these issues often lead to inadequate education which in turn leads to unemployment and economic disadvantages.
- Elder people. Due to health difficulties and economic dependence, older people may have limited access to appropriate health care, support, and social activities adapted to their needs. They are also particularly vulnerable to social and institutional isolation.

- Migrants and members of minority ethnic groups. Migrants and minority ethnic groups face difficulties and restrictions due to their ethnic affiliation. They are likely to face poverty, due to their limited job opportunities and having lower wages purely due to discrimination. Education access is also somewhat limited to this population, along with representation in political institutions and decision-making processes, thus alienating them from their community.
- Refugees. Physical and mental health issues, including high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, are prevalent among refugees. At the same time, access to health care is limited. Furthermore, racism, discrimination, and exclusion are regular issues refugees have to face. Refugees face severe challenges in adapting to a new environment, including language barriers, trauma, and limited social support.
- LGBTQI+ community. Deep-rooted societal attitudes and conservatism lead to social stigma, discrimination, and prejudice against LGBTQI+. This stigma can manifest itself in various aspects of life, including employment, education, social relationships, representation, and in the most severe cases as violence or harassment.

D2.2

The focus of D2.2 was to (a) review the scientific literature and explore research questions that have been addressed regarding the project's populations of interest, and provide empirical evidence from selected studies reflecting the relevant literature; (b) review projects implemented through European collaborations to raise awareness and tackle the problems of the disadvantage populations targeted through the project; (c) develop and implement a survey identifying the disadvantaged populations per partner community, exploring the perceptions of the community regarding the needs of these disadvantaged groups, and understand the role of stakeholders and members of the community in supporting the disadvantaged populations, and the social mission of sport; and (d) conduct interviews with members of the community disadvantaged population to explore their needs, their perceptions regarding received support from the community, and the role of sport initiatives for promoting social engagement.

The literature has provided robust evidence regarding the social mission of sport. Participation in sport brings interactions that can foster inclusion and integration, fight discrimination and racism, develop social skills and competencies, and enhance social capital. Yet, the scientific evidence suggests that for these outcomes to occur, the sport



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environments should be built upon suitable sport environments based on the principles of appropriate empowering climate, sport values, and positive youth development.

A large number of projects has been implemented at European level following repeated calls from the European Commission that acknowledges the important role of sport for the social empowerment of disadvantaged populations. In these projects consortia comprising a large variety of stakeholders develop and implement sport programmes aiming at empowering different disadvantaged populations. The acute effects of these projects bring valuable relief, however, the sustainability of the projects' activities and impact has been identified as a weakness.

The survey that was conducted among citizens, members of NGOs and sport clubs, and officers from local authorities, emphasized the important problems the targeted disadvantaged populations (migrants and refugees, people with low income and unemployed people, and people with disabilities) face, and unveiled that provided support appears inadequate to meaningfully address the problems these populations face. Importantly, sport participation was recognized as a viable platform for developing sustainable programmes.

Finally, the interviews with the members of the disadvantaged groups provide further testimonials regarding the beneficial impact of sport participation for the empowerment of disadvantaged populations. Moreover, members of the disadvantaged population, who were interviewed and were likely to participate in the future activities of the project, along with the people working with such groups, have provided useful directions for designing and implementing subsequent activities of the project.