FONTES

Fostering New Techniques for Social Integration through Sport

BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH REPORT

Work Package 2 — Research, Mapping and Good Practices
ICSS Europe through its Save the Dream Initiative

Social Integration through Sport in Multicultural and Multi-Faith Settings

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About this Report

This report presents the findings of Work Package 2 (WP2) of the FONTES project (Fostering New Techniques for Social Integration through Sport). It brings together evidence from a structured online survey collecting best practices across six European countries and beyond, and from expert focus groups conducted with practitioners, community workers, and civil society organisations. Together, these two research streams provide a comprehensive picture of how sport is currently used as a tool for social integration in multicultural and multi-faith settings, what works, what barriers persist, and what is needed to scale impact.

The survey gathered 29 responses from organisations operating in Spain, Greece, Italy, Denmark, Portugal, Croatia, Argentina, Germany, Thailand and other countries, documenting diverse initiatives ranging from integrated football programmes to para-sport inclusion, faith-based outreach, and employability pathways. Focus groups were conducted from February to April 2026 in Greece and Germany, Spain and Italy engaging practitioners, reception facility staff, civil society representatives, and young people directly.

Key findings confirm that sport is a powerful, culturally accessible tool for social integration, particularly effective in breaking down language and cultural barriers, building trust, and activating otherwise invisible groups. However, persistent structural challenges — including fragmented funding, lack of institutionalised methodologies, gender barriers, and limited integration into national policy frameworks — continue to limit scope and scale.

This report concludes with a dedicated gap analysis and recommendations section designed to inform all subsequent FONTES project outputs, including the training programme, digital platform, AI-powered repository, and policy advocacy materials.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

2.1 About the FONTES Project

The FONTES Project — Fostering New Techniques for Social Integration through Sport — seeks to promote social inclusion and community cohesion by leveraging the unique reach of religious and grassroots organisations across Europe, particularly among recent immigrant communities and people at risk of social exclusion. Building on existing Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) initiatives, FONTES aims to engage people from diverse backgrounds in sport-based activities that foster mutual understanding, integration, and intercultural dialogue.

A central innovation of FONTES is its focus on capacity building for volunteers, coaches, and practitioners working in social inclusion through sport. The project will develop an open-access knowledge base of studies, good practices, and methodologies, enhanced by Artificial Intelligence tools that offer personalised guidance to address daily challenges in the field.

2.2 Consortium and Partners

The project consortium includes:

1. EMCA (Belgium)
2. ICSS Europe through its Save the Dream initiative (lead for WP2)
3. Archdiocese of Naples (Italy)
4. Olympiacos (Greece)
5. Brafa Foundation (Spain)
6. ISC AlHilal Bonn (Germany)
7. Club Deportivo Elemental Dragones de Lavapiés (Spain)

The consortium represents six European countries: Italy, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Greece, and Portugal. By advancing solidarity, equality, and participation, FONTES exemplifies the European Sport Model, emphasising the social, economic, and sustainable dimensions of sport.

2.3 Objectives of WP2 Research

This research document forms the foundation of the project by mapping existing resources and collecting good practices across faith-based organisations, youth-focused organisations, and sport clubs working in multicultural and multi-faith contexts.

The five core research objectives are:

- Objective 1 — Map resources and collect good practices across faith communities, sport clubs, and youth organisations, identifying how sport is used for reconciliation, intercultural dialogue and community building.
- Objective 2 — Understand the needs of communities and target groups, including youth from multicultural and migrant backgrounds, coaches, volunteers, and educators, along with barriers such as gender-specific and cultural challenges.
- Objective 3 — Provide the evidence base for all subsequent project deliverables, including the training programme (WP3), online learning tools (IO2), digital platform and AI repository (WP4), and policy recommendations (WP6).

- Objective 4 — Enable a European-wide intercultural and interfaith perspective through transnational, cross-country research drawing on experiences from six EU countries.
- Objective 5 — Feed the digital knowledge base and AI tools with indexed, summarised, and modularised content for personalised guidance.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

WP2 employs a mixed-methods, transnational research design combining a quantitative and qualitative survey instrument for good practice collection with semi-structured qualitative focus groups. This dual approach ensures both breadth — capturing a wide range of practices from across Europe — and depth — enabling nuanced analysis of context, barriers, and enabling factors.

Survey — Quantitative & Qualitative	Focus Groups — Qualitative
Structured online survey distributed to partner networks and civil society organisations across the six consortium countries and beyond. 29 responses were received representing initiatives across Europe and beyond.	Semi-structured focus groups conducted at national level by project partners. Sessions of 60–90 minutes with 6–10 participants, held in person, hybrid or online in Spain, Italy, Greece and Germany.

3.2 Survey Methodology

The survey was developed in English and the partners curated the translations of the survey into their local languages; to ensure its distribution in the multiple languages of the project partners through their networks, social media, and existing civil society networks. It collected information across eight thematic areas:

- General information and organisation profile
- Description and context of the initiative
- Target group characteristics and needs
- Implementation details, methodologies, and tools
- Results, outcomes, and success indicators
- Lessons learned and challenges
- Recommendations for replication
- Sustainability, partnerships, and communication strategy

Responses were collected between February and April 2026. The analysis presented in this report is based on the complete submissions received.

3.3 Focus Group Methodology

Focus groups were facilitated using the FONTES Focus Group Facilitation Guide and Methodology, developed by ICSS Europe. The guide prescribes a semi-structured format with the following structure:

- Welcome and introduction (10 minutes): purpose of the session, ground rules, confidentiality
- Warm-up discussion (10 minutes): personal involvement in sport, first experiences in diverse settings
- Core discussion (30–45 minutes): role of sport in integration, needs, barriers, challenges, good practices
- Future-oriented discussion (10–15 minutes): what should change or improve, training and digital tool needs
- Closing reflection (5–10 minutes): one key message or takeaway per participant

Co-funded by the European Union

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, aiming for diversity in gender, background, and professional role. Selection of participants prioritised coaches and other volunteers with direct, hands-on experience working with young people in a sport context. Responses were anonymised in all reporting. Audio recording was used where participants agreed. Each partner was required to submit a focus group report using a standardised template.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

All data collection was conducted in line with GDPR requirements and FONTES ethical protocols. Participation was voluntary and informed, with all responses anonymised in reporting. For focus group participants under 18, local consent requirements were followed by the partner organisation in each country.

4. BEST PRACTICES COLLECTED THROUGH THE SURVEY

4.1 Summary and Main Results

The FONTES best practices survey collected 29 initiatives from organisations working at the intersection of sport, social inclusion, and multiculturalism. Respondents included sport clubs, NGOs, public authorities, faith-based organisations, community and youth organisations, and social foundations operating in nine countries.

Survey at a Glance

29 initiatives collected | 9 countries represented | Age range: 0–80 years | Target groups: migrants, refugees, Roma, youth, persons with disabilities, homeless people | Main sports: football, basketball, tennis, para-sport | Key objectives: social integration, community cohesion, youth empowerment, employability

Types of Organisations

The survey captured input from a diverse range of organisational types. NGOs and sport clubs were the most represented categories (approximately 34% NGOs (10 of 29) and 28% sport clubs (8 of 29)), followed by municipalities and public authorities (17%, 5 of 29), organisations self-classified as 'Other' (14%), and faith-based and community/youth organisations (3% each). This breadth reflects the diverse ecosystem of actors currently using sport for social integration in Europe, and confirms that sport-based inclusion is delivered through both grassroots civil society and structured club and public-sector channels.

Geographic Coverage

Responses were received from Spain (11 initiatives), Greece (7 initiatives), Italy (3 initiatives), Denmark (2 initiatives), Portugal (2 initiatives), Argentina (1 initiative), Croatia (1 initiative), Germany (1 initiative), and Thailand (1 initiative). The strong representation of Spain and Greece reflects both the presence of active FONTES partners and the concentration of migration-related sport integration work in these countries.

Target Groups

The most commonly targeted groups were: migrants and asylum seekers (across the majority of initiatives); children and young people; persons with disabilities (at least six dedicated initiatives, including TZAMBOL AGAPIS in Greece, Stadio Eirinis kai Filias in Greece, Champions Together and Mini Tennis Inclusivo in Italy, the Olympiacos / Schisto initiative in Greece, and the Brafa 'Sport and Competition' programme in Spain); Roma communities; homeless people; and socially excluded youth. Several initiatives addressed intersectional challenges, such as young male migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, Roma girls facing combined cultural, gender, and economic exclusion, refugee and migrant women in Greece (Hestia FC), and displaced Burmese youth in Thailand (PlayOnside).

Main Objectives and Outcomes

The most frequently cited main objective was social integration, named explicitly by 18 of the 29 respondents (62%). Other recurring objectives were peacebuilding and conflict reduction (each named by 3 respondents, 10%), community cohesion (2, 7%), youth empowerment (2, 7%), and intercultural dialogue (1, 3%). Employability appears explicitly as an objective in one Portuguese initiative (Welcome Sports Club, 3%). Many initiatives combined two or more of these objectives. Observed outcomes most consistently reported across initiatives included:

- Increased trust and mutual understanding between participants from different backgrounds
- More diverse participation in sport activities
- Reduced tensions and conflicts at community level
- Stronger partnerships between organisations across the public, private, and faith sectors
- Improved physical and mental health outcomes for participants

Methodological Approaches

The majority of initiatives relied on mixed-team approaches (deliberately grouping participants from different backgrounds, including accessibility, gender, socio-economic, etc), dialogue sessions, mentoring, and culturally adapted facilitation. Several highlighted the importance of structured routines, visual aids, and simplified communication to accommodate linguistic and cognitive diversity. A smaller number adopted formal structured methodologies such as Football3 or certified adapted sports education models.

Common Challenges

Respondents consistently identified the following challenges:

- Funding instability and short-term project cycles limiting sustainability
- Language barriers between coaches/volunteers and participants
- Cultural and religious norms restricting participation, particularly for girls and women, or the context is not created safely enough for them to participate
- Organisational coordination challenges, especially involving multiple partner types
- Difficulty retaining participants over time due to mobility, irregular status, or competing needs

4.2 Best Practices by Country

The following section presents at least one highlighted best practice per country, selected for their representativeness, impact, and replication potential.

