



**REWINS**  
REFUGEE WOMEN  
INCLUSION THROUGH SPORTS

## REWINS

Refugee Women's Inclusion through Sports

### Research Study



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## Project Description

The project aims to promote a positive attitude towards refugee women in sports. REWINS will identify refugee's barriers and good practices of participation in local sport activities, support the provision of sporting activities and provide opportunities for refugee women at grassroots sport level (i.e futsal), while promoting a transferable methodology based on the findings.

The project's main objectives include:

- To include and activate refugee women in the sports field;
- To give a safe space for women to explore sports;
- To integrate and facilitate social contact between different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, as well as the program participants and the European community;
- To provide refugee women an opportunity for organized recreation, with emphasis on non-violence, discipline, respect, humility and teamwork;
- To raise awareness of the refugee population concerning the positive effects of sport and physical activity, as part of a healthy life style;
- To promote understanding of cultural backgrounds and reflection in order to increase tolerance and to reduce prejudices and xenophobia in the European societies;
- To create links between sports field and refugees' communities;
- To promote gender equality in sports.

## Partners

1)**FARE Network Ltd** is an NGO located in London, UK. Based on the belief that sport is a powerful tool for empowerment, we work closely with organisations in the football sector. This cross-sectorial approach, linking the NGO sector with the football industry, opens up new opportunities for the target groups and enhances sports organisations' social impact on young people in their local communities. Fare has been coordinating a European-wide network of organisations active in the field of anti-discrimination, social inclusion and (youth) education programmes for 19 years.

2)**Organization Earth** is a Greek non-profit Civil organization (NGO) founded in 2010. The mission is the development of the concept of Environmental & Social Intelligence, by providing experiential, non-formal Education for Sustainable Development for all ages, introducing key sustainability issues into everyday life, primarily through learning activities. Organization Earth and its initiatives have implemented and managed various local and international projects and activities focusing on educating, supporting and empowering people including refugees/asylum seekers to integrate Greek community.



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3) **Polisportiva San Precario** is a NGO and an amateur sportive association settled in Padova, Italy, which shares the values of antiracism, antifascism and antisexism. It is composed by 4 teams: soccer, basketball, volleyball and “the Welcome Team”. The volleyball team is composed by boys and girls who play together in the local amateur league (UISP). “The Welcome Team” is a five a side football team: this project started in 2015 in order to offer the possibility of practicing sport to refugees using it to gain social integration and that's why the players are asylum applicants, students and native people.

4) **Girl Power Organization** is a non profit grassroots sports entity, established in June 2014 in Denmark, and it's passionate about empowering minority groups and rising awareness on gender related issues, by creating opportunities especially for women's from minority groups to get access to sports and allowing them to create their own sports experience. We do this through unconventional sports events, like Football/Soccer, Marathon, Swimming, Zumba- fitness, and cycling events. Girl Power Organisation implemented and managed local and international projects and events with the main focus on supporting, empowering, educating refugees, Asylum seekers, immigrants, LGBTQA to integrate in Danish and EU communities, and build network with the collaboration of national and International non profit organisations through sports activities with the main focus on social inclusion.

## Part 1

The first part of the present guide concerns the perceptions of coaches regarding female participation in sport contexts with special focus on refugee population. The data were collected at the partners' countries and the participants survey were coaches both with and without working experience with female athletes. The purpose of the research study was to investigate the potential challenges and barriers as well as the steps need to be taken in order to promote female sports and participation. What is important for national and international stakeholders includes understanding the needs of persons dealing with female athletes underlining the special needs and education when referring to refugee populations.

In total, 25 coaches took part at the research study, 14 male and 11 female coaches. Notingly almost 1/3 of them declared to not have any professional licence for working as sport coach, meaning that their experience, ideas and perceptions are coming as a result of their emperical practice. On the other hand, the rest of the sample declared to have either international (e.g. UEFA), national (FA) or academic expertise. The last demographic element concerns their experience coaching female team with 18 of participants having such a working experience.

### Experience

The coaches who had working experience with female athletes were asked about their experience. Searching relative literature enabled the consortium to identify elements which concern the perspective of coaches. Although not all of them were highlighted in our research study, the list of them is as following:

Coaching female athletes.....

