

10. Foster social integration through sports and associations

WHAT and WHY?

Integration of youth with migrant parents is more than the elimination of performance gaps vis-à-vis youth of native-born parentage. It also goes beyond equal opportunities in education and employment. Successful integration also means to be full and equal part of the society. This can take various forms, including social, political, artistic or physical activities.

Participation in associations such as sports clubs, music groups or charities, provides an excellent opportunity for all youth to interact. As a training ground for civic skills and an arena for political recruitment, involvement in associations lowers the threshold for political participation, as data from Sweden suggest (Myrberg, 2010^[97]). Active participation in associations also promotes opportunities to demonstrate talent and assume leadership roles in ways that might not be feasible in other settings (Makarova and Herzog, 2014^[98]). Finally, it can provide the relevant networks for better inclusion in the labour market (McDonald, Spaaij and Dukic, 2018^[99]).

Sport programmes, in particular, can attract marginalised young people without attaching the stigma usually associated with social intervention programmes (European Commission, 2016^[100]). Despite these advantages, barriers for the participation of youth with migrant parents in associations exist. Such obstacles include costs, discrimination experience and a lack of sensitivity in training or gathering environments. Besides, youth with migrant parents, and in particular recent arrivals, can lack knowledge of mainstream sports and association services and might have inadequate access to transport (Block and Gibbs, 2017^[101]).

Finally, pro-social engagement can also limit discrimination against immigrants, as it is taken as a signal for social integration. In a fictitious job application study, non-volunteering native-born candidates received more than twice as many job interview invitations as non-volunteering migrants. However, no unequal treatment was found between native-born and migrants when they revealed volunteering activities (Baert and Vujić, 2016^[102]).

WHO?

Different stakeholders, including both governmental and non-governmental, and at all levels of government, can initiate efforts to involve youth of migrant parentage into sports and associations. Sport governing bodies or umbrella associations obviously have to implement the programmes though governmental institutions may support these with funding. Sports clubs and associations often reach out directly to youth with migrant parents, without specific national programmes. Schools and local community organisations are important intermediaries in this respect. They often partner with clubs and local authorities to attract young people with migrant parents into their environments.

HOW?

Public policies can set the framework to support and incentivise associations to play an important role in the integration process. This includes the following: Alongside setting incentives for associations, policies can counter barriers and obstacles for youth with immigrant parents:

- Reducing barriers to participate in associations through active reach-out, better information sharing and facilitated access through intermediaries like schools
- Increasing intercultural competences within associations to create more inclusive environments via special trainings and awareness-raising campaigns
- Supporting and showcasing successful projects that enhance the interaction between youth of native- and foreign-born parentage and facilitate entrance into the labour market

Better information about and access to associations and sports clubs for children of immigrants often involves partnerships among various stakeholders. The Football Association of Ireland, for example, has set up a nationwide after-school programme in partnership with schools and grass-root clubs. It links students with migrant parents and their parents to local sports clubs. The 6-week My-Club after-school programme is provided free of charge in primary schools with a high share of migrant students. Qualified coaches animate the sessions and offer interested migrant parents the opportunity to be trained as potential volunteer coaches along the way. At the end of the programme, students and volunteer parents are invited to visit and join their local sports club in the framework of a follow-up open day. In Denmark, the Get2Sport initiative supports sports clubs to reach and engage youth in sports association in areas with high concentrations of immigrants. Refugees, for example, are invited in co-operation with the local refugee centres and municipalities. The project provides a key link between the local sports clubs and the Danish Sport Confederation (DIF), which co-operates with the Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration on this initiative (DIF, 2020^[103]). The Italian Ministry of Labour's "Sport and Integration" project co-operates with the Italian Olympics Committee (CONI), to foster social integration and fight racial discrimination and intolerance. The ministry also supports awareness campaigns at schools and universities, where young people with migrant parents share their own experience on being part of sport associations. Italy is also piloting specific courses on "integration through sport" at five universities and provides school grants for young people with migrant parents to become sport teachers (Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2020^[104]).