> *The practices documented in this report are, by their nature, those that succeeded in engaging participants. The survey captures who was reached; it says less about who was not reached, who left early, or why — a limitation flagged in the wider Sport for Change literature (see Section 9.1, Nols et al. 2018) and addressed as Gap 10 in Section 7.*

ARGENTINA

AR Club Atlético María Madre de la Lata — Buenos Aires

A faith-inspired community sport club that has been running for six years, offering sport and social support to low-income youth aged up to 30 — both boys and girls — three times per week in their own facility. The initiative targets social exclusion, drug use, and violence in marginalised neighbourhoods. Backed by Caritas and volunteers, the model relies on the consistent, caring presence of adults as a protective factor. A key success factor is the relationship-building between volunteers and participants, which creates trust and enables deeper social support over time. The programme is self-funded through community events such as food sales and raffles.

CROATIA

HR Erasmus+ Sport Integration — HAŠK Mladost

Through engagement with the EMCA network, this Croatian sport club ran an Erasmus+ Sport project integrating immigrant youth into existing club training sessions. Practices included mixed teams and targeted short workshops. An initial challenge was the low number of immigrants in Croatia relative to Western Europe, but the programme successfully engaged Muslim girls in mixed activities — overcoming initial reluctance through consistent relationship-building. Collaboration with the Asylum Centre and the Jesuit Refugee Service proved essential. The initiative highlighted the need for more professional guides and training manuals in the Croatian context.

DENMARK

DK BROEN Danmark — Building Bridges for Disadvantaged Children

Founded in 2002 in Horsens and now active in 35 municipalities across Denmark (and expanding to Greenland), BROEN is a non-profit association that helps children from disadvantaged backgrounds access sport and leisure by covering equipment, subscription, and competition fees. BROEN serves 7,000+ children annually and works entirely through volunteers. Children are referred by schools, police, social services, and other agencies. BROEN partners with Danish Refugee Council, Danish Red Cross, and local sport clubs to reach the most marginalised, including refugee and migrant children. The model depends on minimal bureaucracy, local funding, and the social responsibility of sport clubs.

DK Fodboldlinjen Randers — Randers Ungdomsskole

A school-based football programme launched with one teacher in one school in Randers, now reaching all 23 schools in the municipality and engaging 2,000 participants aged 6–16. Running since 2009, the programme uses football as an educational and social integration tool within the school system. It expanded organically through teacher-to-teacher engagement and now operates on a community (municipal) budget after an initial free model. It is recognised as one of the largest school-based football programmes in northern Europe.

GERMANY

DE Bonn Unity Cup — YouMo!, Bonn

Running all year round during school holidays in the city of Bonn, the Bonn Unity Cup is a youth-led football tournament organised by YouMo! in partnership with the municipality. Designed for diverse groups of young people aged 12–18 with migration histories (and a refugee minority), the tournament reaches between 100 and 200 participants per cycle. Its defining feature is participatory design: the young people themselves take the lead — they shape the format, name the event, choose external speakers, and act as mediators during matches played without referees, in culturally diverse teams supported by trustworthy adult coaches. Pedagogical and educational content (workshops on racism, employability, inclusion) is woven into the tournament rather than imposed as a separate track, and fair-play awards explicitly recognise social behaviour. Funded modestly through municipal support and a local foundation, the practice is sustained by volunteer commitment and a strong digital tournament-planning approach. The Bonn Unity Cup is profiled in detail in Section 5.4.2 of this report through a dedicated focus group with its young participants.

GREECE

GR TZAMBOL AGAPIS — Special Basketball Education & Co-Education

Running since 2016, this initiative by the AMKE Tzambol Agapis provides certified adapted basketball education (Eidiki Kalathosfairiki Agogi) where children with and without disabilities train together in structured, pedagogically grounded sessions. Operating across multiple locations in Greece, the programme currently serves 300+ participants annually, with an 80%+ retention rate per cycle. It uses visual routine cards, role rotation, peer mentoring, and dialogue sessions to foster empathy, teamwork, and mutual acceptance. Partners include the Ministry of Education, the Hellenic Olympic Committee, FIBA Foundation, and multiple municipalities. Basketball is described as a 'common language' that reduces cultural and linguistic barriers and creates belonging.

GR RoMOVE — SolidarityNow, Katerini

Launched in November 2025 with support from the Nike Direct Store Fund (managed by the King Baudouin Foundation), RoMOVE uses football to empower Roma children aged 10–17 in the

informal settlement of Pelekas, Katerini. Starting with 10 participants, attendance grew to 25 and continues to increase at every session. The programme began with a community launch event, a cardiological health check, equipment purchase, and appointment of a coach-mediator. The main challenge is sustaining participation of girls within the Roma community. The initiative depends on multi-year partnerships with the Municipality of Katerini and the local Roma Community Centre.

GR Inclusion through Football3 — ActionAid Hellas / Ministry of Migration

Operating since 2019, this initiative applies the Football3 methodology — a structured form of street football that promotes dialogue, cooperation, and equality — in reception and integration settings across Greece. Teams are mixed by gender and cultural background; games are self-regulated without referees, preceded by a values discussion and followed by a collective debrief. The method was introduced by ActionAid Hellas in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum as a partner and co-funder.

GR Together in Sport — METAdrasi / Hellenic Olympic Committee / DOSB

Implemented from 2021 to 2022 by METAdrasi in cooperation with the Hellenic Olympic Committee and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), Together in Sport used sport as a vehicle for social inclusion and well-being among refugee and asylum-seeking children and youth, alongside members of the host community. The programme combined structured sport sessions and cultural activities for participants aged 17–21, with explicit accessibility for children with disabilities. Mixed-group activities, experiential learning, and value-based sport education promoted teamwork, respect, and intercultural exchange beyond language and cultural barriers. The partnership between a national NGO and recognised national and international sport governing bodies stands out as a replicable model of institutionally embedded integration through sport in Greece.

GR Football as a Tool for Protection and Inclusion — Terre des hommes Hellas

Running since April 2019 in the Thessaloniki area, this initiative by Terre des hommes Hellas uses weekly football training as a structured, safe, and inclusive activity for refugee and asylum-seeking children and youth who have experienced displacement, violence, or loss. Sessions are facilitated by trained football coaches, youth workers, and psychosocial support staff, with clear team rules promoting respect and cooperation. Football functions as a non-verbal universal language, enabling emotional expression, peer connection, and trust-building across cultural and linguistic barriers. The programme is grounded in Terre des hommes' published Football4Protection methodology, which strengthens its replicability and protection focus in other contexts.

GR Hestia FC — Refugee and Migrant Women's Football Team

Established in March 2019 in Athens, Hestia FC is the first women's football team in Greece composed primarily of refugee and migrant women. Through regular training sessions in a safe, women-only environment — with a flexible dress code respecting cultural and religious preferences — the initiative uses football as a tool for protection, empowerment, and confidence-building among women who have experienced displacement, trauma, and social exclusion. The model emphasises team identity, peer support, and informal learning through sport, complemented

where possible by psychosocial support contributors. Reported challenges include irregular attendance linked to unstable living conditions and limited access to long-term facilities. Hestia FC stands out as a rare grassroots, gender-specific example of sport-based integration in Greece, directly addressing the under-participation of refugee and migrant women in sport.

GR Access for All — Peace and Friendship Stadium

Run for the past five years by the Peace and Friendship Stadium (Stadio Eirinis kai Filias), a major Greek public sport venue, the 'Access for All' (Prosvasi Pantou) programme delivers structured sport activities for vulnerable social groups and people with disabilities. The annual cycle opens with an information and consultation conference involving schools and sport stakeholders, followed by sport sessions three times a week from October to May reaching between 100 and 200 participants of all ages. Schools, the host municipality and region, and the Ministries of Sport and Education are core partners, anchoring the practice in mainstream public-sector delivery. The model is a strong example of how a public sport venue can be repurposed as an inclusion platform — a replicable approach for embedding sport-based integration in public infrastructure.

GR One Team Programme at Schisto Reception Facility — Olympiacos / Ministry of Migration

Run from October 2023 to April 2024 by the Social Integration Office of the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum at the Schisto reception facility, in partnership with the One Team programme of Olympiacos (a FONTES consortium partner), this initiative used basketball to support children and young people aged 7–15 from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds. Olympiacos coaches visited the camp every two weeks, delivering training sessions that built self-confidence, peer cooperation, and respect — including joint sessions with children with special needs. Although the cohort from Schisto was small (around 10 boys and girls), the practice illustrates how a major sport club can use its existing community programme as a vehicle for inclusion within reception facilities. The model is directly replicable across other consortium sport partners and reception sites in Greece.

ITALY

IT Circuito dell'Inclusione — PGS Campania

Coordinated by Polisportive Giovanili Salesiane (PGS) Campania — a faith-based youth sport network rooted in the Salesian tradition — the 'Circuito dell'Inclusione' is a six-month inclusion circuit running across schools and sport structures of local parishes in the Campania region. Participants aged 10–30 take part in mixed-gender practical sport activities organised in successive stages, with feedback used to assess group cohesion and to address prejudices and logistical-organisational challenges. The Circuito connects multiple local Salesian sport clubs into a shared, inclusion-focused programme and has given rise to satellite initiatives such as Champions Together and Mini Tennis Inclusivo. The model exemplifies how a faith-based sport network can scale inclusion across territorial boundaries through a structured circuit format.

IT Champions Together — ASD Circolo Tennis Chiaiano, Naples

Champions Together is a four-month sport-inclusion programme run by ASD Circolo Tennis Chiaiano in Naples, focused on the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities aged 12–50. Embedded within a wider national project framework and developed in partnership with Polisportive Giovanili Salesiane (PGS), the programme uses inclusive sport sessions, mixed teams, and continuous coach–athlete relationship-building to foster participation and belonging. A key challenge identified is securing appropriate venues for inclusive activity; a key strength is the consistent quality of relationships between coaches and participants. The practice illustrates how a single local tennis club can deliver disability-inclusive sport effectively when supported by a wider faith-based sport network.

IT Mini Tennis Inclusivo — PGS Don Bosco Piedimonte Matese

Linked to the Circuito dell'Inclusione, Mini Tennis Inclusivo is an eight-month, twice-weekly programme run by PGS Don Bosco Piedimonte Matese for children aged 7–13, including young people with disabilities and migrant participants from Algerian and Moroccan backgrounds. Operating across schools, sport clubs, and the parish oratory, the programme combines tennis with structured peace-building and intercultural-contact activities, with explicit objectives of conflict reduction and improved mutual respect. Initial parental scepticism was overcome through visible relationship-building and group activities. Funded through community benefactors and municipal support, the practice shows how a small parish-level sport club can embed inclusion at the intersection of disability, migration, and faith-based community life.