- is challenging
- fits to my character
- is different than coaching male athletes
- is easy
- is a stereotype
- includes a lot of barriers

The notion regarding female athletes' participation includes barriers and stereotypes. Many female athletes have talked regarding these, many studies have had similar finding and the societies have established such perceptions since decades. However, only one of the coaches refered to fighting stereotypes as applicable to his/her work with 6 of the participants highlight that female athletes face a lot of barriers at sport contexts. The most prefered answer was "is different than coaching male athletes" without however given the chance to explain more on that.

The coaches without experience at female teams were asked about the reasons of not having done so. Despite of having a good number of potential answers such as “I don’t want to do so” or “I don’t know how to handle female athletes”, all of the participants said that they “never had the chance”.

### Challenges

The sample was asked to mention which potential challenges or barriers a coach (male or female) has to face when coaching a female team. The list of the potential challenges is as following:

- Dissonance between different gender of coach and athletes
- Handling female body issues
- Difficulties in communication
- Difficulties in approach
- Adjust training sessions to females’ needs
- Understand females’ temperament
- Fight the stereotypes in sports

The participants were asked to choose as many as challenges they perceive as potential barriers and most of them did not just mention one, giving a more multidimensional perspective to the subject.

As expected, the first potential challenge was fighting the stereotypes in sports (12 answers). Even though the coaches who have worked with female teams did not mention that stereotypes have an impact to their work, almost half of the participants said that coaching a female team includes fighting stereotypes. Except from stereotypes, practical issues seem to occur. Coaches mention difficulties both in approach (9 answers) and communication (5 answers) when having to deal with female athletes. The nature of the sport might concern an issue according to the participants. Six of them mentioned that having to adjust the training sessions to females’ needs can be a challenge. All the other potential challenges received only few mentions.

### Steps

The last element of coaches’ questionnaire included the actions that should be taken in order to enhance females’ participation in sport contexts. The participants had to choose among a number of potential steps to promote female participation as below:

- Invest money to female sports
- Educate sportspersons regarding female participation
- Educate young girls regarding the benefits of sports

- Give more opportunities to young girls for sport activities
- Highlight through media the role of sports
- Establish supportive networks for young girls participating in sports

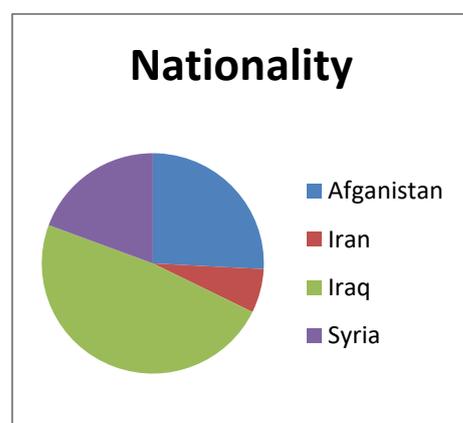
From the above list, the participants had the opportunity to mention as many as answers they prefer as well as to mention something different than the ones in list. The participants highlighted that next steps should be supportive ones for the girls per se. “Give more opportunities to young girls for sport activities” collected the most mentions, as 16 participants chose that answer, while “establish supportive networks for young girls participating in sports” collected 10 answers. These answers highlight the motivation needed to be given to the female athletes in order to establish themselves in sport contexts. The next action that should be taken concerns education. This education should be twofold, both for sportspersons (11 answers) and young girls (11 answers). The education of sportspersons concerns better informing about the female participation in sport contexts while the education of young girls concerns better informing about the benefits of sport participation.

## Part 2

The second part of the research study concerns refugee women's perceptions with regards to participation in sport activities. In total 60 refugee women took part in the research study.

### Demographic Elements

The participants aged between 18-49 years, coming from 4 different countries. When asked if have previously participated in sport activities, only 25 of the 60 total participants have actively participated in sport activities before.



Regarding whether speaking the language of the host country, only few of the participants referred to have an adequate level of the language as to a likert scale from 1 to 5, more than 70% of the 60 participants scored either 1 (not at all) or 2 (poor).