Promoting inclusion and intercultural openness within associations and sports clubs entails various elements. One way is to provide intercultural trainings to coaches and club officials. The Italian Football Federation, for example, required representatives of all professional clubs to complete an awareness training with the Italian Sports Association (UISP). The European Sport Inclusion Network (ESPIN) promotes equal access of migrants and minorities to organised associations, amongst others by volunteering options for migrants and organising inclusion workshops for mainstream sports clubs and associations. Another example focusing on the inclusion of refugees is ASPIRE (Activity, Sport and Play for the Inclusion of Refugees in Europe), a collaborative project of nine European countries (ASPIRE, 2020^[105]). The project has developed a training module that teaches facilitators of national and regional sport umbrella organisations to adapt existing coaching activities to the specific needs of refugees and migrants.

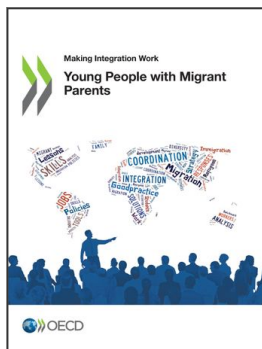
Participation in sports and associations can allow youth to acquire new knowledge and skills more generally. Learning options beneficial to youth with migrant parents can be language support linked to daily activities, use of educational concepts that foster social and inter-personal skills, and forms of civic engagement that allow youth to train leadership skills, irrespective of membership, for example as group workers or trainers. The German Olympic Sports Federation (DOSB), for instance, equips grass-root sports clubs financially and with qualification measures to provide targeted, low-threshold support to youth with migrant parents. As part of the DOSB's nationwide 'Integration Through Sports' (IdS) programme, support

includes homework assistance, language training, assistance with visits at public authorities and job-search in more than 4 000 clubs across the country. The share of individuals with migrant parents at participating sports clubs was found to be roughly six times higher than the national average (DOSB, 2015^[106]). In Portugal, the Art and Hope PARTIS initiative of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation supports projects that showcase the role of art in integrating vulnerable communities. From 2014-18, 33 projects created spaces for freedom and learning, aiming to overcome prejudices and nurturing mutual respect and understanding between groups and communities that would not normally cross paths. More recently, a further 15 projects have been selected through an open tender between 2019 and 2021 (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2020^[107]). The Workers Educational Association of Sweden lists a number of good practises for community engagement in their online handbook “methods” (Workers Educational Association of Sweden, 2020^[108]). One such example is the engagement of native- and non-native speakers in a choir. Singing together enhances participants’ Swedish skills by practicing the pronunciation and creates a space to interact with each other and exchange. Participants are also invited to perform non-Swedish pieces on local stages and events which, in turn, creates awareness in Sweden about immigrants’ and their children’s cultural heritage.

Countries can also encourage national governing bodies of sport and volunteering organisations to reach minimum targets for equal participation. The United Kingdom, for instance, has introduced an equality standard back in 2004 that evaluates sports clubs on their openness to groups under-represented in sport and makes support dependent upon this evaluation.

Associations can provide links to the labour market. In Denmark, the project “From the Bench to the Pitch” was created in 2002 by one of the largest football clubs in Denmark, Brøndby IF, in co-operation with the Municipality of Brøndby and the Ministry of Integration. The aim of the project is to establish contacts between young people with migrant parents and the club’s network of sponsor firms. The club thereby acts as an intermediary. The project is also open to young people who are not part of the club. The advantage of using the club as an intermediary is that it has knowledge about the strengths’ and weaknesses of the young people involved, while at the same time having access to company representatives who have taken a commitment to support the club and its activities. In Chile, the foundation “Music for Integration” facilitates contact among persons with and without migrant parents, but also enables musicians to teach their instruments to children, allowing for a diverse role modelling to youngsters and a skills training in this teaching role among instructors (Música para la Integración, 2020^[109]).

Finally, some countries and municipalities award special prizes for projects and associations with particularly high integration efforts and successes. The integration prize for sports in Austria and the integration prize in Lower Bavaria, for example, recognise the integration efforts of the winning associations or projects (Sportunion Austria, 2020^[110]).



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