PORTUGAL

PT Welcome Sports Club — Social Innovation Sports, Lisbon

Operating since 2021, Welcome Sports Club is a Portuguese NGO initiative that uses sport as a vehicle for the social and labour-market integration of migrants and refugees aged 16–35 — including Syrian, Afghan, Brazilian and PALOP (Portuguese-speaking African) communities. The programme was launched in response to the arrival of unaccompanied refugee minors from Afghanistan who needed sustained inclusion support over time. It combines regular sport sessions accessible to all with a structured employability pathway: profile development, matching with companies, personal and social development, job tours and on-the-job mentoring. Reported reach exceeds 2,000 direct beneficiaries, with a 70% retention rate in employment after company placement. Partnerships span reception organisations, companies, and sport entities, with funding drawn from both public and private sources. Practitioners emphasise that sport itself enables the close, trusting relationship that makes everything else possible — including, in their own words, “opening doors” for participants who had previously been at the margins.

PT Crossing the Boundaries through Sport (CrosSport) — multi-country project (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece)

CrosSport is a 24-month EU-funded (PPPA-SPORT programme) transnational project running across Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, aimed at fostering the inclusion and integration of young refugees

aged 16–30 through sport. Built on a participatory methodology with two pillars — giving refugees a voice in project activities, and engaging 'like-minded' organisations through a gradual partnership process — the project mapped stakeholders, ran national focus groups, and developed a Methodology Handbook and two educational programmes: CLIS (Community Leaders for Sport Inclusion) and SIA (Sport for Inclusion Activists). Results to date include 40 community members trained as CLIS, 27 refugees trained as SIA, 14 CLIS trainees deployed in events, more than 80 organisations engaged in the network, and 40 good practices collected across the four countries. Awareness-raising activities include football matches with mixed teams, video testimonies, and participatory workshops giving refugees the platform. Sustainability is supported by the free online educational platform, the published Methodology Handbook, and ongoing dissemination and network expansion.

SPAIN

ES SPES Programme — Brafa Foundation, Barcelona

One of the strongest examples of sport-based social integration from the survey, the SPES programme run by the Brafa Foundation in Barcelona provides young migrants aged 18–25 (primarily men from Africa who arrived by boat without work permits) with a structured football programme combining sport, personal development, and social orientation. Running twice weekly for two hours each session, the programme includes a football match, a values-based group discussion, and personal conversations with volunteers. With 40 regular participants and 11 dedicated volunteers, the programme has been running for five years. Annual surveys show 85% of participants report a positive change in their physical and mental health since joining, and 90% would recommend the activity. Sport is explicitly used as the language that builds confidence and creates a platform for deeper support. The programme is funded through the Brafa Foundation and partnerships with the Red Cross, Caritas, and local social services.

ES Programa Deportivo Multiétnico — Braval, Barcelona

Running uninterrupted since 1998, Braval's multiethnic sports programme is one of the most longitudinal examples in the survey. It operates 12 mixed-ethnicity teams (6 basketball, 6 futsal) composed of players from 15 countries competing in the Barcelona school sports league. In 27 years, 1,730 participants from 30 countries have taken part, speaking 10 languages and practising 9 religions. Average stay: 6 years. 820 alumni are now employed, 240 have completed secondary education, and 35 have university degrees. The programme's success rests on an entirely voluntary model and a strong focus on mixed teams, with cultural barriers considered easily overcome through shared sport. Funding relies on small participant contributions (€120/year), private sponsors, and public grant applications.

ES Espai Superacció — Superacció, Barcelona

A community-based intervention model supporting young people in situations of social vulnerability through experiential learning and sport. Launched in 2012 in response to youth unemployment and migration-related social exclusion, it combines physical activity (including triathlon), emotional education, and mentoring. The programme targets young people aged 16–24 in residential care,

using sport as an entry point to build trust and gradually connect participants with education, employment, and autonomous life. The model is grounded in the 'vínculo educativo' (educational bond), a transcultural approach that prioritises consistent relationships between educators and young people.

ES Sport and Competition Programme — Brafa Foundation, Barcelona

Running since 1970, the Brafa Foundation's 'Sport and Competition' programme delivers federated training and competitive football and basketball for around 80 boys and girls aged 15–20, with mixed teams of Spanish and migrant participants competing in the Catalan football and basketball leagues. Each team has a coach and an assistant coach, and twice-weekly training sessions are paired with weekend competitions. Participants from low-income families receive grants so that household income is not a barrier to participation. The programme is designed explicitly as character-formation through sport, with a structured competence-based training plan (available openly via bchampion.org) covering teamwork, achievement orientation, integrity, initiative, self-control, and optimism. Notable additions include a Down syndrome team and an assistant coach with Down syndrome, illustrating the programme's commitment to integrating disability inclusion into mainstream competitive sport.

ES Pistes Deportivas Antoni Gelabert — Progess S.L, Barcelona

Operating since 2008 under contract with the Barcelona City Council's civic coexistence ordinance, this programme manages a public sport facility as a tool for social cohesion and conflict reduction in the local neighbourhood. Free, open access for residents aged 12–45 (predominantly male, including participants from Honduras, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ukraine) is combined with structured socio-educational programming and active mediation of how the public space is used. Reaching between 200 and 500 participants, the model rests on two pillars: promoting sport from a socio-educational perspective, and managing the shared use of a public space through clear, consistent rules and visible facilitator presence. Reported outcomes include increased participation, positive feedback from local entities, and a measurable reduction in neighbourhood conflicts.

ES Tasta'M — Camins Fundació Social Escola Pia, Catalonia

Tasta'M is a year-long training programme (September to June) for around 25 newly arrived migrant young people aged 16–21, predominantly from North African (Maghreb) and Sub-Saharan African countries. The curriculum combines Catalan and Spanish language, mathematics, social studies, computing, and short trade tasters with a dedicated weekly 'LAB' session of recreational and sport activities. Sport sessions use randomised mixed teams and clear non-competitive rules: the explicit aim is shared experience and connection, not winning. The practice is delivered in a faith-based educational context (Escola Pia / Piarist tradition) and is funded through grants. Reported impact is qualitative but consistent: changes in relational patterns between students who would not otherwise interact, and stronger group cohesion.

ES Club Deportivo Barrio del Pilar — Fundación Red Deporte y Cooperación, Madrid

Operating in the Barrio del Pilar neighbourhood of Madrid three days per week throughout the year, this programme run by Fundación Red Deporte y Cooperación combines sport and educational support for a primarily Moroccan and Latin American community, with a smaller cohort from Eastern Europe. Children up to 12 receive after-school sport sessions paired with academic support; older youth and young adults benefit from employability-focused activities in which sport sessions and skills workshops alternate. Reaching between 200 and 500 participants, the model uses sport as a catalyst for educational and labour-market objectives. The initiative is funded through a blended portfolio including the UEFA Foundation, EU programmes, and equipment donors, and is complemented by an urban summer camp.

ES Deporte Inclusivo y Educativo — CDE Unión Deportiva Juventud de Alcorcón, Madrid

Running each season from September to May, this Madrid sport club programme reaches between 200 and 500 mixed-gender participants aged 8–18, including children and young people from Latin American and Ukrainian migrant backgrounds. The methodology combines training with workshops, talks, and solidarity activities, and is partnered with local schools. Reported outcomes include increased participation, emotional stability, a stronger sense of belonging, and improved academic performance. The programme is funded through a mix of donations and grants, and is anchored in the personal commitment of its volunteer organisers.

ES Tod@s Juegan and Bisontes Dux — Madrid

Tod@s Juegan is a Spanish NGO that connects young people aged 5–18 at risk of exclusion (for economic, social, or family reasons) with sport teams that suit their interests, covering registration fees, equipment, and access barriers. To date around 30 young people from a range of cultures, nationalities, religions, and sports have been supported. Bisontes Dux is a Madrid-based football team operating under the Tod@s Juegan umbrella. Established with deliberately low fees and active subsidies for those unable to pay, the team is open to any youth otherwise excluded from organised football. After signing up to a municipal league, the team finished third in its first season; equally important to the founders, qualitative feedback from the players and parents indicates that the relaxed, study-friendly model — explicitly de-emphasising results on the pitch — has supported wellbeing, friendships, and academic continuity.

ES Movimiento por la Paz / Brafa Partnership — Barcelona

Run jointly by the NGO Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad and the Brafa Foundation, this is a small-scale referral and support programme for migrant men aged 18–40 who are asylum seekers or applicants for international protection. Around 30–70 participants are accompanied to the Brafa football pitch, oriented to the space and routine, and supported across two training sessions or matches each week (mornings or afternoons). Beyond the sport activity, the programme works on adaptation and integration concepts and behaviours, supported by Brafa staff and volunteers. The activity is offered free of charge by Brafa as an external resource that complements the case-management work of Movimiento por la Paz. The model illustrates how a faith-based sport club and a civil society NGO can pool capacity to provide newly arrived asylum seekers with a stable, free-of-cost sport-based community while their administrative situation is being resolved.

THAILAND

TH Mingalabar Mae Sot League — PlayOnside

Operating since 2013 in the Thai-Burmese border town of Mae Sot, PlayOnside uses football to promote gender equality, social inclusion, and the empowerment of displaced Burmese populations in Thailand. The Mingalabar Mae Sot League is the culmination of six months of weekly work with participating migrant schools, followed by an eight-week tournament that brings together over 600 children and young people aged 8–17 across ethnic, religious, and economic lines. Female participation has grown to 40% — supported by deliberate work with female role models — and the programme retains 18 schools at a 90% retention rate. Coach training, post-match dialogue sessions, and youth facilitator clinics anchor a deliberately non-competitive, dialogue-based approach. Funded through a blended mix of private donors, foundations, corporate grants, and earned income, the model offers a strongly tested template for cross-community sport-based integration in border and post-displacement contexts, well outside the European setting.

5. FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

5.1 Summary and Methodology

Focus groups were conducted as the qualitative research pillar of WP2, complementing the survey's breadth with in-depth contextual insight. Using the FONTES Focus Group Facilitation Guide, each partner from Greece, Spain, Italy and Germany was asked to organise at least one focus group per country, with a preference for two groups where possible — one with youth and one with practitioners.

Focus Group Overview

Method: Semi-structured focus groups + key-stakeholder interview | Duration: 60–90 minutes | Group size: 6–10 participants | Format: In-person or online | Countries completed (as of April 2026): Greece, Germany, Italy, Spain | Total focus groups: 5 plus 1 expert interview

The focus groups collected qualitative evidence on four main themes: how sport supports intercultural and interfaith integration; the needs and challenges of target groups in multicultural contexts; barriers and enabling factors for inclusive sport practices; and recommendations for the FONTES training programme, digital platform, and AI tools.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on direct experience with sport in multicultural or diverse settings. Partners aimed for a minimum of 40–50% youth representation in youth-focused groups and gender balance where possible. All responses were anonymised in reporting.