### Identification of Barriers

In the likert scale from 1 to 5, the participants had to answer at which degree 10 potential barriers apply to their cases. The potential barriers-questions were as following:

- I don't know where to go
- I didn't think about it
- I cannot afford it
- I face language barriers
- I don't like sports
- My family doesn't agree
- It is too far from my place

- I don't feel comfortable with the uniform
- I don't want male coach
- I don't want male teammates

The results showed that the highest barriers refer to the lack of information and financial resources as well as the difficulty in transportation.

More analytically, 43 participants mentioned the lack of information (“I don't know where to go”) as one of the highest barriers. The financial aspect of sport participation also contributes in women's absence of sport participation as 42 participants scored 3 or more at that scale. As expected, not being able of speaking the language of the host country is highlighted as an important barrier for a woman not taking part in sport activities. The latter can provoke difficulties in practical terms but also in psychological as not being able to use verbal communication can harm one's self-confidence and interpersonal relationships.

Although cultural differences are usually considered as the highest barrier for a refugee woman to take part in sport activities, the results of our research study underline that the noted opinion is just a stereotype. The lack of permission from the family was mentioned as a potential difficulty only by few participants. Moreover, 16 participants (25% of the sample) declared that uniforms do not make them feel comfortable. Notwithstanding interacting with males, either as coach (26 answers) or teammates (28 answers), can be considered an important factor for preventing refugee women from participating at sport activities.

Concluding the results of our research study, it seems that the refugee women's absence from sport contexts should be attributed to practical issues such as distance or financial resources rather than cultural differences and perceptions. Therefore, further actions are to be made in order to facilitate female refugees' participation in sport activities.

### Part 3

Below there is a summary of numerous projects that have been already implemented concerning refugee women's integration through sport.

PROGRAM	ORGANIZATIONS	TARGET GROUP	IMPLEMENTATION	OUTCOMES
1. Sport Union Tyrol – Le Debut (Austria)	Sport Union Tyrol (leader) “Women from all countries”  ATIB  Girlspoint ARANEA	Girls from different origins	Regular exercise sessions and presentations in healthy lifestyle	Motivate target group to participate in sports and train to become trainers
2. Sport with Muslim girls and young women (Germany 2016)	Youth Sport Lower Saxony	Women and girls with migrant background	Gymnastic warm-up exercises and self-defense techniques focusing on body awareness. Dance, fitness and strength training	Empower migrant women and girls through sports by fostering personal and social development
3. Kicking girls: Easy access to girls (Germany 2016)	Kicking Girls (leader)  Various schools as partners	Women and girls with migrant background	Football trainings conducted by women coaches in the framework of extracurricular after school classes	Personal development as well as involvement as assistant coaches and organize tournaments and football matches

4. Peer Instructor Training for Migrant Women (Finland 2012)	Kisakeskus Sport Institute (Without partners – funded by local Ministry of Education)	Ethnic Minority Women	Activities to raise awareness of the importance of a physically active lifestyle and to make women to engage with other people to avoid social exclusion	Encouragement of a physically active lifestyle and offering a number of female friendly sports
5. BeFitIn – Integration through sports in Hungary (Hungary 2013-2014)	Suisse Academy for Development (leader) Szubjektív Utopia	Migrant men and women	Migrants have the opportunity to get in touch with local sport clubs and take part in sport activities	Motivation of migrant to interact with the sport community and offering to sport clubs the chance to identify potential talented athletes
6. More female migrants in sports (Germany 2008-2011)	German Olympic Sports Federation Federal Ministry of Health	Migrant and ethnic minority girls and women from all over Germany	Combination of sport and other activities, swimming sessions are combined with homework courses or gymnastics sessions are combined with IT classes	Better access to women to participate in sport related activities with the promotion of social and professional competences
7. Interocio por la diversidad (Spain 2005)	Mancomunidad El Zancara	Migrant youth with special focus on women	Sport events for migrant youth with the promotion of life skills and	Empower of young people through sports and enhancement of an