5.2 Countries Where Focus Groups Took Place

Focus groups have been completed in four countries (Greece, Germany, Italy, and Spain), complemented by a dedicated key-stakeholder interview in Greece. Five focus groups and one expert interview have been documented:

- Greece — Expert focus group, online, 19 March 2026, in collaboration with Greek civil society partners (SolidarityNow, KMOP, Greek Council for Refugees, and reception-facility representatives)
- Germany — Youth and practitioner focus group in Bonn, 13 March 2026, in the context of the Unity Cup programme (10 young participants and coaches under 18, all male, majority with migration background)
- Greece — Key-stakeholder interview with the Director of the Schisto Closed Controlled Facility for Asylum Seekers, online, 18 March 2026
- Italy — In-person focus group at the Archdiocese of Naples, 17 March 2026, with seven youth coaches and sport volunteers active in multicultural sport contexts
- Spain — In-person focus group with the SPES programme of the Brafa Foundation, Barcelona, 12 March 2026, with seven mixed practitioner and beneficiary participants (four migrants, three people experiencing homelessness, two volunteers)
- Spain — In-person focus group at Dragones de Lavapiés (Madrid), 26 March 2026, with ten intergenerational participants aged 17–51, including the club presidency, Muslim and Catholic practitioners, and migrant youth from West Africa and South America

5.3 Main Conclusions from Focus Groups

Across the five focus groups in Greece, Germany, Italy, and Spain — together with the dedicated key-stakeholder interview in Greece — a strong convergence of themes has emerged. Sport is widely understood by practitioners, faith-based actors, and young people alike as a powerful but underutilised integration tool, particularly in fragmented, under-resourced environments. The following crosscutting conclusions reflect combined insights across the four national contexts:

- Sport functions as a horizontal integration tool that transcends linguistic, cultural, and religious barriers, offering a non-formal space for social connection outside institutional structures.
- Self-regulation models and peer-led mediation are more effective than formal referee systems in mixed-background settings, building responsibility and trust among participants.
- Long-term retention depends less on the sport itself and more on the social quality of the environment: familiarity, trust, cultural proximity of organisers, and a sense of ownership.
- Thematic add-ons (workshops on racism, career guidance, inclusion) work best when attached lightly to a sport framework rather than displacing it.
- Gender barriers — particularly for girls from refugee and Roma communities — require targeted preparation, family mediation, culturally safe environments, and positive role models.
- Fragmented funding remains the single biggest structural obstacle to sustainability, continuity, and scale.
- Coach training emerges as a structural priority across all four countries — practitioners and young people consistently pointed to gaps in intercultural facilitation, religious literacy, gender-sensitive practice, and conflict mediation. Even short training modules were described as potentially transformative.
- Religious literacy and respectful normalisation of cultural and religious practice (e.g. prayer, fasting, dress code) function as low-cost, high-impact inclusion levers — particularly evident in the Italian and Spanish focus groups. The act of acknowledging rather than problematising religious practice was repeatedly described as a profound gesture of human validation.
- Gender inequality in sport is structural and economic, not only cultural — Spanish participants emphasised that investment gaps and regulatory weaknesses (not only social norms) drive female under-participation, and called for legislative or regulatory mandates rather than reliance on club goodwill.
- Cultural proximity and eye-level communication between organisers and participants were repeatedly described as decisive for trust, belonging, and long-term engagement — especially for young people from migration backgrounds.
- Sport works best as a low-threshold, enjoyable social space; explicit educational add-ons (workshops on racism, career orientation, religious dialogue) are most effective when attached lightly to a sport framework that participants already value.
- Practical access barriers — limited capacity, lack of equipment, scheduling conflicts, regulatory and administrative obstacles — recur across all four countries and limit the inclusive potential of otherwise effective practices.

5.4 Focus Group Results by Country

5.4.1 GREECE — Expert Focus Group

Country	Greece
Format	Online (Zoom)
Date	Wednesday, 19 March 2026
Type	Expert Focus Group
Participants	Representatives from reception facilities for unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers; civil society organisations including SolidarityNow, KMOP, and the Greek Council for Refugees; practitioners active in refugee and migrant support, integration of children and youth, education, and community development.
Images	

The Role of Sport in Social Integration

The focus group participants framed sport as a horizontal policy tool with strong integration potential, particularly in environments where linguistic, social, and cultural barriers are present. Its experiential and non-formal nature enables the development of social and behavioural skills without requiring prior educational qualifications. Experts highlighted sport's role as: a mechanism for activating 'invisible' groups (children outside education or other activities); a tool for behaviour management and releasing tensions; and a framework for building social bonds and trust. However, use of sport remains largely fragmented and is not systematically integrated into comprehensive social inclusion policies.

Needs of Target Groups

Participants identified five core needs directly linked to structural weaknesses:

- Ensuring continuity and stability of interventions — high mobility of beneficiaries and fragmented activities limit long-term development.
- Holistic integration approach — sport participation must link with education, social support, and other policy areas to achieve sustainable outcomes.
- Personalisation of interventions — the heterogeneity of target groups (age, gender, culture, special needs) requires flexible, tailored models.
- Ensuring basic conditions for participation — access to materials and infrastructure is a prerequisite that reveals and reinforces existing inequalities.
- Strengthening links with local ecosystems — integration requires active connection with local sport and community actors beyond reception facilities.

Barriers and Structural Challenges

The Greek focus group surfaced barriers at three levels:

- Systemic: Discontinuity and fragmentation of funding; lack of institutionalised methodologies; limited integration of sport into national integration policies.
- Community: Local stereotypes and social resistance; gender and cultural perceptions limiting girls' participation; limited family engagement.
- Operational: Lack of equipment and basic resources; limited access to sports facilities; bureaucratic barriers (document recognition, club registration, banking); coordination difficulties at local level.

Gender and Cultural Dimensions

The gender dimension emerged as a critical structural issue. Limited participation of girls is not merely an access issue but is linked to deeper social and cultural dynamics. Effective approaches identified include: targeted preparation and mediation with families; development of safe and culturally sensitive environments; and use of positive female role models. Participants underlined the urgent need for systematic integration of gender-sensitive approaches in policy and programme design.

Good Practices Documented

Five categories of practice were documented in the Greek context:

- Social integration interventions (mixed activities): Mixed football and basketball teams, friendly matches between facilities and local teams, collaborations with scouting and school groups.
- Social skills development: Systematic use of football and basketball with structured emphasis on rules, cooperation, and teamwork.
- Psychosocial and behavioural interventions: Use of martial arts for anger management; linkage of sport with reducing school dropout; structured activities promoting discipline.
- Psychosocial support and safeguarding mechanisms are essential components of effective sport-based integration programmes, particularly when working with refugee and asylum-seeking children.
- Visibility and participation: Participation in marathons, local tournaments, matches outside reception facilities — strengthening self-confidence and normalising presence in society.
- Awareness and anti-discrimination: Wheelchair basketball matches and similar events designed to change perceptions and promote acceptance.

5.4.2 GERMANY — Focus Group on the Unity Cup, Bonn

Country	Germany
Location	Bonn (ISC Alhilal Bon context)
Format	In-person focus group with youth participants
Organiser	ISC Alhilal Bon
Participants	Young participants and organisers of the Unity Cup programme — a football-based holiday programme bringing together youth from different neighbourhoods, social backgrounds, and cultural origins in Bonn.
Images	

The Unity Cup: Context and Origins

The Unity Cup is a recurring football-based holiday programme that brings together young people from different neighbourhoods, social backgrounds, and cultures. It was originally funded entirely by AlHilal before later receiving city (municipal) support. The programme was conceived to create an accessible holiday football space with a strong 'Bolzplatz' character: self-organised, less adult-controlled, and more socially open than formal club structures. It fills a gap during school holidays, providing a space where young people can come together across neighbourhood boundaries, maintain friendships, and experience informal, culturally comfortable participation.

What Works: Ingredients of Success

The most successful element is the regular football offer itself, combining fun, peer connection, familiarity, freedom, and continuity. Young people repeatedly reported returning because friends recommended it, because they could play with people outside their club teams, and because the atmosphere differed positively from ordinary tournaments. Some participants had returned for three to five years, suggesting unusually strong long-term retention.

The 'method' is relational rather than bureaucratic: organisers create an environment of trust, familiarity, and autonomy, and adjust the format in response to what participants say they need. Participants valued autonomy and practical relevance far more than explicit instruction.

Structured Methods and Tools

- Mediator-based conflict resolution without referees — participants manage disputes themselves, with mediators stepping in only when needed.
- Self-organisation and participant responsibility — young people feel ownership of the space and format.
- Fair Play award — a symbolic incentive for prosocial behaviour.
- Thematic educational elements — quizzes and activities on racism, inclusion, and career orientation, attached lightly to the sport experience.
- Participant voice and co-creation — visible format adjustments based on participant suggestions build trust and loyalty over time.

Inclusion, Belonging, and Trust

A session feels inclusive when young people feel safe, familiar, respected, and socially comfortable — when they know people in the room, feel organiser support is available, are treated as equals, and find the space is about belonging, not just performance. Organisers who are culturally close and perceived as 'belonging to us' by participants are a key factor. At the same time, trust breaks down when fairness is unclear, when younger players feel disadvantaged by older ones, or when physical escalation is not clearly sanctioned.

Long-Term Retention and Relationships

Long-term engagement depends on enjoyment, peer recruitment, familiarity, and recurring social anchoring during school holidays. Participants suggested grill sessions, mini-games, and informal social areas as ways to reduce excessive focus on winning and allow connections to develop beyond competition. Participants noted that learning and relationship-building happen more easily when the space is not structured only around matches and results.

Partnerships

Key partnerships include: AlHilal as the initiating organisation; municipal/city support for facilities and funding; local schools and neighbourhood venues in Beuel, Pennfeld, and Tannenbusch; the Disability Community of the City of Bonn; and the German national team for people with dwarfism (for specific inclusion-focused editions). Participants also connected with the broader football club ecosystem, with many playing in local clubs as well.

5.4.3 ITALY — Naples Focus Group, Archdiocese of Naples

Country	Italy
Location	Naples (Archdiocese of Naples)
Format	In-person focus group, informal participatory format (participants seated in a circle)
Date	Monday, 17 March 2026
Duration	Approximately 60 minutes
Participants	Seven young experts in multicultural sport contexts — youth coaches and sport volunteers, all with direct experience of multicultural sport settings (local sport associations, educational youth activities, and social inclusion programmes).

Images	

The Role of Sport in Intercultural and Interreligious Integration

All participants reported direct experience of sport as a privileged space for encounter across cultural and religious lines. Sport was widely framed as one of the few contexts in which people start to know each other without too many barriers — when teams play together, differences are described as moving into the background. At the same time, participants stressed that simply sharing a sporting activity is not, on its own, sufficient to ensure real integration. Genuine inclusion requires deliberate awareness and willingness on the part of organisations and coaches, not only the presence of mixed teams.

Current Problems Linked to a Lack of Religious and Cultural Integration

When asked to identify the main difficulties that emerge in sport contexts when the cultural and religious dimension is not adequately considered, participants converged on five recurring issues:

- Lack of mutual knowledge and awareness — many coaches and sport managers do not have adequate tools to understand specific religion- or culture-related needs. Participants gave the example of training or competitions being scheduled to coincide with important religious moments for some participants. As one coach noted, “Many coaches have never received training on these issues. Often they simply do not know that some organisational choices can put some children in difficulty.”
- Organisational rigidity — training schedules, dress code rules, and the management of activities do not always take cultural or religious differences into account. Even small adaptations would, in the participants’ view, make sport contexts significantly more inclusive.
- Stereotypes and cultural perceptions — implicit expectations and unconscious attitudes can influence how some athletes are perceived within their own teams, with effects on their sense of belonging and active participation.
- Limited representation in leadership roles — coaches, managers, and coordinators only rarely come from diverse cultural or religious backgrounds. Participants linked this to a reduced sensitivity of sport organisations to the needs of different groups.

- Absence of safe spaces for dialogue — many organisations avoid open discussion of religion and culture for fear of conflict. Participants warned that this avoidance is counterproductive, as silence often produces bigger misunderstandings.

Concrete Short-Term Solutions Identified

In a second activity, participants generated practical and realistic solutions that could be implemented in the short term by sport organisations and operators:

- Targeted training for coaches, volunteers, and sport operators on cultural and religious diversity — even short workshops or modules could provide practical tools for managing intercultural situations.
- Knowledge and dialogue activities within teams — informal moments in which athletes share aspects of their culture or traditions, strengthening group identity and reducing prejudice.
- Greater organisational flexibility — small adaptations to schedules, rules, and dress code requirements that allow more people to participate without large structural changes.
- Collaboration with local cultural and religious communities — partnerships that foster mutual understanding and facilitate the participation of young people from different backgrounds.
- Sharing of good practices and digital tools — online platforms for collecting and disseminating inclusion strategies, including practical aids such as "inclusion dictionaries" supporting the choice of words to be used in multicultural and religious settings, in order to avoid offensive or embarrassing situations.

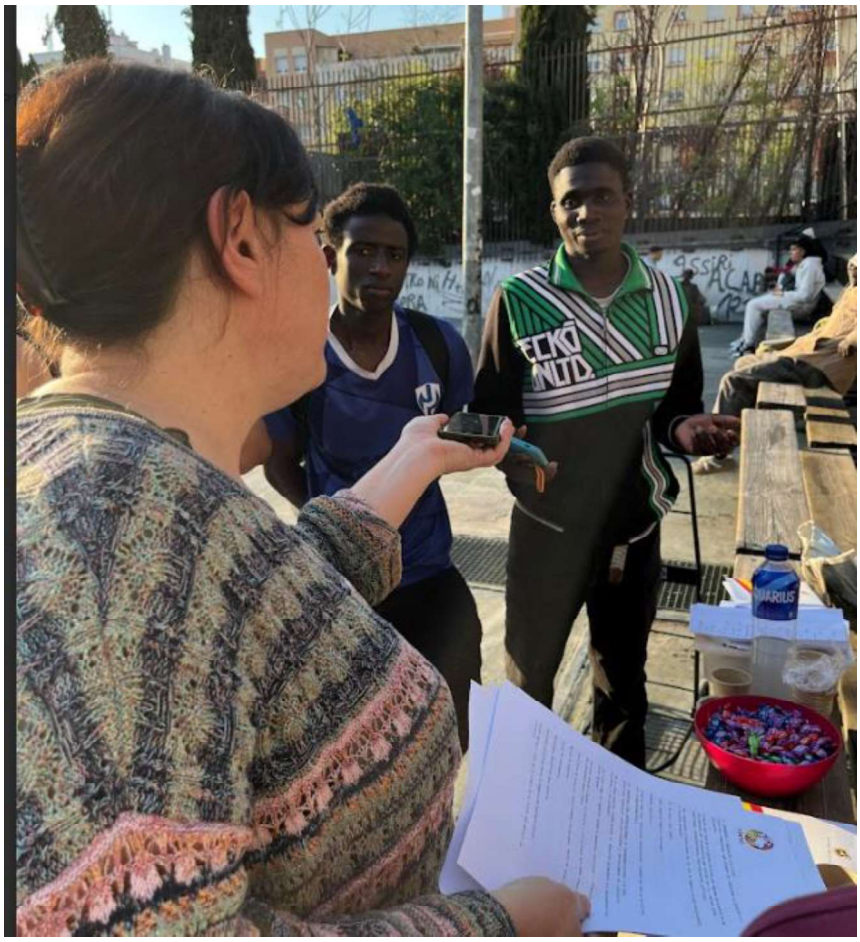
Key Conclusions

The Naples focus group highlighted that sport carries significant potential for intercultural and interreligious integration, but that this potential is not realised automatically. Five elements consistently emerged: improving mutual knowledge between people of different cultural and religious backgrounds; targeted training for coaches and sport operators; the value of dialogue and shared experience within teams; the need for greater organisational flexibility; and the role of local communities and territorial networks in promoting inclusion. As one participant summarised, "Sport can really bring people together, but we need to create the right conditions for that to happen."

5.4.4 SPAIN — Madrid (Dragones de Lavapiés) and Barcelona (Brafa SPES)

5.4.4.a Madrid — Dragones de Lavapiés Focus Group

Country	Spain
Location	Madrid — Lavapiés / Centro district
Format	In-person focus group at the Dragones Football Club
Date	Thursday, 26 March 2026
Type	Mixed intergenerational and intersectional youth and practitioner group
Participants	Ten participants aged 17–51, including the club presidency, social-sport students, Muslim and Catholic practitioners, and migrant youth from West Africa (Gambia, Guinea Conakry) and South America (Peru, Colombia). Religious affiliations included Muslim, practising and non-practising Catholic, and agnostic.

Images	

The Socio-Spatial Role of Sport

Participants framed sport as a bridge between the "private community" and the "public sphere." They observed that, while communities tend to gravitate toward their own (e.g. African or Roma young people meeting in neighbourhood squares) out of a sense of belonging, the organised structure of a club such as Dragones helps break these invisible walls. A particularly striking finding was the emergence of a "Sports Creole" — a hybrid mixture of Spanish accents, regional slangs (Venezuelan, Colombian, Peninsular), and technical jargon. This shared informal language reduces the barrier of "correct" speech, allowing migrants to integrate faster than in formal academic or professional settings.

Religious Identity in a Secular Sport Environment

The group identified two distinct modes of religious interaction with sport. The first, described as the "social sanctification" of sport, draws on Latin American traditions in which Catholicism and sport are closely intertwined — for example, prayer chains organised for injured players. The second, the "negotiated practice" of Islam, was described by Muslim youth as a constant negotiation of physical limits (such as during Ramadan) and social permission. When a coach acknowledges a religious fast, participants reported, this is not experienced as a disruption of the activity but as a profound gesture of human validation. Practical accommodations such as Ramadan half-time breaks were highlighted as low-cost adjustments with high symbolic value: they validate the athlete's identity without compromising the integrity of the game.

Gender Inequality: Cultural and Economic

Participants identified gender inequality as a structural issue with both cultural and economic roots. Investment in women's sport — from grassroots to professional level — was described as significantly lower than in men's, and the most active voices argued that inclusion should not be left to the "goodwill" of clubs but mandated by law or regulation, including measures that compel clubs and schools to integrate female participation. West African participants contrasted rural prohibition of women's sport in their countries of origin with urban progress, where national women's football teams now exist, suggesting a clear link between urbanisation, changing social norms, and women's access to sport. Practical strategies discussed included specific girls' teams as visibility and talent showcases, and hybrid club management that combines high-level competitive moments with shared, lower-pressure spaces designed to be more welcoming to newcomers.

Strategic Needs and Recommendations

- Institutionalising inclusion — participants argued that social inclusion should not be voluntary for clubs but a regulatory or legislative requirement, with diversity measured at board level and not only on the pitch.
- A "Parents' Academy" — there is an urgent need for a dedicated parents' school to de-escalate toxic competitive passion and equip families with knowledge on the psychological aspects of youth sport.
- Intercultural coaching with religious literacy — coach training should explicitly cover religious literacy, including the physical implications of fasting and the cultural modesty requirements that can affect female athletes' retention.
- Equal accommodation of religious rites — existing flexibility around majority-religion events (e.g. rescheduling matches for First Communion rehearsals) should be extended to all faiths as a matter of equal treatment.

5.4.4.b Barcelona — Brafa Foundation, SPES Programme

Country	Spain
Location	Barcelona — Brafa Foundation
Format	In-person focus group within the SPES programme
Date	Thursday, 12 March 2026
Type	Mixed practitioner and beneficiary group
Participants	Seven participants (six men, one woman): four migrants, three people experiencing homelessness, and two volunteers active in sport activities with people at risk of social exclusion. Profiles included a psychology-student volunteer, beneficiaries of the SPES programme, and Brafa staff with multi-decade involvement in sport and youth education.

Images	

Sport as a Levelling Mechanism

Participants in the SPES focus group described sport — and football in particular — as a powerful levelling mechanism. They emphasised that on the pitch, players are not judged on origin or current circumstances; everyone is governed by the same rules and works toward a common good. Beneficiaries reported that playing helped them feel like a person, feel needed, and rebuild confidence in others after long periods of marginalisation. As one participant put it, sport "has helped me believe in myself again, value myself, open new circles of friends, and integrate into society." The combination of equal rules, group identity, and consistent caring presence of coaches and volunteers was identified as the core of the programme's impact.

Barriers Identified by Participants

- Lack of resources — limited free spaces for sport practice, and limited equipment, are practical obstacles that exclude people on low incomes, irregular legal status, or living on the street.
- Preconceived ideas and fear of the unknown — participants noted that ignorance generates fear, and fear inhibits interaction; both newcomers and host communities can withdraw, reproducing marginalisation.
- Distrust and social disconnection — people living on the street, in particular, often live in a state of alert that makes it difficult to benefit from sport activities until a sense of safety has been built.
- Language and cultural barriers — although mitigated by the shared rules and embodied nature of football, language can still slow down trust-building and active participation.