– today)	National Ministry of Sports		psychomotor development	active lifestyle
8. Liberi Nantes Football and Touch Rugby (Italy)	Liberi Nantes Football Club	Newly arrived migrants and women	A touch rugby training program for local and migrant women	Empowerment of newly arrived migrants and women through sports
9. Sport for Girls (Italy)	UISP Turin	Women and girls with migrant background	A space for women of every nationality and culture providing courses, relaxation and children's activities	Support cultural dialog and foster engagement in sport and cultural activities
10. Migrants' Inclusion Model of Sports for All (Italy 2012)	UISP – Italian Union for Sports for All	Migrants and refugees	Build and strengthen a transnational network and a create a model for empowerment through sports	Foster migrants' social inclusion through sport activities
11. Alna School Project (Norway 2012)	Furuset Sport Institution	Young men and women (aged 15-25)	Offer to the participants leadership of joint sport activities	Enhancement of leadership skills and creation of positive role models

## ANNEXES

### ReWINS Questionnaire for Coaches

#### *First Part (Demographic Questions)*

Gender: M F     Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Background:     *High School*             *University*

Certificate of Coaching:

*Degree of Physical Education and Sport Science* \_\_\_\_     *UEFA License* \_\_\_\_

*Other (Please mention):* \_\_\_\_\_     *Nothing* \_\_\_\_

#### *Second Part*

Have you ever trained a female team? Yes \_\_\_\_     No \_\_\_\_

**If no**, please provide us with the reason(s):

Never had the chance \_\_\_\_

Never thought about it \_\_\_\_

I didn't want to do so \_\_\_\_

There is no female team in my city/town \_\_\_\_

Female teams need female coach \_\_\_\_

I don't think that women are suitable for sports \_\_\_\_

I don't know how to handle female athlete \_\_\_\_

I prefer to train male teams \_\_\_\_

**If yes**, which of the following(s) apply to your experience?

Coaching female athletes is challenging \_\_\_\_

Coaching female athletes fits to my character \_\_\_\_

Coaching female athletes is different than male athletes \_\_\_\_

Coaching female athletes is easy \_\_\_\_

Coaching female athletes is a stereotype \_\_\_\_

Coaching female athletes includes a lot of barriers \_\_\_\_

According to your opinion, which challenges/barriers do coaches (both males and females) face when training female athletes? (Please check as much as you prefer)

Dissonance between different gender of coach and athlete \_\_\_\_

Handling female body issues \_\_\_\_

Difficulties in communication \_\_\_\_

Difficulties in approach \_\_\_\_

Adjust training sessions to females' needs \_\_\_\_

Understanding females' temperament \_\_\_\_

Fighting the stereotypes in sports \_\_\_\_

According to your opinion, which steps should be followed in order for female participation to be enhanced? (Please check as much as you prefer)

Invest money to female sports \_\_\_\_

Educate sportspersons regarding female participation \_\_\_\_

Educate young girls regarding the benefits of sports \_\_\_\_

Give more opportunities to young girls for sport activities \_\_\_\_

Highlight through media the role of female sports \_\_\_\_

Establish supportive networks for young girls participating in sports \_\_\_\_

## ReWINS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

\*The questionnaire is anonymous and all information is confidential

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How long you live in this country?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mother language:**

Arabic\_\_\_\_\_ Farsi \_\_\_\_\_ Kurdish\_\_\_\_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_

**Do you speak the language of the country where you live?**

*Not at all      Poor              Moderate              Good              Very Good*

**Have you attended school?** Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, how many years?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Did you participate in sport activities in your country?** Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, Which sport(s)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How many years?** \_\_\_\_\_

*In general, some barriers are identified regarding refugee women's participation in sports. From 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely), at what level you think that these barriers apply to you.*

	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Maybe no</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Maybe yes</i>	<i>Completely</i>
I don't know where to go	1	2	3	4	5
I didn't think about it	1	2	3	4	5
I cannot afford it	1	2	3	4	5
I face language barriers	1	2	3	4	5
I don't like sports	1	2	3	4	5
My family doesn't agree	1	2	3	4	5
It's too far from my place	1	2	3	4	5
I don't feel comfortable					
with the uniform	1	2	3	4	5
I don't want a male coach	1	2	3	4	5