What Works: Practitioner Practice

Practitioners in the Brafa SPES focus group described a small set of consistent practices that they consider essential. They begin each session with a brief informal talk to greet participants and check in on how their day has been, before moving into pair exercises and team activities designed to encourage interaction. Rules are clearly defined and applied to everyone equally, with coaches modelling compliance themselves; this equality of rules was repeatedly cited as one of the most effective integration mechanisms. Beyond sport itself, the programme offers complementary activities — visits to museums, hikes, social events — that provide additional opportunities for socialisation and that signal to participants that they are valued beyond their performance on the pitch.

Practitioner Needs and Recommendations

- Coach quality and engagement are decisive — coaches and volunteers are the crucial agents of impact. The most useful supports for them are practical: tutorials, case studies, and short videos.
- Training in empathy and cultural understanding — practitioners need training that develops empathy, cultural understanding, and the ability to create an environment of calm and well-being, alongside any technical sport content.
- Multilingual digital tools — platforms that can translate into different languages would significantly improve communication with beneficiaries who do not yet speak Spanish.
- More free public sport spaces with trained facilitators — participants called for an expansion of free, accessible sport spaces, staffed by trained facilitators capable of supporting healthy habits and inclusion processes.
- Promotion of activities that genuinely mix migrant and native populations — beyond simple co-location, programmes need to be designed to actively encourage interaction across groups.

Cross-Cutting Conclusions from the Spanish Focus Groups

Taken together, the Madrid and Barcelona focus groups produce a coherent picture. Sport is described as an exceptionally accessible integration platform, valued precisely because it does not depend on language, qualifications, or social capital. At the same time, both groups stress that the inclusive potential of sport is not automatic: it depends on the quality and training of coaches and volunteers, on the visible equality of rules for all players, on respectful accommodation of religious and cultural practice, and on structural conditions — free spaces, equipment, regulatory mandates — without which inclusion remains a matter of goodwill rather than entitlement.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

The focus groups conducted as part of WP2 produced a rich body of qualitative evidence that both confirms and deepens the picture emerging from the survey. Together, they point to a consistent set of conclusions about what works in sport-based social integration in Europe today — and what needs to change.

6.1 Consolidated Recommendations

Recommendation 1 — Prioritise relational quality over programme complexity

Practitioners and young people consistently reported that trust, cultural proximity of organisers, familiarity, and autonomy are the primary drivers of engagement and retention. Programmes should be designed around relationship-building as a core output, not an incidental side effect.

Recommendation 2 — Institutionalise and scale self-regulation methodologies

Mediator-based conflict resolution and peer-led governance (as seen in the Unity Cup) represent highly replicable, culturally appropriate models for managing diversity in sport spaces. These should be documented, systematised, and included in the FONTES training programme.

Recommendation 3 — Address gender barriers as a structural priority

Both focus groups identified the under-participation of girls and young women as a systemic issue requiring dedicated responses — including family mediation strategies, role model programmes, and culturally adapted safe spaces. Gender inclusion cannot be treated as an add-on.

Recommendation 4 — Develop holistic approaches that link sport with other services

Sport alone is insufficient for sustainable integration. Effective programmes link sport participation to education support, health services, legal and administrative guidance, and employment pathways. The FONTES platform should map and facilitate these linkages.

Recommendation 5 — Create continuity mechanisms and multi-year funding frameworks

The single most frequently cited barrier is funding discontinuity. Partners at all levels should advocate for multi-year, outcome-linked funding models that enable programme stability, practitioner training, and longitudinal impact measurement.

Recommendation 6 — Use sport as a bridge to local ecosystems, not an island

Effective integration happens not within a closed programme but through active connection to local sport clubs, community organisations, faith networks, schools, and municipalities. FONTES partners should document and share models for ecosystem-building in addition to standalone practices.

Recommendation 7 — Build religious literacy into coach and volunteer training

The Italian and Spanish focus groups consistently identified religious literacy as one of the most under-developed competences among coaches and sport operators. Practical accommodation of religious practice — such as Ramadan fasting, prayer times, modesty preferences, or scheduling around religious holidays — was repeatedly described as a low-cost, high-impact inclusion lever and as a profound gesture of human validation rather than a disruption of the activity. The FONTES training programme should explicitly include religious literacy alongside intercultural facilitation, gender-sensitive practice, and conflict mediation, and should equip practitioners with concrete tools (including the "inclusion dictionary" concept proposed by participants in Naples).

Recommendation 8 — Move from goodwill to institutional mandates on inclusion

Spanish participants in particular argued that inclusion should not be left to the goodwill of individual clubs, schools, or coaches but should be embedded in regulatory or legislative requirements — including measures that compel sport organisations to integrate female participation and to ensure proportionate representation of diverse backgrounds at board level. This shift is consistent with Council of Europe and EU policy directions on social inclusion through sport. FONTES policy advocacy (WP6) should explicitly support the institutionalisation of inclusion: minimum standards in public procurement and grant frameworks, board-level diversity indicators, and recognition of religious and cultural accommodation as part of safeguarding and good-practice standards.

Recommendation 9 — Strengthen the school–sport interface: partnerships, teacher–coach coordination, and school-based delivery

Schools appear as delivery contexts, referral pathways, or formal partners in more than a third of the surveyed best practices, yet the school–sport interface was not foregrounded as a distinct theme in the focus group discussions, and the report does not systematically analyse its potential. FONTES should include a dedicated training module on school-based delivery, teacher–coach coordination, PE-curriculum integration, and after-school programme design. Teachers, PE specialists, and school directors should be considered to beincluded as target audiences in future FONTES capacity-building activities.

Recommendation 10 — Embed community-oriented co-design as a structural principle

Both the survey and the focus groups identified the absence of systematic participant involvement in programme design as a structural gap requiring dedicated responses — including participatory needs assessment, co-facilitation with beneficiaries, and youth-led programme governance. Co-design cannot be treated as an add-on: participants must be protagonists of the practices that concern them, not only their beneficiaries.

7. GAP ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesises findings from both the survey and the focus groups to identify the most significant gaps in current practice, policy, and knowledge, and to formulate evidence-based recommendations for the FONTES project and the broader field.

7.1 Gap 1 — Lack of Institutionalised Methodologies

Despite the richness and diversity of practices identified through the survey and focus groups, the vast majority have been developed 'bottom-up' by field actors without formal documentation, validation, or dissemination. There is no common European framework for sport-based social integration methodology, and most practitioners work without access to tested guidelines, training materials, or standards.

- Recommendation: Develop and disseminate a FONTES Methodology Framework drawing on the best practices documented in this report. Package this in both print and digital formats, available in the partner languages of the consortium.
- Recommendation: Prioritise methodologies proven in multicultural settings — including Football3, mixed-team facilitation, mediator-based conflict resolution, and adapted sports education — for inclusion in the WP3 training programme.

7.2 Gap 2 — Insufficient Training for Coaches and Volunteers

Across the survey and both focus groups, practitioners consistently reported lacking access to professional guidance on intercultural facilitation, gender-sensitive approaches, conflict management, and working with participants from diverse faith and cultural backgrounds. Language barriers between coaches and participants also emerged as a critical, unaddressed training gap.

- Recommendation: Design training curriculum to directly address intercultural facilitation, gender-sensitivity, trauma-awareness, safeguarding and child protection, and conflict resolution as core competencies — not optional extras.
- Recommendation: Include practical language support tools and communication strategies in training materials, including use of images, visual aids, and multilingual glossaries.

7.3 Gap 3 — Limited Integration of Sport into National Policy Frameworks

In all countries represented in the study, sport-based social integration remains largely peripheral to national integration strategies. Most initiatives are funded through short-term project cycles rather than as part of mainstream policy, and sport practitioners are rarely included in integration policy consultations.

- Recommendation: Through WP6 policy advocacy, FONTES should produce specific policy briefs addressed to national governments and the European Commission recommending inclusion of sport-based integration in national integration action plans, with dedicated funding lines.
- Recommendation: Advocate for minimum standards and outcome-linked indicators for sport-based integration programmes to be recognised in public procurement and grant frameworks.

7.4 Gap 4 — Fragmented Funding and Sustainability Challenges

Nearly every initiative surveyed and every focus group highlighted funding fragmentation as the primary structural barrier to sustainability, quality, and scale. Project-based cycles, typically 1–2 years, prevent

organisations from building long-term relationships with beneficiaries, developing institutional knowledge, or conducting meaningful impact assessment.

- Recommendation: The FONTES digital platform should include a funding intelligence module — a curated, regularly updated database of European, national, and private funding opportunities for sport-based social integration, including Erasmus+ Sport, AMIF, ESF+, and relevant foundation grants.
- Recommendation: FONTES partners should model blended funding approaches (mixing community contributions, municipal support, private sponsorship, and public grants) and share these models through the knowledge base.

7.5 Gap 5 — Gender and Intersectional Inclusion

Girls and young women from refugee, Roma, and faith-conservative communities remain significantly underrepresented in sport-based integration programmes across all countries surveyed. This reflects not only access barriers but deep-rooted intersections of gender, culture, religion, and family dynamics that require dedicated, sustained strategies.

- Recommendation: Develop a Gender-Sensitive Facilitation Toolkit as a standalone component of the FONTES knowledge base, addressing family engagement strategies, culturally adapted safe spaces, same-gender coaching options, and positive role model frameworks.
- Recommendation: All FONTES-affiliated initiatives should set gender participation targets, monitor these systematically, and report disaggregated data by gender, age, and background.

7.6 Gap 6 — Evidence and Impact Measurement

The vast majority of surveyed initiatives lack systematic evidence collection frameworks. Impact is primarily reported through participant counts, retention rates, and anecdotal feedback. Very few initiatives use validated social integration outcomes instruments, longitudinal tracking, or independent evaluation — which limits the sector's ability to demonstrate value to funders and policymakers.

- Recommendation: Develop a FONTES Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Toolkit — a lightweight, practitioner-friendly framework for collecting standardised data on integration outcomes, including validated indicators for social cohesion, trust, intercultural contact, and wellbeing.
- Recommendation: The FONTES AI tools should include a guided self-assessment module enabling practitioners to measure and report impact in a standardised way compatible with European reporting frameworks.

7.7 Gap 7 — Digital Tools and Knowledge Access

Practitioners across all countries express a clear unmet need for accessible, multilingual digital tools that provide contextualised guidance for their day-to-day challenges. No currently available platform specifically addresses the intersection of sport, social integration, multiculturalism, and faith.

- Recommendation: The FONTES digital platform and AI-powered repository should be designed around the practitioner's real-time needs — offering scenario-based guidance, searchable best practice examples, training resources, funding intelligence, and peer connection — in at least the six consortium languages.

- Recommendation: Ensure AI tools are co-designed with practitioners and tested with end users, with particular attention to digital literacy levels among volunteers and community-based coaches.

7.8 Gap 8 — Under-analysed school–sport interface

Schools appear as delivery contexts, referral pathways, or formal partners in a substantial share of the surveyed best practices — spanning Denmark, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Thailand — yet the school–sport interface was not foregrounded in the focus group discussions, which engaged sport clubs, faith-based organisations, and community NGOs but not teachers, PE specialists, or school directors. As a result, the report does not systematically analyse schools as strategic partners, teacher–coach coordination models, after-school programme design as a distinct category, or the role of sport in dropout prevention.

- Recommendation: The FONTES training programme (WP3) should include a dedicated module on the school–sport interface, covering partnership models, teacher–coach coordination, PE-curriculum integration, and after-school programme design, and should include teachers and PE specialists among its target audiences.
- Recommendation: WP4 should curate school-based methodologies as a distinct category on the digital platform, and WP6 policy advocacy should engage education ministries alongside sport ministries when arguing for institutional mandates on inclusion.

7.9 Gap 9 — Insufficient co-creation and participant involvement in programme design

Across the surveyed practices and the focus groups, programme design remains largely a top-down exercise carried out by organisations, coaches, and funders — rarely with the systematic involvement of the participants themselves. Where participant voice does emerge — the youth-led Bonn Unity Cup where young people shape the format, name the event, choose speakers, and mediate matches; the football3 methodology used by ActionAid Hellas where participants collectively agree the rules before each game; the participatory design of CrosSport with its Community Leaders for Sport Inclusion (CLIS) and Sport for Inclusion Activists (SIA); and the explicit call from Brafa focus group participants that "they should be the protagonists; we should only accompany them in the process" — the impact on retention, ownership, and cultural relevance is consistently reported as decisive. Yet these approaches remain the exception rather than the norm, and the report does not systematically analyse community-oriented co-design as a distinct methodological area.

- Recommendation: The FONTES training programme (WP3) should include a dedicated module on community-oriented co-design, equipping practitioners with practical tools for participatory needs assessment, co-facilitation with beneficiaries, and youth-led programme governance — with particular attention to migrant, refugee, and faith-community participants who are most often designed *for* rather than designed *with*.
- Recommendation: WP4 should embed participatory design principles into the digital platform (e.g., practitioner-participant co-design templates, youth-facilitator resources), and WP6 policy advocacy should recognise participant involvement in programme design as a quality indicator for public procurement and grant frameworks alongside the safeguarding and inclusion standards proposed in Recommendation 8.

7.10 Gap 10 — Reaching those we do not reach: the "pistachio effect"

The survey and focus groups documented in this report capture what programmes *do* reach — participants who signed up, engaged, and stayed. What the report says less about is who is *not* reached, who leaves early, and why. Nols (2018) describe this as the "pistachio effect" in Sport for Change: programmes tend to reach the "low-hanging fruits" — young people with some existing motivation, community connection, or minimal social capital — while the "hardest nuts to crack" (typically the most isolated, the most disadvantaged, or those with the least social capital to engage in structured activities in the first place) often remain outside programme reach. Compounding the problem, many programmes have no systematic mechanism to identify who dropped out early or who never engaged, and therefore lack the feedback loops that would allow them to reach those most in need.

- Recommendation: The FONTES training programme (WP3) could include a dedicated module on outreach, non-participation, and early drop-out — equipping practitioners with practical tools for identifying under-reached populations, mapping the "pistachio effect" in their own contexts, and designing culturally appropriate outreach strategies for the hardest-to-reach groups (including those without existing community anchors, those in irregular administrative situations, and those facing intersecting exclusions).

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The findings presented in this report would not have been possible without the time, openness, and expertise of the many practitioners, civil society representatives, faith-based actors, coaches, volunteers, and young people who shared their experiences with the FONTES team between February and April 2026. The lead partner of WP2, ICSS Europe / Save the Dream, gratefully acknowledges the contributions of all those who took part in the survey and focus groups and who entrusted the project with their observations on what works, what does not, and what is needed to scale impact in sport-based social integration.

8.1 Consortium Partners

The FONTES project is delivered by a consortium of seven partners across six European countries: EMCA (Belgium); ICSS Europe through its Save the Dream initiative, lead partner of WP2 (Portugal); the Archdiocese of Naples (Italy); Olympiacos S.F.P. (Greece); Brafa Foundation (Spain); ISC AlHilal Bonn (Germany); and Club Deportivo Elemental Dragones de Lavapiés (Spain). Their combined networks were essential in reaching practitioners, faith communities, sport clubs, reception facilities, and young people across the consortium countries and beyond.

8.2 Survey Respondents

The FONTES team thanks the 29 organisations that completed the WP2 best practices survey between February and April 2026, including (in alphabetical order): ActionAid Hellas; AMKE Tzambol Agapis; ASD Circolo Tennis Chiaiano; Asociación Todos Juegan; Bisontes Dux; Brafa Foundation; Braval; BROEN Danmark; Camins Fundació Social Escola Pia; Club Atético María Madre de la Lata; CDE Unión Deportiva Juventud de Alcorcón; Ellás Omáda Óneiro; Fodboldlinjen Randers / Randers Ungdomsskole; Franciscanos Menores Conventuales (Mañanas en Compañía); Fundación Red Deporte y Cooperación; HAPMK Mladost; Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum — Social Integration Office of Schisto Facility and Schisto Closed Controlled Facility; Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad; PGS Campania; PGS Don Bosco Piedimonte Matese; PlayOnside; Progess S.L; SolidarityNow; Stadio Eirinis kai Filias (Peace and Friendship Stadium); Superacció; and others who chose not to be named publicly. The breadth and depth of their work is the foundation on which this report rests.

8.3 Focus Group Participants and Hosts

The FONTES team is grateful to the practitioners, civil society representatives, faith-based actors, and young people who took part in the five focus groups and the expert interview that informed Section 5 of this report. Particular thanks go to: the Director of the Schisto Closed Controlled Facility for Asylum Seekers and the Olympiacos S.F.P. team in Greece; ISC AlHilal Bonn and the youth participants of the Unity Cup programme in Bonn, Germany; the youth coaches and sport volunteers of the Archdiocese of Naples, Italy; the leadership, volunteers, and beneficiaries of the Brafa SPES programme in Barcelona; and the intergenerational team at Dragones de Lavapiés in Madrid — including its founders and the multicultural community that has grown around the club. Civil society partners SolidarityNow, KMOP, the Greek Council for Refugees and others provided invaluable expert insight in the Greek expert focus group.

8.4 Funding

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9. REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

The following references provide the academic, policy, and practitioner foundations on which this report draws. They are recommended for readers interested in deepening their understanding of the role of sport in social integration in multicultural and multi-faith settings, and have been grouped by category for ease of consultation. All links were last verified at the time of publication; readers are encouraged to check the relevant institutional websites for the most current versions.

9.1 Peer-Reviewed Academic Literature

- **Sport, Refugees, and Forced Migration: A Critical Review of the Literature** — Spaaij, R., Broerse, J., Oxford, S., Luguetti, C., McLachlan, F., McDonald, B., Klepac, B., Lymbery, L., Bishara, J., & Pankowiak, A. (2019). Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, 1, 47. The most comprehensive integrative review of the field, synthesising 83 publications across 14 languages and identifying core themes (health, integration, barriers and facilitators).
  https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sports-and-active-living/articles/10.3389/fspor.2019.00047/full
- **Sport for Development: What game are we playing?** — Coalter, F. (2013). Routledge, London. The foundational critical text in the Sport for Development field, including in-depth discussion of the 'programme theory' problem and the limits of generic claims about sport's social benefits.
  https://www.routledge.com/Sport-for-Development-What-game-are-we-playing/Coalter/p/book/9780415567039
- **Rethinking Sport and Integration: Developing a Transnational Perspective on Migrants and Descendants in Sports** — Agergaard, S. (2018). Routledge, London. A leading European reference on the limits of national integration frameworks and the case for a transnational perspective on sport, migration, and second-generation participation.
  https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315266084
- **Migrant Integration and Cultural Capital in the Context of Sport and Physical Activity: A Systematic Review** — Smith, R., Spaaij, R., & McDonald, B. (2018). Journal of International Migration and Integration, 20, 851–868. A systematic review of 45 studies linking participation in sport with cultural capital and integration outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse migrants.
  https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12134-018-0634-5
- **Community sport and physical activity programs as sites of integration: A meta-synthesis of qualitative research conducted with forced migrants** — Stack, J. A. C., & Iwasaki, Y. (2020). Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 51, 101750. A multidisciplinary meta-synthesis of 23 peer-reviewed qualitative studies, identifying the conditions under which sport functions as a context for integration.
  https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1469029220301655
- **Sport for social cohesion: from scoping review to new research directions** — Moustakas, L. (2023). Sport in Society, 26(8), 1389–1406. A scoping review of 35 studies on sport and social cohesion, useful for clarifying the conceptual definition of social cohesion in sport-based programming.
  https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17430437.2022.2130049
- **Social Change Through Sport for Development. A critical pedagogical perspective** — Nols, Z. (2018). PhD dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Brussel; published by VUBPress, Brussels. The foundational reference for the "pistachio effect" concept in Sport for Change / Sport for Development. Based on ethnographic work with six urban SfD initiatives in Brussels, Antwerp and Genk, the study critiques

the "deficit model" of youth underlying much SfD practice and highlights how programmes tend to reach the "low-hanging fruit" while leaving the most socially vulnerable young people outside programme reach.

https://researchportal.vub.be/en/studentTheses/social-change-through-sport-for-development-initiatives/

9.2 International Policy and Institutional Reports

- **Sport for Protection Toolkit: Programming with Young People in Forced Displacement Settings** — UNHCR, International Olympic Committee & Terre des hommes (2018). The leading multi-agency framework for sport-based programming in displacement contexts, integrating child protection, youth empowerment, and Sport for Development and Peace.
  https://www.sport-for-development.com/imglib/downloads/Further%20Readings_Publications/ioc-tdh-unhcr2020-en-sport-for-protection-toolkit.pdf
- **Mapping of good practices relating to social inclusion of migrants through sport** — European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture / ECORYS (2016). The principal EU-level mapping of more than 60 examples of sport-based migrant inclusion practice across Member States, with conclusions on the conditions for successful integration through sport.
  https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f1174f30-7975-11e6-b076-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
- **Social inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons through sport** — Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly (2023). A consolidated policy review covering the European Sports Charter, Council of Europe Recommendations, and EU policy frameworks on sport-based inclusion, with practical recommendations to Member States.
  https://rm.coe.int/report-social-inclusion-of-migrants-refugees-and-internally-displaced-/1680ab339e
- **Integration of Refugees through Sport: Policy Recommendations** — ISCA (International Sport and Culture Association) and partners, MOVE Beyond / Erasmus+ project (2020). Practical policy recommendations developed across Denmark, Italy, Belgium and Sweden in partnership with civil society and university research teams.
  https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/ca17ae9d-51b7-4d79-8732-3bd7b96d63de/4_MOVE_Beyond_Policy_Recommendations_Full.pdf
- **Inclusion of Migrants in and through Sports: A Guide to Good Practice** — Sport Inclusion Network (SPIN) / VIDC, Vienna (2012). One of the earliest cross-European practitioner guides, with examples from Austria, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Hungary, and the United Kingdom, and indicators for assessing the inclusion potential of sport offers.
  https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/SPIN_Inclusion%20of%20Migrants%20in%20and%20through%20Sports.pdf

9.3 Methodological Resources for Practitioners

- **football3 Trainer Manual** — Moustakas, L. & Springborg, G. (2018). streetfootballworld, Berlin. The principal training manual for the football3 methodology used by partners across the streetfootballworld network, including ActionAid Hellas in Greece.
  https://www.fairplaypoint.org/assets/publications/pdf/football3-for-respect_Toolkit_WEB.pdf

- **football3 Handbook: How to Use Football for Social Change** — Fox, L., Hebel, M., Meijers, B., & Springborg, G. (2013). streetfootballworld, Berlin. The original handbook setting out the 'three halves' structure (pre-match discussion, match without referees, post-match reflection) and its use as a tool for gender equality, peacebuilding, and social inclusion.
  https://www.youthlead.org/resources/football3-handbook-how-use-football-social-change
- **Football for Protection: A Methodology for Working with Children Affected by Displacement** — Terre des hommes (2022). The published methodology underpinning Terre des hommes Hellas' football-based protection and inclusion work in Greece (see Best Practice 4.2 / Greece).
  https://tdh.gr/sites/default/files/2022-07/tdh_football4protection_methodology.pdf
- **Sport for protection: An introduction to the approach** — sportanddev.org & UNHCR (ongoing). A practitioner-oriented overview of the Sport for Protection approach, covering theory of change, four guiding approaches (human rights-based, socio-ecological, protection systems, MHPSS), and links to additional case-based resources.
  https://www.sportanddev.org/thematic-areas/sport-and-refugees/sport-protection

9.4 European Union Programmes and Online Resources

- **Social Inclusion through Sport — European Commission portal** — European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. The official EU policy hub on sport and social inclusion, including the 2016 mapping study, calls for proposals on 'Sport as a tool for integration and social inclusion of refugees' (2017–2021), and the 2021 preparatory action linked to refugee integration.
  https://sport.ec.europa.eu/policies/sport-and-society/social-inclusion
- **European Website on Integration — Migrant Integration through Sport** — European Commission. A continuously updated repository of country-level resources, project results, and policy briefs on sport-based migrant integration across the EU.
  https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/mapping-good-practices-relating-social-inclusion-migrants-through-sport_en
- **Olympic Refuge Foundation** — International Olympic Committee, founded 2017. Programmes, partnerships, and impact resources on the use of sport for protection and empowerment in displacement settings, with pilots in Kenya, Jordan, Turkey, Rwanda, Colombia, and beyond.
  https://www.olympicrefugefoundation.org/
- **sportanddev.org Knowledge Platform** — Swiss Academy for Development. The leading global knowledge-sharing platform for the Sport for Development and Peace community, including thematic toolkits on sport and refugees, sport and inclusion, and gender.
  https://www.sportanddev.org/

9.5 Faith, Religion, and Sport

Because FONTES specifically explores sport as a tool for integration in multi-faith settings, this section gathers the most directly relevant literature on the intersection of religion, faith communities, and sport. It includes Vatican documents, foundational academic works on sport and Christianity, an interfaith textbook, and key research on Muslim women's participation in sport in Europe.

- **Giving the Best of Yourself: A Document on the Christian Perspective on Sport and the Human Person** — Vatican, Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life (2018). The first ever official Vatican document on sport. Frames sport explicitly as "a meeting place where people of all levels and social

conditions come together" and as a vehicle for solidarity, peace and inclusion across "cultures, languages, races, religions and ideologies." Highly relevant to faith-based partners working on integration through sport.
https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/06/01/180601b.pdf

- **Sports and Christianity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives** — Watson, N.J. & Parker, A. (eds.) (2013). Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society, London. An interdisciplinary anthology covering history, philosophy, sociology, and theology of sport, with contributions from leading scholars including Robert Higgs, Shirl Hoffman, Scott Kretchmar, and Father Kevin Lixey of the Vatican's former Church & Sport office.
https://www.routledge.com/Sports-and-Christianity-Historical-and-Contemporary-Perspectives/Watson-Parker/p/book/9781138920576

- **Sport and the Christian Religion: A Systematic Review of Literature** — Watson, N.J. & Parker, A. (2014). Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne. The most comprehensive bibliography in the field, citing more than 1,050 references and providing the most systematic introduction to the academic literature on sport and Christianity available in English. Indispensable starting point for researchers.
https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-4438-5503-7

- **Global Perspectives on Sports and Christianity** — Adogame, A., Watson, N.J. & Parker, A. (eds.) (2018). Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society, London. Extends the field beyond a Western perspective to include studies from Africa, South America, and Asia, as well as Europe, the UK, and the US. Includes chapters on interfaith sport clubs and on the significance of sport in public rituals.
https://www.routledge.com/Global-Perspectives-on-Sports-and-Christianity/Adogame-Watson-Parker/p/book/9780367406257

- **Sport and Christianity: Practices for the Twenty-First Century** — Hoven, M., Parker, A. & Watson, N.J. (eds.) (2019). T&T Clark / Bloomsbury, London. A more recent, practice-oriented volume bringing together philosophy, theology, sport studies, and education. Useful for practitioners working at the intersection of faith and sport in parish, school, and youth settings.
https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/sport-and-christianity-9780567678607/

- **Religion and Sports: An Introduction and Case Studies** — Alpert, R.T. (2015). Columbia University Press, New York. The first scholarly textbook designed for use in both religion and sport courses, with case studies covering Christianity (Catholic and Protestant), Islam, Judaism, and Zen Buddhism. Particularly useful for educators developing curricula on religious diversity and sport.
https://cup.columbia.edu/book/religion-and-sports/9780231165716/

- **Outsiders: Muslim Women and Olympic Games — Barriers and Opportunities** — Pfister, G. (2010). International Journal of the History of Sport, 27(16–18), 2925–2957. A foundational sociological analysis of the structural and cultural barriers facing Muslim women in international competitive sport, and the opportunities for change. Widely cited in subsequent research on hijab, dress codes, and sex segregation in sport.
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09523367.2010.508269

- **Islam's view on physical activity and sport: Egyptian women interpreting Islam** — Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. (2003). International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 38(1), 45–60. A classic empirical study of how Muslim women themselves interpret Islamic teachings in relation to sport, demonstrating diversity within Islam and challenging essentialist accounts of religion as a barrier.
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10126902030381003

- **'Will God condemn me because I love boxing?' Narratives of young female immigrant Muslim boxers in Norway** — Tjønndal, A. & Hovden, J. (2021). European Journal of Women's Studies, 28(4), 455–470. An empirical European study examining how young Muslim immigrant women negotiate religious identity and combat-sport participation in Norway. Directly relevant to the European focus of the FONTES project.
  https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/13505068211021151
- **Implications of Islam on Muslim Girls' Sport Participation in Western Europe: Literature Review and Policy Recommendations for Sport Promotion** — Kahan, D. (2003). Sociology of Sport Online (later cited extensively across the literature). One of the earlier policy-oriented reviews of Muslim girls' sport participation in Western Europe, with practical recommendations on dress code, sex-segregated facilities, family engagement and culturally sensitive programme design.
  https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233289394_Implications_of_Islam_on_Muslim_Girls%27_Sport_Participation_in_Western_Europe
- **Working with faith groups to support active lifestyles** — Sport England (ongoing). Applied research and good practice repository on faith-related differences in physical activity and on partnerships between sport bodies and faith communities, including the Diocese of London / Substance research on the assets that churches hold for sport.
  https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research/faith-groups
- **Sport, Spirituality, and Religion: New Intersections and Global Challenges (Special Issue)** — Religions journal, MDPI (2018–2019). An open-access special issue gathering theological, philosophical and empirical contributions on the role of sport as a meaning-making system, the dialogue between Christianity and sport, and the global diversity of religion-sport intersections.
  https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/Sport_Spirituality_Religion
- **Faith & Sports Institute (FSI) — Baylor University** — Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University, USA. A research and training centre on faith and sport, including the Global Congress on Sport and Christianity (GCSC), with publications oriented to coaches, chaplains and faith-based sport practitioners.
  https://truettseminary.baylor.edu/programs-centers/faith-sports-institute
- **Dios es deportista.** A book inspired by the Church's teaching on sport, and specifically that of the three most recent Popes, presenting around twenty real anecdotes that illustrate sport — like play — as a gift from God and a pedagogical tool for values, effort, healthy competition, interior life, generosity, socialisation, personal growth and teamwork. It gathers the ideas the Church wishes to convey to the whole "family of sport" — athletes, coaches, teachers, journalists, fans, referees and administrators — around the value of sport for improving persons and society and building a more humane and peaceful world.

  https://www.eunsa.es/libro/dios-es-deportista_124918/

Notes

Note 1: This report represents the first comprehensive evidence base produced by the FONTES project. Its findings — rooted in the real practices, needs, and voices of organisations across Europe — will directly shape the training programme, digital platform, AI tools, and policy

recommendations developed in subsequent work packages. FONTES partners are invited to contribute additional best practices, focus group findings, and national insights as data collection continues through 2026.

Note 2: The above references were selected as a starting point. They are not exhaustive, and readers are encouraged to consult the bibliographies of the academic publications listed above for additional sources, including foreign-language and grey literature. The FONTES project will continue to expand its open-access knowledge base of studies, good practices, and methodologies as part of WP4 (digital platform and AI-powered repository).